

**GMB**  
**CONGRESS 2025**

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

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

.....

**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 THREE**  
**(Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025)**

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## **THIRD DAY'S PROCEEDINGS**

**TUESDAY, 10<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2025**

### **MORNING SESSION**

*(Conference assembled at 9.00 a.m.)*

#### **Call to Order**

#### **Election Addresses**

THE CO-CHAIR: Could I call Congress to order, please. Congress, colleagues, we will be starting today's business with the election addresses from those standing for President and Vice President.

As stipulated by the SOC protocols yesterday, I will call candidates in alphabetical order, first for the position of President and then for the position of Vice President. Each candidate will have up to five minutes to address Congress. Please keep to time, colleagues. If you are a candidate and not already sat at the front, please make your way down. I will call first Gordon Gibbs.

GORDON GIBBS (Midlands): Congress, I will be quick in what I have -- I will start again. Congress, my name is Gordon Gibbs and I work for WMBC. My substantive post was a road worker/gang leader in highways, commonly known in Dudley as a tarmacker, but I am a proud GMB member of one of the seven regions in our Union. You may want to think about that.

I became a workplace representative on 1st April 1996 and in September 1999 I was appointed acting Branch Secretary and in January 2000 I was elected Branch Secretary for CAT Branch Dudley, a general branch which has members in various workplaces and industries outside of Dudley MBC. I was the only trade union official to give evidence at an equal pay tribunal which GMB won for women workers in Dudley in 2011. In 2012, T88 Branch Dudley, along with Wolverhampton BW99 Branch, working together, negotiated a single-status agreement in both councils. My understanding is that these are the only signed single-status agreements in the country they were not imposed on our members.

My first term of office on the CEC was in 2003 and last year after the CEC elections, I started my sixth consecutive term of office where along with a fellow colleague we are the second joint longest-serving members of the CEC. I have been a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for four years. I have been an active member of the Labour Party, and since 1996 I was an agent for a prominent MP and I have a good understanding of how politics can work for our trade union movement, which was expressed by our General Secretary.

My view for the future of the GMB if I was elected as the next National President, I would do so as a working branch secretary because the world of work is at the heart of everything we do for working people. We should also remember the greatest asset GMB has is our workplace representatives, who work tirelessly day in and day out supporting our members in membership in workplaces. I would also like to see closer working relationships with GMB regional organisers to support our workplace

representatives and give them the confidence and skills to do what GMB do best - representing workers.

We have a changing world of work and it is moving fast. With AI and net zero we must be ready to transition into supporting workers into these industries by organising them. And you heard that with The Potteries. There needs to be a transition and that is what we need to be doing - organising. We have a Labour Government which we must campaign and hold to account to implement the Employment Rights Bill to support our members and make sure it is not watered down.

I just want to raise a few points from what I have said today. Again, the strength of our union will be our workplace representatives, the people in this hall today who need support. We must offer that support because the world of work again is changing.

On single status this is an important issue. You have heard a lot people come up here from Asda, from local government. We got it right in Dudley. This happened for us and Wolverhampton in 2021. That is important. There are two elements, the equal pay and the pay structure. What we got supported our women workers.

Just back to AI and net zero, and the SSSNB - it is now back on the cards. What we need to do is ensure that SSSNB works along the lines that it did - and some people who were nursery nurses will understand that under the Green Book they had a clear structure and profession. That is where the SSSNB needs to be going.

I will just leave you with this one thing, people who know me know that I bring people together. That is what I am known for, and why I say that is because I have already said that I am a proud member of one of the seven GMB regions, whichever one it is. Thank you, Conference. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Barbara Plant.

BARBARA PLANT (Southern): Chair, Congress, Barbara Plant, Southern Region. Elections are a sign of a healthy democracy so I am pleased to be here asking for your vote. Thanks to those regions that nominated me, especially my own region. It has been an honour, a privilege, a pleasure to have served as your President for the past seven years. Over those years, our union has faced many challenges and celebrated many achievements. Most importantly, we are now a union that puts members' voices at its heart, placing their daily workplace experiences at the core of Making Work Better. It is workers who determine the issues for our campaigns. I am proud that we are taking on bad employers across the UK. I am proud that we are delivering equal pay for women doing some of the most vital jobs in our country. And I am proud that our membership has grown during my term.

We had the external risks of Covid and Brexit to deal with, as well as an internal inquiry. But we can all be proud that because of the Monaghan Report we now have a sexual harassment in our rulebook. We have sent positive ripples across the labour movement, prompting other unions to look at themselves. Dr Henry's report has led to the GMB Race Achievement Scholarship Programme, paving the way for more representative

structures within our union. In 2020, we celebrated an historic milestone, appointing our first ever women Regional Secretary.

When I stood for election in 2018, I said then that promoting equality and diversity within the GMB was an issue I felt strongly about. They were not empty words. We are not there yet but in a far better place, I believe, than we were seven years ago.

It has been an absolute joy as President to travel the length and breadth of our union, meeting members in their various workplaces, learning about their working conditions, whether that is in a shipyard, a pottery factory, a biscuit factory, an Asda distribution centre, a whisky bottling plant, a workshop that makes cathedral organs or a nuclear power station, to name but a few. I have aimed to truly be your national President - accessible to all, happy to be invited and travel to events wherever they are held.

As I said also in 2018, we are a trade union in the 21st century but our roots and structures stem from the 19th century. Therefore, we must be willing to look at, reflect on ourselves and change. And in the last seven years we have become a more open and transparent union. The CEC now receive the minutes from the SMT meetings. I meet with the Regional Presidents quarterly. The Regional Presidents are invited to CEC meetings as observers, if not already elected on there. A CEC handbook has been created. We now have standing orders for CEC meetings. There is a newly formed Branch Working Party and a Rulebook Working Group. No longer do we work in silos but share best practice across regions and nations, learning from each other.

Thanks to your support and all your hard work we can be proud that we are making GMB the best union possible, with members at the heart of that process. I have chaired five successful Congresses and I would be honoured to be back in Blackpool next year still serving as your President.

Transformational change is difficult and never quick. We have achieved much together over the past seven years but there is still more to do, which is why I ask for another term, to continue working with the CEC and the General Secretary. Thank you for everything you do. For being part of this wonderful GMB family. For listening, and hopefully for your vote. Let's keep Making Work Better together! Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: We will now do the election for the Vice President and the first one up is Tracy Ashton *(Applause)*

TRACY ASHTON: No pressure, guys, hey! Good morning, Chair. My journey starts with my roots. my mum and my dad. They were grafters, quiet working-class heroes who taught me that dignity lies in how we serve others not how loudly we shout. That rubbed off on me. I started out in nursing, both in public and private sectors, and later moved into youth service. I learned to listen, to advocate and to fight for better.

One day a colleague said to me, "Hey Tracy, you in a union?" "Nah!" That didn't last long. Within a month I was at my first GMB branch meeting and not long after I became a rep in education. I had two brilliant mentors. I learned that leadership is not about talking over people. It is about listening, showing up and standing firm.

I served as Branch President for over 20 years. I was elected to the Regional Equality Forum, where I continue to serve. I have met incredible people along the way: Dorothy Mills, Penny Blythe, Tyehimba Nosakhere, Sarah James, and our Phil, and the brilliant staff in our office. These folks aren't just colleagues; they are the soul of the union.

I still remember the first time I stood up to present a motion. The nerves were real. It felt like elephants jumping backflips in my stomach and, believe you me, they still are. These nerves haven't fully gone, but they remind me to care, and I do. Later I joined the regional council and eventually the CEC, representing disabled members in the national reserved seat. I am now into my second term, and what a ride it has been. We hit the ground running. Covid struck. Members were scared, isolated, vulnerable and the union stepped up, because that's what we do. I also joined the appeals panel. I was told, "Don't worry it'll hardly ever meet." Famous last words. I have spent so much time in London I am thinking of applying for a Freedom Pass, but never mind.

Some moments that stand out. Winning my first case. Working with Show Racism the Red Card. Helping implement the Dying to Work campaign in my local authority. Getting my rugby club to sign up to the Man Enough campaign. And of course, Congress, carrying my region's new banner into this very hall two years ago. Martin, thank you for that honour. It also went a few weeks later when I carried it at Durham at the Miners' Gala, my home city.

These stories aren't just memories. They are reminders of what makes GMB special. We are not just a trade union, we are a movement, and movements don't sit still. We



are also about our members, moving with them, being there for them and being wherever they need support. The challenges we face are real - outsourcing, zero-hour contracts, cuts to public services, erosion of hard-won rights, but there is one thing I know and it is this: the GMB does not hold back. We fight for injustice, we organise and we win.

And now we need to go further. We need to invest in our reps and develop the next generation. We need to grow our branches, reach every corner of sectors and bring more voices to the table. We need to fight not only for pay and conditions, but for respect, dignity and the right to be heard. This isn't about slogans, it is about values. I believe in the power of unity. I believe in leadership that is grounded, accountable and ready to face hard truths. And I believe this union's best days are still to come.

If I am elected Vice President, I will bring the same grit, compassion and drive that brought me to that first branch meeting all those years ago. I will listen, I will lead, I will act. I have stood on picket lines. I have marched through our streets. I have fought case after case, and through it all I have never lost faith in what we can achieve. So I am not asking for a title. I am here asking for your trust. Let's build this future together because while I was born in Wallsend, I was made in the GMB! Thank you, Congress  
*(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Kevin Buchanan. *(Applause)*

KEVIN BUCHANAN: President, Congress, Kevin Buchanan, seeking your support and your vote for the role of Vice President. I am not normally the subject of my own

speeches so I must confess this is really outside my comfort zone. I have spent years as an activist campaigning and representing collectives or members, not speaking about me as an individual. So, what to talk about? Well, many of you don't know me so I had better tell you a little bit about me, or rather me and the GMB. How do you condense a lifetime as an activist into five minutes?

Well, let's have a go. Throughout my working life as an activist, I have had the privilege of supporting and representing members in a wide variety of workplaces, many of which presented very substantial and daunting challenges. I am sure that is something you are all familiar with. I have also experienced the challenges of being unemployed while supporting my family. I know all too well the choices you have to make while surviving on benefits for long periods and the toll that it takes on you and your loved ones.

So why did I choose to be an activist? I was raised in a family where helping and protecting others was what we did. That is why I became an activist: because it is the right thing to do when your colleagues need you. What do I want for the GB? The GMB has a duty to fight and protect members' jobs, services, employment rights and promote equality. As an activist and member of the CEC, I have worked determinedly to ensure that the interests and protection of GMB members are at the top of our campaign agenda.

There were times during the last CEC prior to the publication of the Monaghan Report where I was very much a lone voice in the CEC arguing for a forensic financial review to ensure that proper and effective financial controls were in place following questions

about the management our union funds. After considerable initial resistance, I succeeded in persuading the CEC to conduct a detailed review of expenditure controls, to give us, the members, confidence in the financial reports we were receiving. I believe our current financial controls are now without peer in the trade union movement.

I was very vocal in my support of the subsequent investigation, the very challenging report by Karon Monaghan KC. I confess I was critical of the working party in expressing my frustration at the length of time taken to produce the recommendations from the report and reminding the CEC that the working party's role was to make recommendations and it was CEC and this Congress's charge to make the decisions on the basis of those recommendations. After all, it is the primary duty of the CEC and Congress to interrogate all the reports presented to it.

While some other major trade unions are reportedly currently experiencing major internal turmoil, reports I sincerely believe, I think we have put our most challenging issues behind us. We are well on our way to healing as a CEC and as a trade union, but it is a journey, and with experience we will find other acts to improve the GMB for its members.

I will do all I can to speed that process and ensure that our union the GMB is focused entirely on promoting the interests of members and to make sure we have an union we can all be proud of.

I think I have demonstrated to you that I don't always go with the flow. I am not afraid to challenge other members of the CEC, or officers, when I believe it is the right thing

to do. But when I make contributions, no matter how controversial or challenging, I do it with the sincere aim always to be constructive and act in the best interests of the members.

The President and Vice President are charged with ensuring the rules of the GMB are observed and adhered to. This is a responsibility I would take very seriously to ensure that the governance of the GMB by both the CEC and the senior management team are within rule.

If you decide to bestow upon me the enormous honour and privilege of serving as your Vice President of the GMB, I will do all I can to ensure our activists are skilled to provide the best representation and advocacy for all our members and, very importantly, to recruit new members. It is so essential for the growth of our union. If elected I will make every effort to be available to support our members in their campaigns throughout the union. If I can lend support to members anywhere, I would be happy and privileged to do so.

What about the future? What are the challenges that are coming for us? AI is rightly viewed with some trepidation but we also have to examine the resurgence of Trump, the rise in popularity of Reform UK, the resurgence of the right now in many countries. Yes, I do worry about artificial intelligence, but I am more concerned about original ignorance, fed to Reform voters by social media platforms such as X. All my ---

THE CO-CHAIR: Kevin, can you wind up now please? You have had your five.

KEVIN BUCHANAN: -- will continue to evolve and, as I have said - --I will make sure this doesn't happy by the way! (*Applause*) -- will continue to evolve, and, as I have said, I will work tirelessly for you in the future to make the union better. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Sonya Davis.

SONYA DAVIS (Southern): Sisters, brothers, esteemed members of our union, first, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Malcolm Sage for his many years of dedicated service to our union. Thank you, Malcolm. (*Applause*)

I stand before you not just as a candidate for Vice President but as a woman whose journey has been shaped by resilience, conviction and an unyielding commitment to justice. My story is one of struggle, growth and an unbreakable resolve to ensure that every worker's voice is heard, respected and amplified. I am Sonya and I here to ask for your trust and support and to lead as your Vice President to make our union truly member led, fair, safe and fiercely anti-racist.

When I first joined Wandsworth in 2006, I didn't fully grasp the power of the union. I had previous experience in similar roles and confidence in my ability to navigate workplaces without needing collective support. But life has a way of teaching us lessons we didn't know we needed. When my probation was unfairly extended, I turned to a union for help. That experience was disappointing, to say the least. The representative I relied on did nothing to advocate for me and I walked away

disillusioned, cancelling my membership. But Congress, that moment planted a seed, a realisation that unions could and should be so much more, if only they were led by people who truly cared.

In 2010 I found my home in the GMB at Wandsworth. I attended a branch meeting, listened, questioned and joined; determined to make a difference. We need more people to not just join our union but to step up and build our union too. I trained as a representative but I saw a branch struggling, barely functioning, with minimal representation. I knew it could be better. In 2015, I stepped up by being elected as Branch Secretary, determined to re-build and strengthen our collective voice, living my principles and committing to rebuild our movement from the bottom up.

Then came the darkest chapter of my life. Just six months into my role I was suspended on baseless grounds, a clear attempt to silence me for challenging injustice. At the time I was also caring for my mother who was battling with dementia. Those were gruelling months. I did not inform my family of my suspension, carrying the weight alone, tending to my mother's fading health. When she passed away that December, I kissed her goodbye and I felt something profound: an unexplainable strength she passed to me, her youngest daughter, one of six siblings, raised with love and resilience. That strength has carried me forward.

After four agonising months, I was cleared of all allegations, a witch hunt exposed for what it was. When I returned to work, I didn't just shrink back, I demanded a meeting with the director and I held them accountable for failing me both as an employee and as a branch secretary. I wanted to ensure that no other worker would ever face what I

had to endure. That experience didn't break me, it galvanised me, it lit a fire in me to ensure no worker ever feels abandoned or unheard. My mother's strength together with my own became my guiding light to fight injustice in every workplace.

Since then, I have poured my heart into our union. I have served on countless internal GMB Committees, been Vice Chair for National Lifelong Learning, sat on the Labour Party's Forde Report and I have championed many issues. I am proud that my regional Wandsworth Branch has grown to over 2,0700 members. Having completed the Tutors Course, I also facilitate GMB courses for Shrewsbury College, empowering others to lead.

My journey with the union has been both challenging and exciting in equal measure, meeting incredible people along the way who have given me the support and the confidence to go for it. So here I am.

Why do I want to be your Vice President? Because I believe in a union that is truly member led, one that listens to every voice, fights every injustice and stands unwaveringly against racism and discrimination. My life's trials have taught me that fairness is not given, it is fought for. I have faced betrayal and loss yet I risen stronger, driven by the belief that every worker deserves dignity, respect and a union that has their back. As your Vice President I commit to honouring the Karon Monaghan Report and its recommendations by ensuring that our union is a beacon of fairness, where no one is silenced, no grievance is ignored, where every member feels empowered and where diversity is celebrated, where anti-racism and equality is not just a goal but a reality woven into everything we do.

So, Congress, I ask for your vote not just for me but for the vision of the union that stands tall, united and ---

THE CO-CHAIR: Sorry, Sonya, can you finish up, please.

SONYA DAVIS: I believe in smashing glass ceilings. A vote for me will be a vote for smashing yet another GMB glass ceiling. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Dave Douglas.

DAVE DOUGLAS (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): (*Applause*) Chair, friends, comrades, Dave Douglas, North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region. Rep, activist, gas man: standing to be your National Vice President. This union runs on people who do the hard work, the unseen work, often in their own time, for the sake of others. I want to thank you and your families for giving us your valuable time.

I have been a GMB rep for nearly 20 years. I started on the tools and I am still there now, as a gas engineer. I have led members through disciplinaries, fought over 40 days of strike action, sat across the table from millionaire executives and sat down with government Ministers. I have had members sob down the phone. I have had to hold the line when taking a promotion or when walking away would have been easier.

In all my time at the GMB, the strikes, the negotiations, the wins, the losses, there is one moment I will never forget, and I am sure we have all got one. Fourteen years ago,



I was driving a member home after he had been sacked. No notice, no severance, just out the door. We turned into his street and there she was: his wife locked out of his house with his six kids, one clinging to her coat, waiting in the cold. He sat there in silence next to me with his head in his hands, broken. And in that moment, I had one choice. I could have let him out and said, “Good luck, mate” and driven off like it wasn’t my problem. But that’s not what we do. I went home, pulled the policies apart and found the cracks. We rallied the members, built the appeal and took it back to them. We got his job back. He is still there now. (*Applause*) Thank you. He is still there now. He is one of our strongest reps and he will be retiring soon, with his dignity and his pension, and he will tell you straight, it was our union that made the difference. And that is what the GMB means. It is never just a workplace issue. It is someone’s future, it is someone’s home, it is someone’s life.

Today I am bringing together front-line manufacturing and energy workers to make sure our voices are heard in our workplaces, in our communities and at the very top of government. I have done this as a lay member, not on a full-time deal, not with a special pass, just like many of you here, balancing the job, my family, the union work and the responsibility. That is who I am. That is what I have done and that is the energy I will bring as your Vice President.

Congress, I am not afraid of the difficult conversations. Ask any of the gas engineers. I will challenge senior leaders where I work and I will do it in this union: calmly, firmly and with purpose, because decisions made at the top shape what happens on the ground.

Privatisation has turned many industries into machines for shareholder profit. Pensions slashed, skills forgotten, front-line staff pushed harder for less. And unless we push back that race to the bottom will drag our members with it. As Vice President I will be the voice in the room that doesn't forget what it is like on the ground, the weight of the job, the pressures our members face, the toil it takes when they have got nowhere else to turn. I will be a Vice President standing alongside you as you fight for change, a Vice President who always puts members first without fear or favour; a voice on the front-line of working life direct to that top table.

Sometimes people ask me what it felt like when we lost the fire/rehire at British Gas and I will tell you, it felt bloody terrible. But today as I watch fire and re-hire being made illegal I am so proud for what we fought for. As our own rulebook says, there is no limit to what this union can achieve. So, Congress, if you want a worker's voice at that top table, an experienced, battle-hardened activist and someone who always puts members first, then please give me your support. Solidarity, brothers and sisters? Up the working class? Forward together! Long live the GMB! (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Kevin Jones.

KEVIN JONES (Wals & South West): (*Applause*) President, Congress, Kevin Jones, Wales & South West Region. Colleagues, President, Congress, sisters and brothers, it gives me great pride, deep humility and unwavering commitment that I stand before you today to ask for your support in nominating me as your Vice President of our great union, the GMB.

I joined the GMB in 1979 and I have been a member for 46 years. During that period, I have held positions of branch shop steward, branch president, equality officer and currently Branch Sec/Convener for Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. I am also the Regional President of the Wales & South West Region.

I come to you not as a stranger but as a lifelong trade unionist, with decades of service to the union and its members, throughout those years. I have sat on many committees, including the Central Executive Council, and have always had one unwavering focus: our members. From the very beginning of my journey 46 years ago, my purpose has been clear: to listen, to stand up and to speak out for working people. I have always delivered and believe that the voice of the members must come first. If given the honour of serving you as Vice President, that voice will continue to guide every decision I make.

I come from the Republic of Merthyr Tydfil, a small village within the Welsh Valleys, where community isn't just where we live, it is who we are. In our villages and towns solidarity runs deep. People look after each other, they work hard and they stand together in times of hardship. It is there where I learned the true meaning of trade unionism, not just as a structure but as a way of life. The same spirit of community has shaped everything I do. I spent years supporting the MacMillan Cancer charity, the British Heart Foundation and the Welsh Air Ambulance, and other charities and local action groups because I believe that our work as trade unionists cannot begin and end in the workplace; it must extend into the very fabric of our society.

Congress, I am fully committed to supporting the President, the General Secretary and

every single region and branch of this union. Together we must ensure that our values, fairness, dignity, respect and justice are not just words in the rulebook but principles we live by every day of our lives, across all our nations.

We are a proud union with a proud history but it is not enough just to honour that history. We must protect it and we must build on it and, as Vice President, I will work tirelessly to ensure that the GMB remains strong, member led and focused on what matters most: protecting our people, improving their lives and defending their rights.

I don't believe in titles for the sake of titles. I believe in leadership that listens, leadership that unites and leadership that delivers. If elected I will be visible, accessible and active. I will be a Vice President who works with you, not above you; a Vice President who takes the concerns of the rank and file and carries them to the top; a Vice President who always remembers where they come from.

Congress, I ask you for your support not just for me as a candidate but for a continued vision of our union that belongs to its members, that fights for what is right and never forgets who we are and who we serve. Let us keep our union strong, let us honour our past and secure our future and let us do it together. As we say in Wales Stronger Together. We can win for our members if we are all on the same team and not divided. Thank you for your trust, your time and your continued belief in the GMB, our great union that puts members first. Solidarity - as always! Thank you, colleagues, for listening. I ask you to consider voting for me to be your Vice President of this great union. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Congress, we are now continuing with Congress business. The ballot papers and ballot boxes will be distributed following the political speaker in this morning's business. I will announce from the platform when the ballot opens.

### **Employment Policy: Rights at Work**

THE CO-CHAIR: We now move into motions under Employment Policy: Rights at Work which you kindly agreed to carry over from yesterday's business. Just to further update you, we will be debating Motion 131 and Composite 7 on Thursday morning, which has been agreed with the regions concerned. Can the movers of Motion 130, 132 and 133 please be ready to speak and the mover of Motion 130 come to the rostrum.

## **URGENT NEED FOR TIGHTER GUIDANCE AROUND GRIEVANCES**

### **MOTION 130**

#### **130. URGENT NEED FOR TIGHTER GUIDANCE AROUND GRIEVANCES**

This Congress believes that the current ACAS guidance around grievance procedures that a large number of employers seem to mirror is both insufficient and can be used unfairly. Most employers hold some form of hearing and carry out an investigation when they are looking to take an employee through the disciplinary process. We may not always agree that this process is fair, but there is at least an opportunity to put forward a member's case fully prior to a decision is reached. We are seeing a rising number of grievances where employers are simply issuing a letter in reply. We acknowledge that the guidance does state that employees should be given an opportunity to put their case forward, but increasingly employers are taking the initial grievance submitted as that chance. These guidance procedures have been in place since the 11th March

2015, it is time they are reassessed and updated to prevent employers using the wording to avoid giving members a fair process.

This Congress resolves to campaign for a change to the current ACAS guidance to ensure that a fair process, including investigation, hearing and a right to response is done in a timely and unbiased way.

### **D30 DURHAM AND TEESSIDE GENERAL**

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

*(Carried)*

ANTHONY JACKSON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): President, Congress, first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Moving Motion 130 - Urgent Need for Tighter Guidance Around Grievance Procedure. How many times have you heard our members say, “I’ve submitted grievances before and they’ve never been dealt with?” Or, “We never hear or find out if the grievance has ever even been investigated because the employers just don’t tell us”.

We believe that current ACAS guidelines around the grievance procedure, which a large proportion of employers mirror, is both insufficient, inadequate and lacking in fairness. Most employers hold some form of hearing and carry out a full investigation when looking to take an employee through the disciplinary process. We may not always agree that certain aspects of this process are either fair or impartial, but there is at least an opportunity to put forward a member’s case fully prior to a decision being made. A rising number of grievance outcomes are via a letter from the employer, with no explanation as to what information has been collated in the investigation and what may or may not happen as a consequence of the initial grievance. We acknowledge that

current guidance states that employees should be given the opportunity to put forward their case, but there is no further opportunity to respond to statements collated from the investigation. How are our members supposed to believe that the grievance has fully been investigated? Surely this is both unfair and prejudicial. We also call for tighter guidelines when employers receive a grievance. It transpires that some companies do not deem a grievance as a priority and they therefore put on ice sometimes for weeks and, in extreme cases, months. This has a negative effect on our members. Current guidance has been in place now since 11th March 2015. That is over 10 years. Surely it is time the process and guidance were both reassessed and updated. Congress, I move, thank you. (*Applause*)

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

SUE ATKINSON: (North East, Yorkshire & Humberside): How many times have you heard the same story when asking people to put in a grievance, “No, not going to bother, never gets anywhere, waste of time. Six months along and the same thing will happen again.” It takes a lot of courage to submit a grievance. Most people are at the end of their tether. We need to make companies take on the responsibility of taking grievances seriously and for them to be done in a reasonable time-frame, not making people wait months. Our members deserve a good working environment and the knowledge that their issues will be resolved. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Susan.

## **EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS**

## **MOTION 132**

### **132. EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS**

This Congress believes that new employees should gain full employment rights as soon as they finish their probation period. The probation period would be set by Government for all employees, with guarantees that all new starters will receive the support they require. The new Employment Rights Bill should reflect this.

### **AVON & WESSEX A55 BRANCH**

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

*(Carried)*

JEFFREY SUTTON (Wales & South Wes): President, Congress, from the perfectly formed Wales & South West Region, moving Motion 132. *(Applause)* Remember I have got Malcolm! Colleagues, today we stand at a pivotal moment for working people across the UK. For too long, new employees have had to wait, sometimes for years, before gaining the full rights and protections they deserve. This has left millions vulnerable to unfair dismissal, insecure contracts and exploitation, undermining both their dignity and their ability to build a better life for themselves and their families.

But change is at hand. The new Employment Rights Bill promises to sweep away the outdated two-year qualifying period, delivering on the GMB-backed commitment to ensure that all workers receive protection from unfair dismissal from day one on the job. No longer will probation be a loophole for insecurity. Instead, it will be a period of genuine support and assessment, with government setting clear standards and guarantees for every starter. This is not just about fairness. It is about building a modern economy that works for everyone. When workers feel secure and valued they



are more productive, more innovative and more likely to stay and grow with their employer. Businesses benefit from a more committed workforce and our society as a whole reaps the rewards of greater stability, equality and opportunity. By ensuring that full employment rights are granted as soon as employment begins, we are sending a clear message that every worker matters from the very first day. We are building a future where no one is left behind, where every job is a good job and where the law stands firmly on the side of working people. Let us seize the moment, let us stand together for dignity, security and justice in every workplace. Congress, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

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

NICOLA GRIFFITHS (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 132. Colleagues, the GMB has always fought for the rights of working people and this campaign is no different. By backing the call for full employment rights immediately after probation, we are championing a simple principle: fairness from the start. The new Employment Rights Bill reflects our values. It will remove the two-year wait for unfair dismissal protections, end exploitative practices like zero-hour contracts and guarantee day one rights for parental leave, sick pay. More crucially, it recognises the importance of a fair, transparent and supportive probation period set by the Government so that both workers and employers know where they stand. This is a game-changer for millions. It will give new starters the confidence to speak up, to join a union and to build a future without fear of arbitrary dismissal. It will help businesses attract and retain talent and it will make our labour market stronger and fairer for all.

Let's make sure that the new Bill delivers on these promises. Let's ensure that every worker, regardless of background or contract, gets the protection and respect they deserve as soon as they finish probation. Congress, please support this motion and help us build a better fairer world of work. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Nicola. Mover of 133?

**WORKERS' PROTECTIONS FROM ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)  
TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND JOB SECURITY**

**MOTION 133**

**133. WORKER PROTECTIONS FROM ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI): INTELLIGENCE:  
TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND JOB SECURITY**

This Congress recognises that the rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and algorithmic decision-making systems in the workplace has transformed industries, creating new opportunities but is also posing significant risks to workers.

Workers are increasingly subject to decisions made by AI systems, including hiring, performance evaluations, task assignments, and terminations, often without transparency or recourse. Changes to algorithms and AI systems can have profound impacts on workers' livelihoods, job security, and working conditions, yet workers are often unaware of these changes or their implications.

The lack of transparency in AI systems and algorithmic decision-making can lead to biased, unfair, or discriminatory outcomes, disproportionately affecting marginalised and vulnerable workers.

This Congress demands that Workers have the right to know how decisions affecting their employment are made, including the right to understand and review changes to algorithms that

impact their work. The displacement of workers due to AI-driven automation poses a significant threat to job security, necessitating proactive measures to protect workers and ensure a just transition.

We request that Congress work with the Government to develop legislation to establish robust worker protections in the context of AI and algorithmic decision-making, including but not limited to the following provisions:

#### Section 1: Right to Transparency and Updates on Algorithmic Changes

1.1 Disclosure of Algorithmic Systems: Employers utilising AI or algorithmic systems in workplace decisions must disclose the use of such systems to employees and provide clear explanations of how these systems operate.

1.2. Notification of Algorithmic Changes: Workers must be notified in advance of any significant changes to algorithms or AI systems that affect their employment, including changes to hiring, performance evaluation, task assignment, or termination processes.

1.3. Right to Review Changes: Workers shall have the right to request and review information about changes to algorithms that impact their work, including the criteria and data used in decision-making processes.

1.4. Prohibition of Black Box Systems: Employers must ensure that AI systems are not used as "black boxes" and must provide workers with accessible, understandable information about how decisions are made.

#### Section 2: Protections Against Unjust Job Loss Due to AI

2.1. Job Displacement Impact Assessments: Employers implementing AI systems that may lead to job displacement must conduct and publish impact assessments, including plans to mitigate job loss through reskilling, upskilling, or redeployment.

2.2. Just Transition Programs: Employers must establish just transition programs for workers displaced by AI, including access to training, education, and financial support to transition into new roles or industries.

2.3. Severance and Compensation: Workers displaced by AI-driven automation shall be entitled to fair severance packages, including extended healthcare, pension benefits and compensation proportional to their tenure and role.

2.4. Right to Appeal AI-Driven Terminations: Workers terminated by AI-driven systems shall have the right to appeal the decision and request human review of the termination process.

### Section 3: Safeguards Against Bias and Discrimination

3.1. Bias Audits: Employers must conduct regular audits of AI systems to identify and address biases, particularly those related to race, gender, age, disability, and other protected characteristics.

3.2. Worker Representation in AI Oversight: Workers to have the right to representation in committees or oversight bodies responsible for monitoring the implementation and impact of AI systems in the workplace.

3.3. Prohibition of Discriminatory Algorithms: Employers shall be prohibited from using AI systems that result in discriminatory outcomes, as determined by anti-discrimination laws and the Equalities Act 2010.

### Section 4: Enforcement and Accountability

4.1. Regulatory Oversight: A national department will be tasked with enforcing these protections, including conducting investigations and imposing penalties for non-compliance.

4.2. Whistleblower Protections: Workers who report violations of these protections shall be safeguarded against retaliation under whistleblower legislation.

4.3. Private Right of Action: Workers shall have the right to pursue legal action against employers who violate these protections, including claims for damages and injunctive relief as found in unfair dismissal legislation.

This motion seeks to ensure that the benefits of AI and automation are balanced with the rights and protections of workers. By mandating transparency, accountability, and safeguards against job loss, The Union can foster fair and equitable workplaces in the age of AI.

We are asking that our Union develops an industrial strategy so that we are at the forefront of this technology shift.

To ensure that no worker is left behind in the transition to an AI-driven economy, the Union should set up a national project group to develop research, education, and training programs to support workers across the public and private sectors in adapting to the changing technological landscape. This National Project Group should bring its strategy to Congress 2026 for agreement.

## **G50 EVRI BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

ALISON GENTRY: President, Congress, moving Motion 133. First-time delegate, first-time speaker (*Applause*). I rise to propose the motion Workers' Protections from Artificial Intelligence (AI): Transparency, Accountability and Job Security. The rapid integration of artificial intelligence and algorithm decision-making systems is transforming our workplaces. While AI brings opportunities for efficiency and innovation, it also presents significant risks to workers, risk we cannot ignore and that require our immediate attention. Today workers face decisions about hiring, performance tasks assignments and even determinations made by AI systems, often without transparency or recourse. These systems can change overnight with workers left in the dark about how or why their jobs are affected. The lack of transparency can

lead to biased, unfair or discriminatory outcomes especially for our most vulnerable or marginalised colleagues. This Congress must demand that workers have the right to know how decisions affecting their employment are made. We must insist on the right to understand and review changes to algorithms that impact our work. Workers should never be subject to black box decisions that cannot be explained or challenged. Beyond transparency we must address the threat of job displacement. AI-driven automation is already eliminating roles across industries. We need proactive measures to protect workers and ensure a just transition. That means employers must assess the impact of AI, provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities and guarantee fair severance and support for those displaced. Our motion calls for robust safeguards against bias and discrimination, regular audits of AI systems must be mandatory with worker representation on oversight bodies. No worker should suffer discrimination from an algorithm. The right for yours and my data to be removed and if need be, forgotten to ensure the corporate cannot profit from yours and my work enforcement is critical. We propose a national regulatory body to oversee these protections, strong, whistleblower safeguards and the right for workers to take legal action when their rights are violated.

Finally, we urge our union to lead the way. We must develop an industrial strategy and establish a national project group to research, educate and train workers for the AI-driven future. This group should report back to Congress in 2026 with a comprehensive strategy. Colleagues, AI must not be a tool for exploitation or exclusion. With transparency, accountability and robust protections, we can ensure that no worker is left behind in this technological revolution. I move. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Alison. Secunder?

JAMIE WALKER (London): I am proud to second this vital motion on Workers' Protections from Artificial Intelligence. As we have heard from my colleague, AI is already reshaping our workplaces, but too often workers are left powerless, subject to decisions made by invisible algorithms, with either no right to appeal or highly obfuscated by unscrupulous programmers and employers. This is not the future we want for our members. Transparency is not just a technical issue. It is a matter of fairness and dignity. Workers deserve to know how decisions about their jobs are made. They deserve the right to challenge unfair outcomes and be informed about changes that affect livelihoods. Job security must be at the heart of our response to AI. If roles are lost to automation, employers must be required to support workers through re-training, re-deployment, fair compensation and real opportunities to move into new roles, not just promises. We cannot allow technology to become an excuse for abandoning our responsibilities to working people. We also need strong safeguards against bias, data misuse and onward distribution of data that we may have given over. Algorithms can perpetuate discrimination unless they are properly overseen and audited by us, by workers, by people, by humans. We all know that lazy employers will throw everything into the AI pot, just thinking about cost savings rather than about us. Workers must have a seat at the table whenever AI is being implemented and recognition agreements should be scrutinised and possibly rewritten to recognise the need for clear policy when it comes to AI in every sector that we work in.

This motion sets out a clear practical path for protecting our members in the age of AI.

There is plenty of information written on it, so please take a look at it. I urge Congress to support this motion and stand up for workers' rights in this digital age. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Jamie. Anyone wish to speak against these motions? If not, I will call on the CEC speaker Dean Gilligan. Sorry.

JAMES ROLLES (London): Thank you, President. Congress, good morning. This is not really an opposition, but it is on Motion 132, Wales & South West. I think it is a good motion. I agree with the sentiment but I think it is misguided. The New Deal for Working People wants day one working rights, not after probation, so I think really you have got to explain what you mean on this because probations can last up to a year, sometimes longer if people are doing apprenticeships. The New Deal for Working People and our demands and our union policy is for day one working rights, not working rights after a probation that could last up to 18 months. So, I would be really grateful if you could explain your thinking behind that. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, James. With it not being against, it does not deem a right of reply. I now call on Dean Gilligan.

DEAN GILLIGAN (CEC): Good morning. Chair, Congress, responding of behalf of the CEC to Motions 130 and 133. The CEC is supporting all of these motions and the composite with qualifications.

On Motion 130, we know that collective grievance procedures can help build union



membership at work by strengthening our members' voices and making it easier to provide collective solutions and benefit everyone in the workplace without the need for litigation. The CEC's qualification that reassessed and updated procedures in ACAS guidance need to be addressed as part of the broader package of employment rights being delivered by the Labour Government. We should also not inadvertently introduce procedural traps that might impact negatively on our litigated cases, as was the case with the statutory grievance and disciplinary procedures regime in place between 2004 and 2009, under the last Labour Government.

Likewise, the CEC is supporting Motion 133 with a qualification. This motion rightly calls for worker or employee rights through information that is gathered and used about them through AI systems. This is one of the most important debates of a generation regarding ownership of and profit from personal data. Our qualification is that we will work with existing section committees and industrial sector committee groups to consult and campaign on this matter. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motions 130 and 133 with the qualifications I have outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Dean. Could the movers of Motions 268, 269 and 270 come to the front, please. Does North East, Yorkshire accept the qualification on 130? (*Agreed*) Does London accept the qualification on 133? (*Agreed*) Colleagues, the CEC is supporting all these motions and we will now go to the vote. All those in favour of 130? Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 132. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 133. Any against? That is carried. Could I have the speaker of Motion 267 to the rostrum, please?

## **ROUGH SLEEPING**

### **MOTION 267**

#### **267. ROUGH SLEEPING**

This Congress requests that that local councils and Government look into the issue of rough sleepers. The causes of rough sleeping include homelessness and many interrelated structural, individual and interpersonal factors. Poverty, unemployment housing shortages and systemic barriers in welfare support are understood to be drivers for Rough Sleepers. These underlying causes can often be exacerbated by personal vulnerabilities such as poor health or substance abuse. Greater London has seen a 16% increase in Rough Sleepers and the countryside has seen a ten-fold increase over the last five years which is almost a 40% increase. The London Annual Report 2023/2024 stated that a total of 11,993 people were seen rough sleeping in Greater London alone up from 8,413 the previous year an 19% increase. The Tory government report on circumstances preceding individuals first experience of rough sleeping was missed by early intervention and gaps in specialist services. Often, rough sleepers are unaware of housing support options. Some of the people who fall through the safety net can include people with no recourse to public funds leaving institutions such as Prison, Armed Forces, Hospital, Local Authority Care, Women, Young People and also LGBT People having to assist where they can. The Tories had 14 years to sort this issue out but have failed. This Congress asks that this Labour movement reduces the numbers of rough sleepers and keeps their promise to build more homes.

#### **E20 EDMONTON & ENFIELD BRANCH**

#### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

BEN CAMPBELL-WHITE (London): Moving Motion 267, Rough Sleeping. Each night thousands of British people sleep rough, in parks, under bridges, in shop doorways or in their cars. They are veterans, young people, working families, and far too often people struggling with mental health or addiction. Rough sleeping is the most visible and an extreme form of homelessness. It is not just a housing issue. It is a public health crisis, a moral failure, and a stark reminder of the inequality we must confront.

For those sleeping rough every day is a battle for survival. Hygiene becomes a near impossible task without access to washing facilities or clean clothes. Simple tasks like brushing teeth or washing hands, things most of us take for granted, are luxuries beyond reach. This leads to deteriorating physical and mental health, infectious diseases and further isolation from society. Sleeping rough strips people of their safety. Vulnerable individuals are often subjected to violence, theft, harassment and exploitation. This level of exposure and fear takes an immense psychological toll, often deepening trauma and worsening mental health. It also makes recovery even harder. How can anyone rebuild their life under constant threat? Rough sleepers are exposed to rain, snow and freezing temperatures without adequate insulation, heat or protection. In these conditions, sleeping rough is not merely uncomfortable, it can be life threatening. No one should die through a lack of a roof over their head.

We need real prevention. We need a national strategy that moves beyond short-term fixes and Band-Aid solutions. Without a stable address, access to showers or even a place to rest, how can someone hold down a job? The system not only neglects them, but it also actively locks them out of the very opportunities that could lift them out of homelessness.

Rough sleeping is not merely a consequence of homelessness but a manifestation of deeper societal issues. Factors such as a lack of affordable housing, unemployment, financial instability and family breakdown contribute significantly to this crisis. Moreover, many individuals on the streets grapple with unrelated mental health issues, substance abuse and social isolation, which is often exacerbated by life on the streets, creating a vicious cycle.

We need to listen to those with lived experience because they know what works and what doesn't. The decisions that shape their reality are made in offices far removed from the streets by people who have may never have had a real conversation with someone who has lost everything. Policies are drawn up with good intentions - maybe - but without a grounded understanding of what it truly means to be homeless in Britain today. We cannot keep making decisions from the top down without listening to those at the bottom, looking up for help. We need to invest in permanent supported housing. We need to improve access to mental health and addiction services. We need to ensure that no one is discharged from hospital, prison or foster care into homelessness. We need to ensure more is done to help victims of domestic violence by ensuring that by fleeing their homes they are not faced with homelessness. With sustained investment, a focus on prevention and a commitment to collaborative action, we can ensure that everyone has a safe and secure place to call home. Congress, please support this motion. *(Applause)*

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

SHANZIDA FERDOUS (London): Good morning Congress and President. I am a proud GMB London Region member. Yes, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker (*Applause*) Thank you so much all, Congress, but I need your support for the motion 267, Rough Sleeping. I am seconding this motion.

Homelessness in the UK has increased due to various reasons such as higher private rents and also the cost-of-living crisis hitting hard and the lack of affordable social housing. Being evicted from privately rented homes, especially through no-fault evictions, play a big role in these issues. The longer someone experiences rough sleeping, the more likely it is they will develop physical and mental health needs and substance misuse issues.

We have witnessed 14 years of Tory austerity. They did not build enough affordable homes for people. That is why we have been seeing many rough sleepers on the streets. Every single person has a right to a home and the Tories never made a policy for no-fault eviction to protect tenant rights, because many councils have faced significant financial crises to protect and to accommodate their people in temporary accommodation.

Therefore, I ask our Labour Government to continue to invest more in the housing sector by building more affordable homes in keeping with their manifesto promises, and prevent rough sleepers, which have grown up over 14 years. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you colleague. Mover of 268?

## **COUNCIL TAX - A FAIRER SYSTEM FOR ALL**

### **MOTION 268**

#### **268. COUNCIL TAX- A FAIRER SYSTEM FOR ALL**

*This Congress, every year the Council Tax rises to extortionate levels, beyond the reach of the pockets of most households and working families. Some of the criteria used to assess and justify the charges of the property, for banding are as follows: size, layout, character, location and valuation. If you adapt part of the property so that a relative is able to live with you and it has a separate entrance but still the same property, the Government is saying that it has to have its own banding, so you now end up with two council tax bills for the same property. Residential properties are built on a plot of land, which comes with the price of the property at no extra cost. Therefore, one council tax bill should cover you for any changes or adaptation to the property, so we thought. The Cost of living rises every year without fail and so do all household utility bills including council tax. If you are already paying council tax for the property, why should you be made to pay separately for any changes made to the same property, which means you will be paying twice, plus the annual increase. This is just one example of the exploitation and unfair policy of the Government. GMB must seek to pursue the government for a new or fairer system that will work for all. Please support this motion*

#### **A37 AVIATION SECURITY BRANCH**

#### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

STEVEN VOLLER (London): President, Congress, moving Motion 268, Council

Tax - a Fairer System for All. Every year council tax rises to extortionate levels beyond the reach of the pockets of most households and working families. Some of the criteria used to assess and justify the changes of the property for the banding are as follows: size, layout, character, location and value. If you adapt part of your property so that a relative can live with you, if it has a separate entrance but is still the same property, the Government says that it must have its own banding, so you end up paying two council bills for the same property. Residents' properties are built on one plot of land, which comes with the price of the property at no extra cost. Therefore, one council tax bill should cover for any change or adaptations to the property, so we thought. The cost of living rises every year without fail, and so do all household utility bills, including council tax. If you are already paying council tax for the property, why should you be made to pay separate for any changes made to the same property, which means you will pay twice. Plus, the annual increase is just an example of exploitation in an unfair policy from the Government. The GMB must seek to pursue the Government for a new fairer system that will work for all. Please support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

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

BRENDAN DUFFIELD (London): Supporting Motion 268, Council Tax - a Fairer System for All. President, fellow delegates, I support Motion 268 because it highlights a real injustice affecting working families. Picture this: you live in England and your elderly mum needs care, so you convert a part of the house into a separate flat. Suddenly the council sends you two separate bills. You can apply for a 50% discount if mum is independent or full exemption if she is dependent and meets certain criteria. Switch to Wales, there is a complete exemption even if mum is dependent and over 65,

severely mentally impaired or substantially disabled. Switch to Scotland and Northern Ireland, no annex discount at all. This is a penalty on families doing the right thing. We have a country lottery where English families might get help, Welsh families might not be charged at all and Scots and Irish families get charged twice. This hits the working family hardest. Ordinary families who extend their homes to care for parents should not be hammered with double taxation. It should be one property, one family, one fair bill, no complications. I urge you to support this motion because fairness should not depend on which side of the border you live. Support this motion.

*(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Brendan. Secunder? Secunder of 268? You have done it. You have seconded? Apologies for that. Mover of 269?

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR THE 21st CENTURY**

### **MOTION 269**

#### **269. AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

This Congress acknowledges that 20 years ago this year, our CEC presented a special report on Housing to GMB Congress and recognises that GMB has existing policy on housing but that the fifteen years of cuts under the previous governments have led to inflated house prices that are outside the reach of many low paid workers.

With the election of a Labour government since our last congress, this motion calls on the GMB to commit to lobby and campaign politically for affordable housing for our members. Affordable housing for working people can provides protection against the risks of unsafe housing which brings multiple health and issues.



Town centre regeneration or masterplans have seen the reintroduction of housing in former retail and brown field sites, such as in Wigan and Bolton and we need to ensure that this becomes the norm, with affordable property at the heart

## **B23 BOLTON LOCAL GOVERNMENT BRANCH**

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

(Carried)

SUSAN PAXFORD (North West & Irish): Good morning Vice President, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. Moving Motion 269, Affordable Housing for the 21st Century. Congress, when you become a parent, you begin to plan your children's lives - school, college, university and moving into their own homes. Fast forward and they get to the point in their lives where everything we wanted for our children has happened, except for one thing. Our young people are stuck - and they are stuck at home with us, and I am a mum.

Since 2021, the number of first-time buyers aged 25 to 34 has reduced by 12%. Some 39% of first-time buyers are under 20 and in addition to this the average age for first-time buyers has increased from 32 to 34 years old.

So, what are some of the factors for these changes? Reasons include but are not limited to, rising mortgage rates, increasing house prices, not being able to afford properties within their own towns, high cost of living pressures, the lack of houses being able to be purchased due to people extending their properties so they do not move on, rather than moving into a bigger property because they cannot afford it, the selling off of local

council housing leaving fewer properties to rent and having to pay higher rents through the private sector.

As a public sector worker, I know we feel the brunt of being unable to buy houses due to our wages. A disappointing 3.2% pay increase this year will not cover the level of inflation, never mind save for house deposit. We are worth more. Due to these factors, adults under 30 are remaining in the family home. This can cause further pressures on families, causing arguments and stress, with too many adults within the property. Parents will see their children as children, they will do all the cooking, cleaning and paying the bills. Young adults want their independence. They become frustrated by the situation of being forced into living under someone else's roof and rules. They are working adult jobs but are still unable to afford to buy a property. This is affecting their dignity, self-respect and mental health. Young working adults, public sector workers, key workers, et cetera, should be able to afford a mortgage and they should have their own homes. It is a basic. Young adults should have the freedom to become independent by living alone or with their partners, working to a future away from their parents.

Furthermore, we need our union to fight for the following. Lobby the Government to deliver on their manifesto promises, especially the building of 1.5 million new homes. Maintain first-time buyers' ISAs, nil deposits or a maximum 5% deposit for first-time buyers and local government workers, key workers, NHS workers. Stopping the enforcing through local government and planning the building of four and five-bedroomed homes and looking to build more two/three-bedroomed starter homes for young people and again public sector workers, NHS workers. A ban on landlords being able to buy affordable homes and renting them at exorbitant rents. These homes are

purely to be built and bought and lived in as starter homes and not for profit. Until these issues are resolved our young workers - local government, key workers, NHS workers- remain stuck in a high -rent culture unable to save for a deposit, or they are stuck living with their parents. Our young people, families, public sector workers - my daughter - should be able to aim high, should have a home and should be able to achieve their dreams. Thank you. I move the motion. (*Applause*)

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

ANDREW TRICKETT (North West & Irish): Morning Congress, seconding Motion 269. Congress, this motion is not just about buildings but rather about dignity, stability and justice. We are living in an era where economic growth too often leaves behind those most in need. Families are being priced out of their own neighbourhoods. Young people are locked out of home ownership and for too many the simple human right to shelter has become a daily struggle. Affordable housing is not a fringe issue. It is central to economic opportunity, public health and social cohesion, and the solutions must be 21st century solutions, smart, sustainable, inclusive and scalable. That means re-thinking zoning, investing in social housing, incentivising innovation in construction, ensuring that housing is not just available but accessible and equitable. We must build not only more affordable homes but better futures. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

## **SUPPORT FOR THE LESNES OCCUPATION AND CAMPAIGN CONTEXT**

### **MOTION 270**

#### **270. SUPPORT FOR THE LESNES OCCUPATION AND CAMPAIGN CONTEXT**

We, recognise the importance of supporting the residents of the Lesnes Estate in their campaign against Peabody's misleading "regeneration" plans. Peabody has misled residents with promises of regeneration without transparent communication about demolition plans. We believe that existing homes should be refurbished, not destroyed, ensuring that long-term residents are not displaced. Requests: We call upon local trade unions, community groups, and allies to:

1. Show Solidarity: Support the residents' campaign by sharing the petition and promoting any events related to the occupation through your networks, including on social media platforms.
2. Financial Support: Contribute donations to fund the printing of leaflets and materials to further the campaign and petition drive.
3. Political Advocacy: Urge local MP Abena Opong-Asare to write to Angela Rayner, requesting her intervention to summon John Lewis into Parliament to address the concerns around the Ballot consultation process and the ongoing lack of maintenance on the estate. By passing this motion, we commit to standing in solidarity with the residents of Lesnes Estate in their fight for housing justice and transparency.

## **K19 SOUTH LONDON GENERAL BRANCH**

### **SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

GRAHAM WILLIAMS: Good morning, President, Vice President, Congress, dyslexia since 1995. First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you. I am here today to talk about Motion 270 - Support for the Lesnes (State) Occupation. This motion calls on Congress to show their support for residents of the South London Housing Association who rightly disagree with the word "regeneration", which they believe is misleading. Regeneration here refers to the demolition of hundreds of social housing homes, no freehold tenancies, no assured tenancies and the relocation of the

permanent traveller community. Housing association figures released show of 2,000 new homes, less than 3% (60 homes) will be for social housing. The remaining will be either for part/buy part rent or for the luxury housing market. Does this sounds like regeneration or does is sound like gentrification? Residents of the Lesnes Estate protested to the Tory council back in April this year, with demands for support for their campaign against the housing association's plan to demolish the remaining homes in their community after residents campaigned, seized the opportunity and took occupation of one of the empty homes.

The campaign demands are simple. The immediate opening of the boarded-up homes. Hundreds of social housing properties are boarded up while the Tory council have thousands of people on waiting lists for emergency housing. Many of these homes have been empty since before 2020. For the remainder of the regeneration area seize large areas of the regeneration by the estate, boarded off, containing either a mass amount of rubble, concrete or vast empty spaces. These were former working-class homes for generations now flattened to the ground. Much of the land has not been worked on for over five years and could have easily temporarily housed many of those thousands on the social housing list. Lesnes residents argue that the housing association should either refurbish the estate or the council should step in and do it themselves. Save Lesnes from demolition. The housing association is allocating new homes so those residents of the 3% waiting list are now being housed in the 1960s accommodation. Since the takeover the South London Housing Association is charging those new tenants living in the 1960s properties the full market value. The current housing association tenants on the remainder of the estate are currently paying between £500 and £600 per month as they are on low market wages. They are being informed that their rents will be going

up in due time to between £1,200 and £1,600 per month. New renters are being charged this rent now. That is being charged on housing benefit. That charge therefore is being charged to taxpayers - you and I.

This fight is not unique to this one housing association. Lesnes campaign calls for your support sharing the campaigns on your

social media ---

THE CO-CHAIR: Can you wind up now please, Graham?

GRAHAM WILLIAMS: -- Put housing association legislation protections back on the list. Thank you for supporting this motion. (*Applause*)

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

ASHLEA WOODWARD (Southern): President, Vice-President, ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests. I am seconding Motion 217. First-time speaker, first-time delegate. (*Applause*)

We stand with the brave residents of Lesnes Estate, individuals who have spent their days building their lives, contributing to their community and calling this place home. They are not simply fighting for walls and roofs. They are fighting for dignity, security and a right to remain in the spaces they have cherished. It is deeply troubling that the housing association entrusted with providing homes is now threatening to uproot

people, many of whom are retirees who have worked tirelessly their entire lives only to face the possibility of displacement in their later years. Their struggle is not just about housing. It is about the fundamental right to belong. The Tory council has greenlit the planners and disregarded the voices of those who wish to stay. Residents were led to believe their homes were being refurbished and not demolished. They were promised a fair deal, yet the compensation offered makes securing another home in London impossible. This is not regeneration. It is a forced removal and it must be challenged. The campaigners are simply asking for a real conversation with Peabody's executive leadership, the opportunity to discuss alternatives like refurbishing empty homes instead of tearing them down. How can a plan be called progress when it disregards the people it affects the most? The occupation is a symbol of resistance.

Residents also argue that the so-called regeneration plans are a veiled attempt at social cleansing, targeting mostly the West African community that live on the Lesnes Estate. The pensioners who have held their ground for six days occupying an empty property must remind us all that injustice is worth fighting for. Their defiance echoes the truth. Homes are not commodities. Communities are not bargaining chips. We call on Peabody, we call on Bexley Council and we call on Mayor Sadiq Khan: you must listen to these residents, acknowledge their right to stay and offer real solutions. If regeneration is truly for the people then let the people have their say in how it unfolds. Lesnes Estate does not belong to developers or investors. It belongs to its residents, past, present and future. Let's stand together, let's amplify their voices and let's ensure that any human being should not be cast aside for the sake of profit. Congress, I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Ashlea. Anyone wish to speak in opposition? If not, can I call on Ian Clarke to give the CEC qualifications.

IAN CLARKE (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC to outline the stance on Motions 268 and 270.

On Motion 269, Council Tax a Fairer System for All from London Region, the CEC shares the motion's fundamental goal: council tax must be modernised so it can stop hitting the poorest households hardest while starving local authorities of stable revenue. Congress will recall that our 2019 Special Report on Local Government and Austerity set out exactly that ambition: a fair, progressive, redistributive framework for local funding. Motion 268 sits squarely within that policy. Our qualification is a simple one of leverage. Central government alone can legislate systematic reform. Our direct lobbying power in Westminster on this issue will always be limited. The GMB can most effectively improve members' living standards today by winning better pay and conditions for the lowest-paid staff inside local government and beyond. We therefore urge Congress to support Motion 268 with this practical qualification.

Turning now to Motion 270, Support for the Lesnes Occupation and Campaign Context by Southern Region. The campaign in Lesnes shines a light on a national problem, ageing housing estates allowed to decay until demolition appears inevitable. GMB backs the residents' fight for safe, well-maintained homes. Our qualification concerns resources. Whether to donate funds or to amplify campaigning on social media rightly rests with the individual branches and regions. They know their budgets and local



priorities best. The CEC therefore supports the motion while affirming that any financial or promotional contributions remain at branch and regional discretion.

In summary Congress, the CEC recommends that both Motions 268 and 270 will be carried with the stated qualifications. Should these qualifications not be accepted we would ask Congress to oppose. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Congress, I am now going to suspend business on those motions because I have been told that our political speaker is here, and she is on a tight schedule. So let me introduce her. When we met in Bournemouth last year, it was during the general election campaign. Then, on 4th of July, the UK voted for change. Finally, after 14 long years, we saw the back of the dreadful Tories and elected a Labour Government.

This is the first GMB Congress held under a Labour Government since 2009. When we gathered in Blackpool we heard from the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown. I am delighted to say that in 2025 we are now joined by another senior Government Minister. Just as important to us, she is also a long-standing GMB member. Congress, please join me in joining Rachel Reeves MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, to address Congress. (*Applause*) (*Pause*) She is coming, I promise you.

Let me introduce her again. Congress please join me in joining Rachel Reeves MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, to address Congress. (*Applause*)

RACHEL REEVES (Chancellor of the Exchequer): Thank you for that welcome.

Thank you, Barbara, and thank you, Gary, for the leadership that you show to our union and to our movement. It is great to be back in Brighton and it is a privilege to be back at the GMB Congress as a proud member of the GMB union.

Congress, I especially want to thank you all here for the tireless work that the GMB representatives do in so many workplaces. I know how difficult the last few years have been for many members, from the pandemic through the cost-of-living crisis. Working people paid the price for the Conservatives' failure, for their austerity, for their undermining of our public services and for Liz Truss's fantasy economics. Never let anyone forget what the Conservatives did to our country. Never trust them again with our health service, with our schools or with British industry. (*Applause*) I know that your members have had to pick up the pieces, and so has this Labour Government.

But we are making different choices, to put more money in the pockets of working people. We are making Labour choices. And the choice in October to give a pay rise to 3 million workers of up to £1,400 a year by raising the National Living Wage, a National Minimum Wage created by Labour and raised by Labour, too. Together we are amending the remit of the Low Pay Commission, so that for the first time the Living Wage will take into account the cost of living.

The choice of our Employment Rights Bill, the biggest upgrade to workers' rights in a generation, a key part of our plan to make work pay for working people. (*Applause*) Banning exploitative zero-hour contract and unscrupulous fire and re-hire practices, strengthening sick pay and bringing the outdated, unfair, conflictual industrial relations

framework that we inherited from the Conservatives into the 21st century. That is the choice that this Government is making.

And another choice, one that I know was very close to the heart of our former President, the late great Mary Turner, our decision announced last week to extend free school meals to an extra half a million kids to save working families up to £500 and lift 100,000 children out of poverty. That is the difference a Labour Government makes. That is a testament to Mary's campaigning. *(Applause)*

I know that there is another political party which will tell your members that they have working people's interests at heart. So, remember this, and tell it to the people that you work with, while Labour is levelling up workers' rights, Nigel Farage and Reform opposed the Employment Rights Bill. While Labour is investing in our National Health Service, Nigel Farage and Reform want to privatise our National Health Service. And while Labour is investing in security for our nation and for our allies, Nigel Farage and Reform are not on the side of the heroic people of Ukraine. They are on Russia's side instead. That is Reform: tough on workers, tough on patients but soft on Putin. *(Applause)*

Congress, we are making progress. It is just one quarter but the most recent numbers show Britain to be the fastest-growing economy in the G7. Four cuts to interest rates since August last year, saving working families taking out a new mortgage hundreds of pounds every year. And real wages have risen more in the first 10 months of this Labour Government than they did in the first 10 years of the last Conservative Government. I know that not enough working people are yet feeling that progress, and that is what

tomorrow's spending review is all about - making working people better off, investing in our security, investing in our health, investing in our economy. This Government is going for growth because that is the best way to create jobs, boost wages, lift people out of poverty and sustainably fund our schools and our hospital and all the public services we rely on.

And we are doing things differently, because, unlike the Tories, I don't think that the only good thing the government can do is get out of the way. I believe in an active government working alongside industry and trade unions to drive our shared prosperity. That why we will be publishing our Modern Industrial Strategy later this month, an industrial strategy based on genuine partnership between government, industry and trade unions. And that is why tomorrow we will be allocating an extra £113 billion of investment, maintaining public investment at its highest sustained level since the 1970s.

And unlike the Tories, I know we cannot build a strong economy on the contribution of just a few people, a few industries or a few parts of our country. We are going for growth, growth in every part of our country with the benefits felt in every part of our country. So, we are investing right across Britain. That is why I was pleased to announce last week the biggest ever investment £15.7 billion in transport links within our city regions and their surrounding towns, better linking up Liverpool with St Helens, Manchester with Rochdale, Sheffield with Rotherham, Leeds with Bradford and Birmingham with Solihull. And tomorrow there will more. We promised investment in every part of Britain, and that is what I will deliver tomorrow.

And Congress, I know the contribution your members make to the defence of our

country: in aerospace, in defence and in shipbuilding. And I know that the first duty of any Government is to keep our citizens safe. Today we live in a dangerous world, where new threats demand a new response. So, we are investing in the defence of our country and in the strength of our defence industry, in the good union jobs that come with it and in the communities that rely on them. Bringing defence spending up to 2.6% of GDP within two years. Investing in a battle-ready nation supported by home-grown technologies. And investing in British jobs and British industry, including the investments that we have set out today in our nuclear defence, in Plymouth and in Derby, in Barrow and in the Clyde. If you want a taste of what that can mean for working-class communities, look at our plan for Barrow. Good proud work for people in Barrow building Britain's nuclear submarines. Providing training and opportunities for our young people. Decent pay that flows back into the local economy and high street. And a partnership between the Labour council, this Labour Government and BAe Systems to invest in the regeneration of the town centre. Pride in your work. Pride in your community. A strong Britain with strong defences resting on the talent, the effort and the prosperity of working people.

But security does not stop with our armed forces. It is about making sure that in a world where energy prices were sent spiralling by events in another part of the world, where fragile international supply chains can be easily disrupted, that we must be a more self-sufficient nation. And we have been reminded so forcefully in recent years, energy security is national security. I know Gary and the GMB have always understood that, and so because it is the right choice for jobs and for the cost of living, because it is the right choice for economic growth, and because it is the right choice for energy security,

I can announce today to you that this Labour Government is investing in the biggest roll-out of nuclear power in a generation. *(Applause)*

This Government is giving our full backing to the Sizewell C nuclear plant, providing £14.2 billion of additional funding for the first directly state-funded nuclear power station since 1988, producing the energy to power 6 million homes, employing 10,000 people, supporting thousands more jobs across the UK, including 1,500 apprenticeships and putting hundreds of millions of pounds into the supply chain.

That is not all, Congress. Because this Government backs British innovation and because the potential for faster, cleaner, cheaper energy is there, we will be backing new small modular reactors, investing in that technology and in the rapid deployment of fusion technology, backing our world-leading fusion plant in Nottinghamshire, providing a route for private sector led advanced nuclear projects to be deployed here in the UK, bringing those jobs to Britain. The International Energy Agency estimates that the small modular reactor market will be worth up to £500 billion by 2050. So, if we want that those jobs and we want that wealth and we want to lead the world, then we must act today, and we are.

To start that means investing £2.5 billion to enable one of the world's first small modular reactor programmes, supporting 3,000 jobs in the East Midlands in the process. A first step towards our ambition for a full fleet of small modular reactors across our country. And I can tell you today that following a two-year competition we have selected the preferred company to partner with Great British Nuclear to develop small

modular reactors. That preferred partner is Rolls Royce, a great British business based in Derby. *(Applause)*

And, Congress, I can tell you now that taken together, tomorrow's spending review sets out over £30 billion of investment in Britain's nuclear-powered future. Friends, this Labour Government is launching a new era of nuclear power here in Britain.

*(Applause)*

And as we build, for transport, for jobs, for energy, that will mean jobs in British supply chains for our young people. Today's announcements are another step towards that great British nuclear ambition, to make sure 70% of its future fleet is made here with home-grown content. We have already taken steps to modernise our approach to public procurement with simpler rules and a focus on growth here at home. And we will look to go even further, to reform and streamline those procurement processes. And because our industrial ambitions rely on the ambitions and the talents of our young people, we will break down the barriers that those young people face in getting the skills and opportunities they want and deserve. And a strong national economy, investing in new nuclear, new transport, new military hardware will mean something else too. New orders for steel - steel made in Britain. *(Applause)*

In April, as a Government we faced a choice to allow British Steel in Scunthorpe to go under or to intervene, in a way that British Governments have been too reluctant to do for far too long. I was not prepared to tolerate a situation in which Britain's steel capacity was fundamentally undermined, in which our infrastructure, our industries, our security would become dependent on imported steel. I was not prepared to see

another working-class community lose the pride, lose the prosperity and the dignity that industry provides. So, this Labour Government intervened - to save British Steel and the thousands of jobs that go with it. *(Applause)*.

And I can tell you today that the package that I have set out will provide more than £420 million of additional funding for Sheffield Forgemasters for the production of nuclear-grade steel for our nuclear ambitions. Thriving steel, thriving defence and thriving energy industries, with Made in Britain a mark of quality around the world. Industries that bring pride, industries that bring good work and wages that flow back on to our high streets and into our communities. Once again things made in Britain, things made to last. *(Applause)*

Congress, I know whose side I am on. I know whose side this Government is on. We promised you a Government in the service of working people: a Government backing Britain's industry, backing Britain's jobs and backing Britain's workers. Consider that: a promise made and a promise kept. Thank you Congress. *(Applause and a standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Rachel, thank you for your speech. We will now move to questions from delegates in the hall. First, we will hear from Ann Weekes from the London Region followed by Lee Burgess from the North West & Irish Region.

ANN WEEKES (London): Chair of Ability, London Region disabled self-organised group. Proposed welfare reforms will push over 3 million households into greater financial hardship, including 800,000 losing access to Personal Independence



Payments, 150,000 losing Carer's Allowance and over 2 million seeing reductions in health-related Universal Credit. This is wrong. Will the Government listen and think again? (*Applause*)

RACHEL REEVES: Thank you for that question. We are in a situation today where despite the number of people in work rising in almost every country in the world since the pandemic, people of working age out of work and economically inactive is increasing in Britain. The last Conservative Government did not do nearly enough to support people, including people with sickness and disability challenges, back into work. That is why we promised in the Spring Statement a few weeks ago to put a billion pounds into supporting people into work. We know that with the right support there are millions of people who would like to work, who can work, and with support would be able to get back into work. So, alongside the changes we are making which will still see the number of people on Personal Independent Payments increase during this Parliament, will still need the amount of money spent on sickness and disability benefits increase in Parliament, that we will support people as well to get back into work. But the current system that we have today is not sustainable, and I want to ensure that the welfare state is there for future generations. To do that we do need to make sure that everyone who can work is given the support and the dignity that work can provide for so many people. Of course, we will always protect those who cannot work but more needs to be done to fulfil the ambitions of people with disabilities themselves to get back into work and have a career and a vocation that they can be proud of, and contribute to their finances, and also the nation's finances.

THE PRESIDENT: Apologies, it is Keir Wilson from North West & Irish Region.

KEIR WILSON (North West & Irish): The Government's increased investment in defence is very welcome but it must be matched by action to build a skilled workforce that our national security depends on. What guarantees can the Government give that you will prioritise UK-based jobs and apprenticeships, particularly in places like Barrow?

RACHEL REEVES: Thank you for that question and that is exactly what we want to do as a Government. As I said in my speech, as we invest in transport, in defence, in energy, we want to make sure that those jobs are here in Britain and that we are giving opportunities for our young people - and I am going to set out more detail around further education and apprenticeship funding tomorrow - to ensure that young people have those opportunities to get access to those jobs that we are creating. Good jobs that pay decent wages, unionised jobs with rights, and that is what we are going to do. I have set out the industries that we are going to be backing in my speech today to you at the GMB and tomorrow I will be setting out how we are going to use government procurement, apprenticeships and skills to make sure that those jobs go to young people in this country who deserve a chance. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rachel. Next, we will hear from Sharon Yates from the Midlands and Kim Inglis from North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region.

SHARON YATES (Midlands): Hi, Rachel. I am for the Midlands Region and I am a proud working-class woman from the pottery industry. Please, please, listen very carefully to this question because it is very, very important. The UK has become the

highest industry energy prices in Europe. In the Midlands, businesses are closing everywhere and skilled workers are losing their jobs. The Potteries are being smashed. When will the Government take urgent action to bring down the energy costs for the industry and protect jobs in British manufacturing? *(Applause)*

RACHEL REEVES: Sharon, I absolutely get the point that you make, and people in this room will know that is ceramics, it is steel, it is cement, it is agriculture: it is a whole range of sectors where energy prices are making our British businesses uncompetitive with our counterparts around Europe, where energy prices for industry are lower. I will be setting out the spending review tomorrow, but a couple of weeks after that myself and Jonny Reynolds, the Business Secretary, will be announcing our Industrial Strategy focused on those eight key sectors. We will absolutely come forward with a plan to ensure that our intensive energy industries in the UK, including the pottery industry in Stoke and other parts of the Midlands can be competitive and can succeed in this tough environment. I absolutely understand what you are saying. We are focused on it as a Government, and you will hear more on that later this month *(Applause)*

KIM INGLIS (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): The Employment Rights Bill is a big step forward for workers, but it must be just the beginning. My region is running many equal pay campaigns 50 years after the Equal Pay Act. As the first woman Chancellor, will you finally finish the job started by Barbara Castle and make equal pay a reality? *(Applause)*

RACHEL REEVES: Thank you very much for that question. It is a campaign very

close to my heart. It is now 55 years since Barbara Castle introduced that equal pay legislation and yet the pay gap between men and women is still around 15%. I am not willing to wait decades more before we actually achieve that ambition of Barbara Castle and the people she campaigned alongside, including the Ford workers at Dagenham, until we actually achieve equal pay. I said that in my first speech when I became Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is why we are doing things like the Employment Rights Bill. It is why we are increasing the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage. It is why we are rolling out better, properly funded childcare so that more parents (but it is particularly mums) can balance work and family life. It is why we are rolling out free breakfast clubs at all primary schools so parents (and again it is particularly mums) can work more hours or do a job a little bit further away from their kids' school. It is something that on a personal level means a huge amount to me and I am determined to be the Chancellor that closes that gender pay gap once and for all. Thank you for that question. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Chancellor, thank you. We know what a busy week this is for you and, although there may be so well differences between us, the announcement on Sizewell is so important to our union and our members, and shows what we can achieve together. Thank you so much for taking the time to be with us at Congress today. *(Applause)*

RACHEL REEVES: He has just promised me three nuclear power stations! See you later. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Congress, we will now take the vote for the last four motions. Does

London accept the qualification on Motion 268? (*Agreed*) And does Southern accept the qualification on Motion 270. (*Agreed*) We will go to the vote. The CEC are supporting all these motions. All those in favour of 267, please show. Any against? That is carried. Motion 268, all show. Any against? That is carried. 269 support all show. Any against? That is carried. 270 all show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 267 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 268 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 269 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 270 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Congress, can I ask for movers of Motions 271, 272, 273 and 285 to come to the front please? Can we have the mover of 271 to the rostrum?

## **MANAGING SOCIAL HOUSING**

### **MOTION 271**

#### **271. MANAGING SOCIAL HOUSING**

This Congress believes that it will be in the best interest of our members working and living in social housing if housing was let and building inspected by the relevant local authority. Often Housing Association's pick and choose the tenants they want denying would be tenants to live in areas they would like to. One housing letting system with one set of guidelines would help in this matter. Many Housing Associations and some Councils fall behind with repairs and maintenance, this needs to be closer regulated.

Housing Associations charge higher rents than Councils and one set of pricing would also be beneficial to all.

## **AVON & WESSEX A55 BRANCH**

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

*(Referred)*

JAYSON FORROW (Wales & South West): President, Congress, I am moving Motion 271, Managing Social Housing. Colleagues, every day in every community across our country people struggle to find a decent affordable home. Too many of our members are being let down by a system that is fragmented, unfair and too often unaccountable. The current patchwork of housing associations and local authorities mean that people are denied the chance to live where they want and need to be. Let me be clear: housing is a human right. It is not a privilege to be rationed out by those who pick and choose of who is deserving. Yet that is exactly what happens too often. Housing associations can select tenants in ways the local authorities cannot, creating a postcode lottery of opportunity and support. This is wrong and must change. One letting system with one set of clear fair guidelines would bring much needed transparency and fairness. It would ensure that every family and every individual gets a fair shot at a home in their constituency, regardless of who is making the decisions behind closed doors.

It is not just about allocation, maintenance and repairs which are a daily concern for many too. Too often we hear stories of damp, mould and disrepair, with residents waiting months (sometimes years) for essential fixes. It is not just an inconvenience; it is a risk to health and well-being. We need stronger regulation to hold landlords, whether councils or housing associations, to account. And let's talk about rent. Housing associations charge higher rents than councils yet offer little in return. This puts additional pressure on already stretched household budgets. One set pricing

applied fairly and transparently would help ensure that everyone pays a fair rent for a decent home.

In supporting this motion we are standing up for fairness, accountability and the dignity of every person in need of social housing. Let's send out a clear message: Our members deserve better, our communities deserve better. Let's make it happen. I move.

*(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Jayson. Secunder?

JACQUELINE SHORTE (Wales & South West): Good morning, Congress. I am seconding Motion 271. As my colleague previously so powerfully said, the current system is failing many of our members. I want to share with you what this means for real people, for families, for children, for elderly residents who have worked all their lives and now find themselves at the mercy of a system that is stacked against them. Imagine living in a home where the heating does not work, the damp is creeping up the walls and your calls for help go unanswered. We all know what the mismanagement of social housing looks like. We know what happened with Grenfell and we know also what happened with little Awaab Ishak, who died of mould inhalation in his social housing accommodation, despite his parents repeatedly requesting that the association look at that problem. They were told there was no case to answer.

This happens when there is a lack investment - of real investment in these properties. This motion is about putting power back where it belongs with the people in the communities who need it most. Bringing lettings and inspection back under one

authority would mean that control would be greater, transparency easier to understand. It would remove the postcode lottery away from each of the landlords. While we are on it, why is it called social housing? It is housing, isn't it? It should be a basic human right for everybody irrespective of tenure.

We also, as my colleague mentioned, talk about the financial burden, the cost of increasing rents, the cost of living, that is having a disproportionate impact on clients who live in social housing. Social housing - housing - must be more than just a safety net. I second this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Jacqueline. Mover of 272

## **FINANCING SOCIAL HOUSING**

### **MOTION 272**

#### **272. FINANCING SOCIAL HOUSING**

This Congress requests that the General Secretary and President talk to the Government about the following: - Public service pensions funds should be allowed/encouraged to loan money to Local Authorities, at a mutually favourable rate, to build social housing, council housing. This will help reduce the housing waiting list to the benefit of members and more over provide jobs in the construction industry. It is better for these Pension Funds to invest in local initiatives to the benefit of the members whose money they are responsible for.

### **AVON & WESSEX A55 BRANCH**

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

*(Referred)*



GEORGIA CHEDZEY (Wales & South West): President, Congress, moving Motion 272. Congress, I am proud to move this motion: a motion rooted in commonsense, fairness and community spirit. At a time when our members and their families face sky-high rents, insecure tenancies and housing waiting lists that stretch into years, we must ask ourselves what are we doing with the power that we already hold. Public service pensions funds, our money and our members' money have been invested far and wide, often into projects with little or no connection to the lives of those who earned those pensions. And yet right here on our doorstep, councils are crying out for funds to build the very thing that communities need most - decent and affordable homes.

This motion asks for something simple: that our union through the General Secretary, President and CEC speak to government and say let's connect the dots. Let public service pension funds be used at a mutually beneficial rate to lend to local authorities to build council and social housing. It is a win/win. It helps reduce housing waiting lists, it creates skilled unionised construction jobs in local communities and it ensures pension investments serve the very people they came from. This is not radical, it is responsible. It is the kind of investment that respects the past, responds to the present and secures the future. Congress, we talk about the dignity of work and the importance of home. This motion brings the two together. Let's give our members homes they can afford and jobs that they can rely on. I move. (*Applause*)

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

SUZANNE WILLIAMS (Wales & South West Region): Colleagues, I am honoured to second this motion and let me say clearly this just makes sense. At the heart of this motion is a simple idea, that pension funds built by public service workers over a lifetime of commitment should be invested in ways that reflect their values and serve their communities. Let's stop pouring money into anonymous global markets when we have a real urgent need here at home. Families desperate for a place to live, councils desperate for the resources to say build and workers desperate for decent, secure jobs. We are not talking charity. We are talking about ethical investment with guaranteed social return. Local authorities get the funds they need. Pension funds get a stable return. Our members get houses and our workers get to build them. This is the sort of initiative that speaks to who we are as a movement - practical, progressive and people focused. Let's give our members a say in where their money goes. Let's use it to rebuild communities, not just balance spreadsheets. Colleagues, please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Suzanne. Mover of 273?

## **STOP FINANCIAL CLEANSING**

### **MOTION 273**

#### **273. STOP FINANCIAL CLEANSING**

This Congress calls upon the CEC to seek agreement from GMB backed politicians and councillors to put a stop to the trend, that the poorest people who live in affluent areas of the country are moved and re-homed around the country like pawns on a chess board just because it is cheaper to house them elsewhere. It is a common practice for a person or family who live in affluent areas to be moved to the midlands or other areas in the country purely because the

houses are cheaper to rent then after a month or so the rent cost is taken on by the local council which puts strain on already stretched resources. These are people who do not have a choice and often are in the poorest paid jobs this needs to stop.

## **W60 WELLINGTON BRANCH**

### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

BYRON COOKE (Midlands): Moving 273, Stop Financial Cleansing. *(Applause)* I apologise because all you can see is the top of my head.

Congress, I'll be honest, when this came up at a branch meeting, we debated what do we call this and the only thing we could think to describe it as is the cleansing of the poorest people by the richest areas in the UK, and it needs to stop.

Let me give you some background on how this works. The local authority main housing duty is a duty to provide temporary accommodation until such a time as the duty is ended either by an offer of settled accommodation or for another specific reason. So, what does that mean in real terms? There is not enough social housing and private rents are astronomical. So, what does an authority in an affluent area do to reduce its costs? It moves the problem elsewhere. The only thing is that the problem is low income/zero income people. We are not talking just single people; we are talking families as well.

Let me give you another example. Mr and Mrs Poor and two children live in an affluent borough in the UK - sorry, London this is down to yourselves - Chelsea. They currently live in temporary accommodation due to a lack of housing. The authority says to them,

“We can’t afford to house you here so here’s a train ticket, we’ve sourced you a house 250 miles away in the Midlands. Off you pop.” Their problem is now someone else’s. Meanwhile in the Midlands Mr Dodgy says, “I can make some money here. Chelsea Council will give me a nice incentive to house people outside of the area. I have a dilapidated property that no one here can rent. I’m on to a winner.” So, Mr Dodgy sets up Okay Lets. I kid you not, this was a real company. This was eventually shut down by the local council due to the state of the properties. Then it was renamed and re-opened by Mr Dodgy’s brother, cousin, pet hamster, thus the circle goes on. So Mr and Mrs Poor and two children get moved to the Midlands, having to start over again, knowing no one, leaving friends, family and in some cases jobs behind them. They need to claim the relevant benefits from the local authority, which puts further strain on some of the poorest councils in the UK. It is not just the rent costs that become a burden to the local authorities but also adds strain to other public resources such as schooling, hospitals, GPs and policing.

Some of the most vulnerable people in this position fall victim to county lines. They see an opportunity and swarm on it, “I’ll pay for you to go and see your friends. Take this package for me. And now you’re my mule.” As well as CSE and anti-social behaviour, it is like an all-you-can-eat buffet for these gangs.

Let me give you a real-life example. We have a member who was a carer in London. She was in the UK on a work visa. This means no recourse to benefits. She was doing okay in her job and kept her head above water. They were moved by the local authority from London. She had to leave her job and again had no recourse to benefits, so had no income and really struggled to get a job. She had a young baby and the move

plunged them both into abject poverty. A person who was previously financially and socially independent now isolated with no means to care for her child. Gang violence - and this one really struck me. A GMB member held in her arms the dying body of a teenager after being shot on an industrial estate where we live ---

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

BYRON COOKE: I call upon the CEC to make it union policy to lobby our union-backed MPs to stop this happening. Thank you. (*Applause*)

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

JACQUELINE BENNETT (Midlands): Good morning President, Vice President, General Secretary, Congress, I am seconding Motion 273, Stop Financial Cleansing. I hope by the end of speaking to you this will solidify what everybody has been talking about in terms of housing. Financial cleansing in the housing sector, the current state, this is some facts I am going to give you. The figures that around 34,418 households were placed out of area last year. Based on responses from 80% of English councils, this was found in a Freedom of Information request, it was found that the incomplete figure suggests a total of 172% above what was officially recorded the previous year. The councils that responded to the FoI admitted placing homeless households more than 200 miles away.

Now for those of you that do not know, I am a housing advice and prevention manager. I cannot go into all of the things that happen with homelessness because it

will take up too much time. Moving families so far away due to the cost of housing is very sad, but here are a few little facts you might need to know and understand.

When the Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher stopped the authorities from building, they gave the right for people to buy their council properties, which is not a problem. However, the local authorities were not able to back fill, so what happened when those houses were being bought? Hence these are the consequences years later that we are facing. We now have a national crisis where there is not enough housing for the people who are in need. The housing registers are full to capacity. People can end up waiting several years to be rehoused. The local authorities have ---

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

JACQUELINE BENNETT: I am just asking you, Congress, please support this motion.  
*(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Jacqueline. Mover of 285.

**CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE ATTENDANCE  
ALLOWANCE  
MOTION 285**

**285. CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE**

This Congress will be aware of much discussion and concern around the removal of the Winter Fuel Allowance (WFA), for those not in receipt of Pension Credit. It is estimated that last year nationally there were around 800,000 pensioners not claiming this benefit. While there has been

some publicity about the Attendance Allowance (AA) , eg, Age UK; the Martin Lewis show and others, this allowance isn't as widely known about and could give significant financial support to retired GMB members/those who are pensioners. It could also help family members currently involved in support and caring responsibilities, and you do not have to have someone caring for you in order to claim but you do need to have a physical disability, a mental disability, or a health condition and you need to be of State Pension age or older The Martin Lewis website estimated that there were 6.41m people over 65 who needed help with daily activities, but only 2.98 m claimed help (2019 figure) It is clear that GMB needs to raise awareness across our membership as the "AA" unlike some other benefits has significant advantages – both financial and in the application process

- Financial : there are 2 levels of award, lower and higher rate . The lower rate is £ 72.65p per week, ( =£3,778 per annum ) and the higher rate is £108.55 per week ( =£5,644.60 per annum The rate goes up in April 2025 to around £110 per week for the higher rate [ref 1].
- If you get the AA it can also help to get other benefits, such as Council Tax reductions
- It is not means tested – your savings or income are not taken into account • It is paid net, every four weeks, and is not taxed
- Help to apply – Age UK have a tool to help you, and any Citizens Advice Bureau can help. [ref 2]
- Flexibility – when an award is made you can use it for help around the house, garden, - anything that you have difficulty or cant do or limited by your condition. You don't have to show how you use it. Just demonstrate that you have had the need 6 months before applying
- Backdated – payments are backdated to when you requested the application form ( by phone or email )
- Long term – is likely that any award will be permanent- unless your condition really improves and help no longer needed. You will be asked every 2 years if you still want the award

- Application process – Unlike other applications its much shorter, only 32 pages, and not all will apply. Apart from your personal details it just asks (tick boxes) , which tasks /functions you have difficulty with – e.g going up and down stairs; getting in a bath etc, personal hygiene; domestic tasks

- Is a medical involved? Not as such but you need to ask your GP practice to send you a “Patient Summary “ (they are required to do this, there’s no fee) and this will list any conditions you have, and medication etc.

- Conditions might be (not exclusive )- Arthritis, Asthma, bad back, Diabetes.and more. It’s HOW your condition LIMITS your daily life As an example, a GMB London Region member (Pensioner) was above the Pension Credit limit, and not entitled to any other benefits (or so they thought!). They already had asthma/mild COPD and developed osteoarthritis in a knee, but not severe enough for a replacement knee. But they had problems with stairs, getting into a bath, and in domestic tasks as well as walking, gardening. An advice worker noticed their difficulty and urged them to apply for the AA. They were awarded the higher rate £ 5,646pa and now life is much easier and there’s less reliance on family members! What can GMB do? We are asking that GMB send communications to members to raise awareness of the AA and adopt this as a general campaign.

We call on Congress to ask the Government to look into how the NHS App might be used to alert patients to the AA allowance. “Do you know that you may qualify for an Attendance Allowance? and the “trigger” points are being of retirement Age (DWP/NHS) and having a diagnosis of one or more conditions by your GP.

Sources:

1. DWP : <https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance>

2.AgeUK:[www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/moneylegal/benefits-entitlements/attendance-allowance/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/moneylegal/benefits-entitlements/attendance-allowance/)



## **E12 EAST DEREHAM BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

JAN SMITH (London): Morning, Congress, President, East Dereham Branch, London Region, moving Motion 285 on Attendance Allowance. Colleagues, delegates, visitors, this motion can affect you all. I am very pleased to propose this important motion to you today and I hope it grabs your attention as well as your attendance here today. This motion is about raising awareness in claiming Attendance Allowance. It is I feel important in its own right regardless of the additional current factors that we are facing like the loss of the Winter Fuel Allowance and other cuts that are looming for those with disabilities. Many we know are put off claiming much-needed and deserved benefits, either through pride or not being aware of such help, or deterred by the complex forms that have to be filled in and so-called helplines.

Colleagues, this particular benefit will be of interest to any retired member or their carers or those soon to retire. I can tell you it is not means tested, it is not taxed, it is per person. It a much shorter application process than claiming Pension Credit. Only 32 pages but not all will apply. Why they have to be so long I do not know. The higher rate and the lower rate has now gone up since this motion was written by our Branch President in his motion factory. Thank you, Harry. The higher rate is now £110.10 per week or £5,725.20 per annum but, colleagues, here are some tips. Get all your information together before you apply. A medical summary from your doctors. There is no charge for this. Write down over a weekly diary task that you have difficulty doing or cannot do as well as you would like. See also the case study which has been

mentioned in this motion. The motion has been written with all the full facts, so if you are not sure, read it and it will give you the guidance.

Nothing is guaranteed so you have got nothing to lose. Go for it: apply. They might turn you down, which they do in a lot of cases, on your first application. You then go through a mandatory appeal. Again, they might turn you down because they are not going to change their minds. But you can go through the full appeal tribunal, which is then completely independent to which you could then apply. So, colleagues, please support this motion. If you feel you have got an illness, even if it is a hidden illness such as asthma, et cetera, go for it. I move. (*Applause*)

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

ALAN LAW (London): Seconding Motion 285. President, Congress, I am very pleased to second this motion. The more I learn about this benefit and the help it could bring to some of our members, the more I needed to get behind it. As our mover has said, many are not aware of the benefits or are put off. GMB can help by raising awareness through the GMB website, mailings to members and through the RMA. Getting such an allowance may help those who are normally family carers so that the benefit can be used to get extra help at home. But there is no requirement to demonstrate that you have a cleaner, gardener, et cetera. When I first learned of the motion, I suggested that the NHS app might be used to alert patients to the allowance, as one example if it is triggered by being retired age and likely to be a more longer-term condition diagnosed.

I support the GMB investigating and researching this aspect further, potentially with GMB MPs, National Health and the Department of Work and Pensions are also relevant, and other charities. I second (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Alan. Does anyone wish to speak against these motions?

JONATHAN GREGSON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I did not actually expect to make my first speech in opposition. (*Applause*) Speaking against Motion 271 about moving social housing to be under local authority control. I agree there needs to be a lot tighter regulation. It is what I do for a living. I deal with housing associations all the time. I deal with local housing within my council. I work for Bradford Council. It is not flexible enough to move it to local government. Housing associations - there are bad ones, there is regulation, there is not enough regulation, but what I deal with are the smaller ones, the flexible ones that do the stuff that the councils cannot. They provide supported housing for elderly people. They provide supported housing for vulnerable people. A lot of them, as we heard from Midlands, deal with temporary accommodation and that sort of thing. Councils are not flexible enough to deal with this. The regulations are not in place, the laws and legislation are not in place to deal with this. Therefore, I will be very quick: I urge you to vote against Motion 271, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Jonathan. I will now call on the CEC speaker Dave Flannagan. Before I do that, would the mover of 271 like the right to reply?

JACQUELINE SHORTE: (*Applause*) Good afternoon, no, it is morning still. Such a busy morning. I hear the colleague's response about local authorities. We did not say local authority, we said one authority. Housing is devolved in Wales. It is a devolved function and right now the Senedd are pondering the Second Reading of the Homelessness Bill. I think far too often social housing (or housing) is overlooked on the agenda. It is pivotal to everything, and yet we allow it to be run by a myriad of organisations, with a myriad of policies. Some are subjective, some are clear and it is always difficult to find that benchmark of where people are at. Some people bid, some people have a numbers waiting list. All we are asking for is a system that is transparent and fair, so our clients, our colleagues, our members understand what they are applying for, what the tenure that they are signing up to is looking like. Our motion goes further to say that while it is a devolved function, we need to benchmark how we are dealing with this resource against our other neighbouring authorities. I urge you, Congress, please support this motion because without it those years of neglect that social housing has endured and been forgotten about will continue. I urge you to benchmark and bring up that safety net. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

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

DAVE FLANNAGAN (CEC): Speaking on behalf of the CEC and responding to the debate to set out our positions on Motions 271, 272, and 273.

On Motion 271, Managing Social Housing, from Wales & South West Region, the CEC fully supports stronger local authority control of housing stock, provided councils also

retain the rental income that makes that control sustainable. Before we can endorse the motion's specific mechanism, however, we need a clearer picture of its knock-on effects for municipal finances and service delivery. For that reason we ask that 271 be referred for detailed assessment. Referral will allow us to model the revenue flows, scrutinise possible funding gaps and ensure that any transfer of stock leaves councils stronger not weaker.

Moving to Motion 272, Financing Social Housing, from Wales & South West Region, Congress will know that pension fund money can support affordable housing projects. Manchester's landmark partnership with the Greater Manchester Pension Fund showed the way after the 2008 crash. Yet every such deal was structured to meet the trustees' overriding fiduciary duty to maximise returns for members. As the motion is currently drafted, that safeguard is unclear and could place trustees in conflict with their legal obligations. We therefore propose referring Motion 272 to examine how housing investment can be scaled up without jeopardising members' pensions. A referral is the responsible route to square social ambition with fiduciary reality and evolving ESG rules.

Finally, on Motion 273, Stop Financial Cleansing, from Midlands Region, the CEC shares the motion's core aim. People should be able to live in the communities that they call home, not be priced out by spiralling rents and house prices. Our qualification is one of framing, not intent. What forces families to move is a chronic lack of supply, decades of underinvestment in council housing, weak regulation and speculative development, rather than a co-ordinated policy of social cleaning. We are therefore

happy to support the motion with this qualification, and we commit to campaigning for large-scale publicly backed housebuilding that tackles the root cause of displacement.

In summary, Congress, the CEC is asking that Motions 271 and 272 be referred for full financial scrutiny. We are also asking you to support Motion 273 with our qualification to address the housing supply crisis head on. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Dave. Does Wales & South West agree for reference on 271? (*Agreed*) Because we have someone in opposition I have to take a vote on it. The CEC are supporting reference back on this. All those in favour, please show. Any against? Does Wales & South West agree to refer 272? (*Agreed*) Motion 273, does Midland accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) All those in favour, please show. Any against? That is carried. Motion 285, London, you support. (*Agreed*) All those in favour, please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 272 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 273 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 285 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Could I have the movers of Motion 101, 102 and 105 to the front, please. While they are coming down, Congress, we are running a bit ahead of schedule, so we will be bringing forward Motions 109 (London) and 115 (Midlands) later this morning. Thank you.

## **SUPPORT FOR “END NOT DEFEND” CAMPAIGN**

### **MOTION 101**

#### **101. SUPPORT THE ‘END NOT DEFEND’ CAMPAIGN**

This Congress agrees that the exposure of sexual harassment suffered by workers across sectors in hospitality and service, entertainment, retail, healthcare and construction and manufacturing in recent times is very troubling. High profile cases in the media at the moment such as McDonald’s, and sadly those reported in our union by former staffers is abhorrent. Sexual harassment continues to be a widespread issue in workplaces, with 2 in 5 (43%) women and 18% of men report having experienced sexual harassment at work. It also disproportionately affects young people, and young women in particular, as well as minoritised ethnicities, and those reporting a disability and insecure workers. These worrying figures demonstrates the urgent need for legislation to protect workers from this toxic behaviour. This Congress should agree today to affiliate to and support the ‘End Not Defend’ campaign by the Workers Policy Project to campaign to bring into legislation a new requirement for reporting cases of sexual harassment and violence similar to reporting accidents in the workplace (RIDDOR) and to lobby the government to create and resource a new, cross-cooperation panel to overview sexual harassment in the workplace between TUC, EHRC and HSE.

This Congress calls for the GMB to support the campaign for:

- i. a Specialist Sexual Harassment Reporting System where workers can anonymously report sexual harassment to trained advisors, ensuring safe and supported disclosure.
- ii. Enhanced Enforcement Powers for when organisations fail to protect their workers or deal with sexual harassment.

- iii. Annual published reporting to bring harassment reporting in line with gender pay gap reporting.
- iv. Increased time limits for sexual harassment grievances in line with criminal complaints.

## **B19 BOLTON BRANCH**

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

*(Carried)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Mover of 101, North West & Irish?

*Motion 101 was **WITHDRAWN**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Can we have mover of 102, please?

ALEXANDER KPITANEC (Midlands): Good morning, Congress. I am the delegate moving 102. Technology has changed how we work. Tablet computers are now used across industries from healthcare to education, retail to logistics, but while they offer convenience, they also create serious ergonomic risks that the current workplace regulations ignore. The 1992 Display Screen Equipment Regulations were designed for desk-top computers. These regulations were updated in 2002 and for context, the first iPad was released in 2010. As a result, workers using tablet computers are suffering rising rates of neck and back injuries, digital eye strain and increased sickness while employers knowingly put workers at risk.

According to the Chartered Society of Physical Therapy, work-related neck and back pain has increased by 30% in the last five years, with tablet computers being a key factor. Unlike desktop monitors, tablets are often used in poor postures, on laps, on



low surfaces, or in my case in the back of an ambulance. This is causing excessive strain on our necks and backs.

The HSE reports that musculoskeletal disorders caused over 7 million lost working days last year, a figure set to rise if we do not act. The *British Journal of Occupational Health* stated that tablet users experience 40% more digital eye strain than desktop computers. Unlike traditional screens, tablets are used at a closer distance, increasing exposure to blue light, causing blurred vision and dry eyes and headaches.

Employers already have a legal duty to protect workers under the Health and Safety at Work Act. This includes protecting workers from excessive risks of screen use. This cannot continue. Employers must be held accountable for providing proper eye care protection, safe working spaces for tablet computer users, just as they would do for any other workplace hazard. The DSE Regulations do not address tablet portability. Unlike desktops, tablet computers encourage poor posture, as they are used in very unsupported positions. The regulations focus on keyboards and mice, ignoring any increased risk from repetitive strain from touchscreen use. The regulations pre-date modern high-intensity screens, failing to address blue light exposure and close-range viewing risks. We cannot afford to wait another decade or two for change.

This Congress should push for action and an overhaul to the DSE regulations to ensure tablet-specific protections, hold employers accountable for ergonomic training and equipment including tablet stands, external keyboards and posture guidance, and the expansion of vision care protections, ensuring free eye tests for tablet users. In

conclusion, if technology is advancing, our protections must advance too. If employers will not act, we should. I move. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Alexander. Secunder? Colleagues, I have had a request to ask you if you can be a little quieter while they are at the rostrum speaking, thank you. *(Applause)*

ASHTON GREEN (Midlands): *(Applause)* Today I stand to second Motion 102. As an NHS flow co-ordinator, I spend 12 hours a day in front of a screens navigating systems that are essential to patient care. While technology supports our work, prolonged screen exposure affects our health and well-being in many ways. Recent developments such as the use of iPads within our ambulance services, hot-desking and remote and hybrid working are not currently covered by UK law fully.

The 1992 Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations are outdated and do not reflect today's technology or our understanding of its impact. Despite these regulations, many workers continue to experience discomfort, fatigue and mental strain from excessive screen time. We urgently need updated standards to address the new technologies and ergonomic practices. It is time for Keir Starmer and the Labour Government to wake up from Planet Zog, come down to the real world and work alongside the Health & Safety Executive and take decisive action for the benefit of all NHS and ambulance colleagues, alongside those of the wider sector.

Supporting this motion will create safer, healthier working practices in the environment of today's digital world. Colleagues, support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Ashton. Mover of 105?

**RISK ASSESSMENTS AT WORK - A LIVE TOOL FOR HEALTH & SAFETY**  
**MOTION 105**

**105. RISK ASSESSMENTS AT WORK- A LIVE TOOL FOR HEALTH & SAFETY**

Congress notes that the Summer of 2024 saw the UK streets fuelled by race hate violence and islamophobia, with the targeting of hotels/accommodation housing those seeking refuge in the UK through the UK asylum system. The violence by the far right heightened the already hostile environment for all Black Global majority people, particularly in the workplace. Congress notes that it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that the workplace is safe. Legislation around health and safety at work states that employers are responsible for assessing all risks to workers This includes arranging for effective planning, control, and monitoring of preventative and protective measures and consulting employees. Employers have a responsibility to provide a safe working environment, including preventing and mitigating any risks.

This includes acknowledging the risk to mental and psychological health. Under the ILO Convention on violence and harassment at work, which came into force in March 2023, employers' duty of care does not stop at their front door but extends to all work-related activities including travelling to , from or between workplaces. Following the race hate, Islamophobic, anti-migrant violence, many Black Global Majority workers did not feel safe either travelling to and from work and in some instances being in work. Congress is asked to:

1. Ensure that risk assessments at work is a live tool, which should be kept under review and changed accordingly in consultations with workers, through campaigning and raising awareness initiatives.
2. Encourage reps to support Black Global Majority networks/spaces in workplaces.

## **E10 EALING BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

ALISON GENTRY (London): Moving Motion 105. Good morning. We gather today with a shared purpose: to cultivate workplaces where every individual feels safe, respected and empowered to thrive. Our discussions around risk assessments, particularly those informed by the stark realities highlighted in reports such as Race Hate and the Notes in Congress underscore a fundamental truth: the responsibility for workplace safety rests with each and every one of us. Legislation surrounding workplace safety rightly emphasises the employer's duty of care. This includes the responsible processing of information related to our well-being. However, the shadow of conventional violence and harassment which occurs in workplaces and in public spaces across the UK daily reminds us that due diligence cannot stop at the factory floor or the office door. It extends to all work-related activities, including the journeys that bring us together.

Today I also want to speak specifically to the critical need for inclusive risk assessment. Assessments that truly see and account for the diverse experiences within our workplaces. For too long the unique vulnerabilities faced by black and global majority individuals have been overlooked or rendered invisible in standard risk-assessment frameworks. This does not diminish the need for all to be part of these risk assessments, but asks for credence to be given to those who are all too often relegated during such processes to being an afterthought. Think about it: are our current risk assessment tools truly capturing the nuances of racial bias, gender bias, micro aggressions, or the specific

forms of harassment that individuals from marginalised communities may experience? Do they adequately consider the impact of systemic inequalities on the individual's sense of safety and belonging? The answer too often is "No". This is not merely a matter of fairness. It is a matter of effectiveness. A risk assessment that fails to account for the lived realities of all employees provides an incomplete and completely flawed picture of workplace hazards. It leaves significant gaps in our safety protocols and undermines our collective well-being.

Therefore, I propose a shift, a vital evolution in how we approach risk assessments. Our risk assessments must move beyond a singular focus and actively consider the intersecting identities and experiences of our workforce. This means understanding how race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability and other factors can compound vulnerabilities. We need to actively seek out and listen to the experiences of black and global majority employees. Their insights are invaluable in identifying blind spots in our current assessments and developing truly effective solutions. Our risk assessment tools and the training that accompanies them must be culturally sensitive and equipped to address issues of bias and discrimination. The establishment and empowerment of black global majority networks and spaces within our workplaces are crucial. These platforms provide vital peer support, create a sense of belonging and can serve as an invaluable resource for informing more inclusive risk assessments and safety strategies.

Risk assessment is not a static exercise. It is an ongoing process of learning, adaption and improvement. By embracing a more inclusive and equitable approach we can transform this essential tool from a generic check-list into a powerful instrument for

fostering genuine safety and belonging for everybody. Let us commit to building bridges of safety and belonging; bridges that are enough to support the diverse tapestry of our workplaces and ensure that every individual can contribute their talents without fear or prejudice. Let us work together to make our workplaces truly safe, truly inclusive and truly equitable for all. I move. *(Applause)*

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

ANDREW HEWITT (London): Seconding Motion 105. Risk assessments are a vital tool that ensure the health and safety of all workers and must be tailored to individual needs and cover all workers. Risk assessments involve consulting with members to identify potential hazards, evaluating the risks associated with them and implementing measures to mitigate those risks. Our members have first-hand knowledge of potential hazards in their workplaces or travelling to their workplaces. Once we identify hazards, we evaluate the level of risk they pose and implement measures to eliminate or reduce these risks,.

Congress, risk assessment is not a one-time activity. It should be live and needs ongoing monitoring and regular review, to ensure control measures remain effective and that new risks are identified as they arise. This is why we need a live toolkit to implement risk assessments in real-time. In London Region we have produced a comprehensive risk assessment template on our website for our reps to complete. We are going to use these to raise awareness and standardise processes across our workplaces. We are developing training materials, courses and interactive sessions that educate members and reps about the risk-assessment process. This gives us a

mechanism to allow workers to provide constant feedback on the process and a risk assessment should be considered as a working document with time-lines and review dates.

Recently London Region has piloted an IOSH course which I have completed. This is a nationally recognised qualification and gives us the expertise which is over and above most managers. We use this to tackle management, raise awareness and campaign.

Congress, by implementing a live toolkit and dedicating more resources towards health and safety, we empower workers and create a positive safety culture. In line with the New Deal for Working People, let's ensure that health and safety reflects the diversity and ever-changing work environments of our workplaces. Together we can make work safer. Please support Motion 105 (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Andrew. Mover of 106?

## **RAAC CRISIS MOTION 106**

### **106. RAAC CRISIS**

Congress notes that in 2024 a motion was carried which highlighted the problem of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in schools. However, this goes beyond schools and affects other public buildings such as hospitals, council and other public buildings. RAAC was used to paper over some of the issue of Asbestos and seen as a quick cheap fix. However now when work is undertaken to repair RAAC not only in Schools but also Hospitals and other public buildings, the staff, children and the public and others could be at risk due the asbestos being disturbed and fibres being released into the air. Most of us will be aware that if the Asbestos

fibres are released from materials becoming airborne on average there is a 30/40-year latency period between exposure to the fibres and the onset of a disease. It is not all bad news if the Asbestos is kept in good condition but such work as pinning or tacking work to insulation boards or ceiling tiles might cause a problem. RAAC /Asbestos still kills around 5,000 workers each year this is more than people killed on the roads. Around 20 trades people die each week as a result of past exposure this is just not a past problem but also today it can be present today in any building built or refurbished before 2000.

The fibres can and normally take a long time to develop and can cause fatal and serious diseases from Mesothelioma which is a cancer affects lungs lower digestive tract it is almost exclusively related to asbestos and by the time it's diagnosed it's almost always fatal. Asbestosrelated lung cancer is the same as lung cancer they look the same as lung cancer caused by smoking and other causes it is estimated that there is around one lung cancer for every Mesothelioma death. Pleural thickening is generally a problem that happens after heavy asbestos exposure the lining of the lung (pleura) the lining of the lung thickens and swells if it gets worse the lung itself can be squeezed and cause shortness of breath and great discomfort in the chest. We should remember that that people who smoke are also exposed to Asbestos fibres and are at much greater risk of developing lung cancer.

The last Tory Government took no action and blamed others, so we need to act fast to put right these Tory failures. This is why after 14 years of Tory rule , we call on Congress to ensure that the Labour movement does what it can to make ALL public buildings safe for all who live work and visit this location let's get the RAAC issue sorted for all.

Furthermore, HSE Statistics report Mesothelioma deaths but we cannot see if these are caused by asbestos or RAAC. Congress is asked to lobby HSE for greater transparency in these statistics.

**E20 EDMONTON & ENFIELD BRANCH**



## LONDON REGION

*(Carried)*

ALASTAIR BLUNDELL (London): President, Congress, moving Motion 106. It has been discussed at Congress before but it was mainly catered to schools. This I hope is going to go slightly further. Today I would like to address you on the matter and it is of great importance that affects safety, well-being and the future of our nation, I can say our nation because I am a proud Scot. I may live in London but I am from Scotland, as the accent may tell you. *(Applause)* It is a crisis surrounding reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, or RAAC. It was once hailed as an innovative solution for affordable housing infrastructure. However, we now find ourselves grappling with the serious and often dangerous consequences of widespread use of this material in buildings across our great country. Over the past few years, it has become increasingly apparent that RAAC, once viewed like so many things, as a cost-effective alternative to traditional concrete, has a fundamental flaw in its long-term structural integrity, originally used in the construction of schools, hospitals and other public buildings. Due to the lightweight and insulating properties RAAC has been shown to degrade more quickly than anticipated when exposed to the environmental elements and everyday wear and tear. This has led to reports of crumbling roofs, walls, structural weakness in some of our most critical infrastructure.

Recent studies and investigations have uncovered the alarming extent of RAAC failure with some buildings showing early signs of deterioration well before their expected life-span. We cannot ignore the fact that the material may have been used in thousands of public buildings and today is endangering the safety of our citizens and children

across the country. It is crucial to acknowledge the human element in this crisis. Behind every building constructed of RAAC has students in classrooms, patients in hospitals and families in their homes where it should be their castle. These people deserve much better, as well as our elderly and vulnerable citizens. They should not have to live in fear and unsafety while seeking medical care and our families should not have to live in fear that their homes that were meant to secure them, are failing.

We cannot afford to ignore potential disasters looming ahead. I call on our Congress and our Labour Government to resolve these issues and take immediate steps to assess the scope of the RAAC crisis starting with a comprehensive review of all public buildings constructed using this material. I move this motion to Congress. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Alastair. Secunder?

CATHY HOLLAND (London): Seconding Motion 106. Dr. Johan Axel Eriksson along with Professor Henrik Kreüger created RAAC concrete. Even then it was known to have a life expectancy of around 30 years. It was invented in Sweden in the 1920s and patented in 1924. It gained popularity in other parts of the world, including the UK in the 1950s as a cost effective and easily installed alternative to traditional concrete in the mid-1990s. The collapse of RAAC in a roof at a school in Kent highlighted the seriousness of the issue. In 2023 the Government issued a safety alert and guidance to building owners regarding RAAC. Why when it was known to have a lifespan of 30 years was it used in schools and any other buildings, to quite frank? In my Essex schools there have been 62 schools found as containing RAAC. Some schools like in my childhood village of Mistley Norman have had to be completely rebuilt, leaving

school support staff to be sent to other schools out of the area while the school is rebuilt. Because I now live in Wales, I know it also affects a concert venue called St David's, which is an amazing venue. All the staff were made redundant as it has now been closed for a couple of years while they get rid of the RAAC. It is such a shame that our people get made redundant because of somebody's mistake. I second. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Cathy. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition of the motions? If not, can I call on Jacqueline Murphy with the CEC qualification?

JACQUELINE MURPHY (CEC): Speaking on behalf of the CEC and responding to the debate with our stance on Motion 106, the RAAC Crisis, from London Region. The CEC supports the call to extend and accelerate the removal of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete from all public buildings, making them safe for those who live in, work in or visit them. This is entirely in line with the GMB's longstanding health and safety priorities. Our one qualification concerns the motion's second ask to lobby the Health and Safety Executive for statistics linking RAAC to mesothelioma. Current evidence shows that mesothelioma is caused by asbestos exposure. There is no credible research linking RAAC itself to that disease. Pursuing statistics that the Health and Safety Executive does not and cannot collect would divert effort from the urgent task of getting RAAC out of our schools, hospitals and offices. We therefore support the motion with the qualification that our campaigning remains evidence based and focused on the proven risks and aimed at securing safe replacements or remediation of RAAC as quickly as possible.

In summary, the CEC asks that Motion106 be carried with the stated qualification. If these recommendations are not accepted, we will ask Congress to oppose, thank you.

*(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Jacqueline. All those in favour of 102, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 105, please show. Any against? That is carried. Does London accept the qualification on 106? *(Accepted)* All those in favour. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 102 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 105 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 106 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Could we have the movers of 103 and 107 to the front, please?

### **Ballot Papers**

THE CO-CHAIR: Congress, just to inform you all that ballot papers have been distributed to regions and CEC members and ballot boxes have been placed at either side of the hall. As outlined by the Chair of Standing Orders yesterday, if you arrived late this morning and if you are a delegate, please speak to your regional secretary. If you are a CEC member that has arrived late, please speak to the Executive Officer. The President ballot paper is on orange paper and the Vice President on green paper. Both ballot boxes can be used for both votes and you can vote during lunch. The ballot closes at 15.30 and the result will be given at the end of the day. Thank you, colleagues.

THE PRESIDENT: Could we have the mover for 103, please?

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

### **CHANGES TO INDUSTRIAL DISEASE BENEFIT**

#### **MOTION 103**

##### **103. CHANGES TO INDUSTRIAL DISEASE BENEFIT**

This Congress asks for support on the changes to industrial disease benefits issue. This can affect anyone of us as if you suffer from Osteoarthritis of the knee, you can only claim if you have worked down a coal mine or laid carpets. The last coal mine shut down in 2015. Vibration white finger you can't claim for unless you have worked in certain jobs. We call on the GMB to take this to the Government and the Department of Work and Pensions to recognise workplace diseases and remove this outdated policy.

#### **N55 GMB NOTTINGHAM CITY BRANCH**

##### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Lost)*

WAYNE KIDGER (Midlands): President, Congress, N55 Branch, Nottingham City Council, Midlands Region, moving Motion 103 - Changes to Industrial Disease Benefit, outdated policy. Congress, I need your support on this workers' issue. It could affect any one of us. Osteoarthritis of the knee, vibration white finger, carpal tunnel syndrome - you cannot get these work-related diseases according to the DWP unless you have worked in certain jobs. The DWP state that a plasterer only puts plaster on a wall, even

when the HSE notify your workplace to changes risk assessments and occupational health acknowledge the disease is work related. I call on the GMB union nationally to lobby government and the DWP to recognise workplace diseases and remove outdated policy. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Wayne. Secunder? Again, can I ask people to keep the noise down for the speakers.

DAVE WALLIS (Midlands): President, Congress, seconding Motion 103. *(Applause)*  
Congress, there are over 70 prescribed industrial diseases but just because they are prescribed does not mean to say you can get a claim for them. I am told by people who help other people fill in the claim forms that unless you are working in industrial diseases that have been proven in law that the industry has caused that disease therefore, someone working in a coalmine could claim for vibration white finger but somebody working on the roads using a machine very similar to the ones that they use for drilling et cetera down the mines can have their claims turned down as their work has not been proven in law that it causes the disease. As is the same with many other industrial diseases. Therefore, I call upon the GMB National to lobby the Government and the DWP to acknowledge that workplaces diseases can happen in other workplaces. Congress, please support. I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Could I have the mover of 107 which I believe is being moved without the support of the region, so could that speaker make that clear, please?

## **TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SAFETY GLOVES - MANOEUVRING VEHICLES SAFELY MOTION 107**

### **107. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SAFETY GLOVES - MANOEUVRING VEHICLES SAFELY**

This Congress agrees to promote the use of traffic management safety gloves (Stop'N'Go) as visual aids to be used when manoeuvring vehicles. This will include developing guidance for workplace organisers and members to support them in campaigning for the use of these gloves in their workplace. Visual aids such as Stop'N'Go gloves are easily deployed and can be used to improve communication and enhance workplace safety in situations such as assisting to reverse large vehicles. This can reduce the risk of accidents without inconveniencing workers.

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

#### **LONDON REGION**

*(Fell)*

LISA LOVELL (London): President, Congress, first-time delegate, first-time speaker *(Applause)* I am moving Motion 107 without the support of my region - Traffic Management Safety Gloves - Manoeuvring Vehicles Safely. Our refuse workers already wear gloves as part of their daily uniform, gloves that will help them grip, lift and protect their hands from sharp objects and hazardous waste, but those gloves are only doing half the job because every day across our towns and cities refuse workers are not just handling bin bags, they are guiding 10-tonne trucks through tight streets and busy estates. They step into the role of traffic marshal directing drivers back and forth with hand signals that are sometimes unclear or easily missed. We have a solution. It is not the only one, but it is simple: “stop and go” gloves. These gloves can do everything a standard glove does, protect hands, improve grip but with one vital

difference: a red palm and a green back. This means when a worker holds up their palm the driver sees red and stops and when they wave forward the driver sees green and moves. No shouting, no confusion, no climbing in and out of the cab to double check instructions.

Congress, this is not a gimmick. This is about safety, clarity and efficiency. It is about preventing accidents before they happen. How many times have we heard of near misses or worse involving reversing vehicles or unseen workers. In waste collection split second decisions matter. Visual signs matter. And it is not just about refuse collection. These gloves could be used in delivery depots, warehousing, recycling plants, ports, construction sites; any industry where people and vehicles interact in tight spaces.

I note the CEC's concerns but they are not concerns that are shared by our branch activists and reps working in refuse who put this motion forward. We are not asking the GMB to back a particular brand or supplier. We are asking for common sense and for our union to explore and promote trials of these gloves, and, if successful and well received from employers, to consider these gloves as a standard part of PPE. Because if something as simple as colour coded gloves can make a dangerous task safer and more efficient and more professional, why wouldn't we?

Let's be clear, this motion is not supported by our union leadership but I stand here proudly as a first-time delegate and speaker asking you, Congress, to support this motion, not because it is flashy but because it is practical, because it is worker led and it is a solution that could be rolled out tomorrow improving lives the day after. Let's



continue to send a message that we listen to people doing the work. Let's show that our union leads with ideas from the ground up. Please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Lisa. Is there a seconder for that Motion 107. No? That motion will fall but thank you, Lisa, for putting across your point of view. Thank you. Does anybody want to speak in opposition to Motion 103? I will ask CEC speaker Linda Carr-Pollock to come and give the CEC response.

LINDA CARR-POLLOCK (CEC): Speaking on behalf of the CEC responding with our stance on Motion 103 and 107, which has just fallen, as we have heard, both of which we are respectfully asking the regions to withdraw.

On Motion 103, Changes to Industrial Disease Benefit from Midlands Region, the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefits Scheme lists a disease only when robust medical evidence shows it is more than twice as likely to arise from the job as from ordinary life. This so-called prescription test is the cornerstone of the scheme's integrity. It ensures compensation is paid where, on the balance of probabilities, work has actually caused the disease. Removing that safeguard would oblige the state to compensate virtually every illness, including widespread conditions with only tenuous or unproven links to employment. Independent analysis warns such a change could add billions of pounds to the social security bill and just as seriously, erode the credibility of our campaigning for fair evidence-based protection for workers. Therefore, the CEC is seeking the withdrawal of motion 103. We would have been asking for the withdrawal of motion 107. However, with that being fallen we no longer need to ask

for that. Should the region decline, the CEC will invite Congress to oppose. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Before I take the vote, could I ask the movers and seconders of Motions 111, 112, and 114 to come down the front although I think you might already be there. Midlands, do you agree to withdraw Motion 103. (*Not agreed*) That does mean the CEC will be asking you to oppose this motion.

A SPEAKER: Do we get a reply to the CEC?

THE PRESIDENT: There is not a reply to the CEC because you already knew the CEC stance before. That is the rule in the Standing Order. Thank you. So, the CEC are asking you to oppose Motion 103. Can I see all those in favour, please show. All those against? That is lost.

*Motion 103 was **LOST**.*

*Motion 107 **FELL**.*

THE PRESIDENT: We are moving on to motions related to Pensions & Retirement so could I have the mover of Motion 111, please?

## **Employment Policy: Pensions & Retirement**

### **STATE PENSION FOR ALL WORKERS**

## **MOTION 111**

### **111. STATE FUNERALS FOR ALL WORKERS**

This Congress calls upon GMB to support a campaign in pursuance of state pensions for all workers who die prior to their retirement age. As a consequence of one of our members' wives passing away, we have found that there is no support for working families on the death of the breadwinner and all contributions paid in by the said person goes to the government, which leaves a lot of families in the position of either taking out a loan or funding funerals by other means. We believe this happens to thousands of workers every year.

### **S88 STAPLEFORD BRANCH**

#### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

MILES SHORT (Midlands): I am calling for Congress to support this motion for workers who have worked for companies for at least 20/30-odd years. Please can you support this for a state pension and support their families as well. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: That was the shortest moving speech, well done. Could we have a seconder, please. Again, could I just ask as you are moving around your hall to place your ballot papers can you be as quiet as possible please and not make noise for the speaker, thank you.

IAN PREECE (Midlands): Supporting Motion 111, State Pensions for All Workers. President, Congress, I am here today to support this motion; a motion not rooted not only in theory but the harsh lived reality of working families across the country. Every

week, every month, millions of workers pay into a system through tax, through National Insurance, through decades of hard work, we tell them that it is their retirement, their security in later life, but what happens when it does not go to plan, when a worker dies before reaching pension age? The truth is they get nothing, families get nothing, all those years of contributions gone. Back to the government: No support, no return, no justice. We have seen it first hand, a hard-working member dies, their loved ones are left not only grieving but scraping together money for a funeral, selling belongings, taking on debt. This is not just a tragic story. It is the reality for thousands of people. And it is not fair.

Congress, we are a movement built on fairness and dignity and solidarity. We cannot accept this system. This motion is simple. If you pay in, you earned it. If a worker dies before retirement their families should receive the pension they would have had and deserve. It is not charity, it is justice. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

## **FAIR DEAL FOR PENSIONERS**

### **MOTION 112**

#### **112. FAIR DEAL FOR PENSIONERS**

This Congress notes that for many years state pension payments have been falling behind the Living Wage. The difference is forever increasing so much so that the state pension will soon be half the living wage. This causes many retired workers anxiety and financial difficulty. This conference calls upon the GMB to campaign for better parity with the Living Wage.

## **G36 SECURITY BRANCH**

### **SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Referred)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ian, thank you. Mover of Motion 112, please

CLIVE MURTON (Southern): Moving Motion 112, Fair Deal for Pensioners. President, Congress, brothers and sisters, this Congress notes that for many years state pension payments have been falling behind the living wage. The differences are ever increasing, so much so that the state pension will soon be half the living wage. This causes many retired workers anxiety and financial difficulty.

This Congress calls upon the GMB to campaign for better parity with the Living Wage. According to the government website, the average full-time working hours in Britain are 35 hours a week. This means that the Living Wage which is currently £12.21 an hour equates to over £22,000 per annum. The current state pension is £11,993 per annum, a shortfall of over £10,000 a year on the Living Wage. The pensioner who has worked 50 years paying tax and National insurance during their working life is then expected to live on half the wages they were on when they retire. Statistics show that there are 1.9 million pensioners living in poverty and this is increasing every year. It is scandalous that working people, the backbone of the country, are cast aside when they retire and are left financially challenged. Remember, everyone here will retire one day. Do you want to live in poverty or do you want a fair pension? I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Clive. Secunder for Motion 112, please.

RHIAN GRIFFITHS (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I support a Fair Deal for Pensioners, for those who have worked tirelessly, contributed to society and upheld the very foundations of our communities. Their years of dedication deserve to be met with dignity, security and fairness in retirement, yet many pensioners face financial uncertainty, the rising cost of living and inadequate support. After a lifetime of service, they should not be burdened with the fear of making ends meet.

A fair deal means guaranteeing pension increases that reflect inflation, ensuring access to quality healthcare and providing support that enables pensioners to live comfortably and independently. This is not just about policy. It is about respect. It is about recognising that those who built the roads we walk, taught the lessons we learned and strengthened the economy we rely upon deserve more than just words. They deserve action. I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, well done. Can I have the mover of Motion 114, please.

## **PENSIONS & INHERITANCE TAX**

### **MOTION 114**

#### **114. PENSIONS & INHERITANCE TAX**

This Congress believes that following the announcement from the Chancellor that from 6 April 2027 most unused pension funds and death benefits will be included in the value of a person's estate for inheritance tax (IHT) purposes. The proposed changes would mean that Local

Government Pension Scheme death grants would be subject to IHT from April 2027 which will have a detrimental effect on members families moving forward and during a time of potential financial hardship following the death of a loved one. The S30 Branch opposes this proposal and calls on Congress to debate and ultimately stop this legislation from being passed and implemented nationally, ensuring our members pensions are ultimately protected from such penalties. Therefore, it is requested that Congress resolves to support this campaign in protecting its members pension contributions throughout their working lives.

### **S30 THE GMB NORTH Lincs BRANCH**

#### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

MILES SHORT (Midlands): Supporting Motion 114. I am beginning to wonder about this because I have paid tax all my life since I was 15 and paying bloody tax and everything else and now, I am not keen on dying because I might have to pay inheritance tax. This is a disgrace, an absolute disgrace. I have paid tax. Then I have paid tax on my pension. How much more tax am I going to have to pay? And then when I die, I am still going to pay tax. So, can you please support this motion.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Miles. Secunder for Motion 114, please.

IAN PREECE (Midlands): Supporting this motion. President, Congress, let's call it what it is: a tax on grief. From April 2027, the Government want to include unused pension funds and death benefits in inheritance tax. That means death grants from the local government pension scheme will be taxed at the exact moment families are at their

lowest struggling with loss. This is not about fairness. It is about squeezing more money from working people who have spent a lifetime serving their communities. Pensions are not perks. They are a promise. And now the promise is being broken. We must protect our members' dignity, their families and their futures. This is a fight for justice. Let's not let this cruel legislation pass. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ian, thank you. Does anyone want to speak in opposition to any of those motions? No. Then can I ask Mary Hutchinson from the CEC to come to rostrum, please? And can I have movers and seconders of 109 and 115 down the front.

MARY HUTCHISON (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC to outline our stances on Motions 111, 112, and 114.

Let me begin with Motion 111, State Funerals for all Workers, from the Midlands Region. We share the motion's fundamental aim. No family should suffer the indignity of being unable to bury a loved one through lack of funds. The CEC therefore supports the principle of financial help, but with one practical qualification. The motion suggests using a deceased worker's state pension entitlement to cover the funeral costs. In reality, Congress, the pension ceases at death and cannot be drawn upon. What is available is the funeral expenses payment, a means-tested grant that already covers burial or cremation fees, transport, documentation and up to £1,000 for other costs. Our task is to press for that safety net to be better funded and more widely advertised, ensuring grieving families can access it quickly and without stigma. With that qualification, we encourage Congress to support Motion 111.



Turning to Motion 112, Fair Deal for Pensioners from Southern Region. The motion contends that state pension levels are lagging behind a living wage, but provides no data and does not specify whether it references the real living wage set by the Living Wage Foundation or the National Living Wage determined by the Low Pay Commission. Because the state pension is protected by the triple lock, rising by at least 2.5% a year, any claim of falling behind needs close scrutiny. The CEC therefore asks that Motion 112 be referred so we can examine the evidence in full, clarify the wage benchmark and consider how best to protect pensioner incomes.

Finally Motion 114, pensions and inheritance tax from the Midlands Region. We support the motion's call to challenge proposals that would fall the Local Government Pension Scheme Death Grants into the deceased member's taxable estate. However, our backing comes with one qualification. Given average LGPS benefit levels, only a small minority of estates would exceed the £325,000 inheritance tax threshold, and the CEC continues to support progressive taxation of substantial wealth transfers. Our focus therefore is on ensuring that modest-income families are not pulled into inheritance tax liabilities by the inclusion of death grants. With that understanding we support Motion 114.

In summary, Congress, the CEC recommends supports Motions 111 and 114 with the qualifications set out and referring Motion 112 for detailed evidence gathering. Should these recommendations not be accepted, we will invite Congress to oppose. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mary. Does Midlands accept the qualification on Motion 11. *(Agreed)* Does Southern agree to refer Motion 112? *(Agreed)* Does Midland accept the qualification on Motion 114? *(Agreed)* We do not need to take a vote on 112. All those in favour of Motion 111, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 114, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 112 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 111 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 114 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Could I have the more the Motion 109 please to the rostrum.

## **Employment Policy: Pensions & Retirement**

### **EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE PENSION INFORMATION**

#### **MOTION 109**

##### **109. EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE PENSION INFORMATION**

It is vital that employers provide clear and comprehensive information about the potential impact on pensions when an employee's working hours are reduced, or their job is downgraded. Such changes can significantly affect an individual's final pension payout, potentially leading to long-term financial consequences. Employees should be made fully aware of how these adjustments could impact their pension contributions, the accrual of pension benefits, and the eventual retirement income they can expect. Employers have a responsibility to ensure that employees are informed about how reductions in working hours or changes in job roles may alter their pension entitlements, including both employer and employee contributions. Additionally,

employees seeking flexible working arrangements should be made aware of how these changes could influence their pension plans, as altered hours or job functions could reduce their overall pension benefits. By proactively providing this information, employers help employees make informed decisions about their employment and retirement planning. Transparency in this area fosters trust and ensures that workers can adequately prepare for their future, avoiding unexpected financial hardship upon retirement. Therefore, we call for a legal requirement that employers provide timely, detailed information regarding pension implications in the event of reduced hours, job downgrading, or flexible working arrangements.

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

#### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

GEORGE SHARKEY (London): Moving Motion 109 - Employer Responsibility to Provide Pension Information. Imagine working for decades contributing to your pension only to discover at retirement that a change in your working hours 10 years ago dramatically reduces your benefits, and no one told you. This is not a far-fetched scenario. It is a reality for too many employees who make decisions about flexible working, reduced hours or just job changes without knowing the long-term consequences. That is why I stand firmly in support of the motion on employer responsibility to provide pension information. We are not asking employers to predict the future. We are simply asking that they be transparent about what they already know: how employment changes such as reducing hours, accepting a lower-graded role or sticking to a flexible schedule can impact an employee's pension. When an employee moves to part-time work, the impact on their future pension is not always obvious. Contributions both from the employer and employee can decrease, accrued benefits

may grow more slowly, and the final retirement income may be significantly lower. These are not just administrative details - they are life-altering financial realities. It is vital that employees understand these implications before they make a decision and not after. Without clear timely information people can unknowingly make choices that put their retirement security at risk.

Some may argue that it is the employee's responsibility to research their own pensions, but pensions are complicated, they involve calculations most workers are not trained to make. Employers, on the other hand, are in a unique position to clarify these matters. They already manage pension contributions. They have access to the necessary data and they often communicate with pension providers. Offering clear guidance is not an undue burden. It is a basic duty of care. Moreover, we are in an era where flexible working is becoming the norm. That is a good thing but with flexibility must come foresight. If someone chooses to work fewer hours to care for a family member or improve their work/life balance, they deserve to understand how this will affect their retirement income.

Transparency builds trust. When employers are open and proactive about pension information, employees can plan more efficiently. They can weight short-term benefits against long-term impacts, and they can take steps such as making voluntary contributions to mitigate any potential loss. By making a legal requirement for employers to provide detailed pension impact information during changes in work patterns, we are not creating red tape, we are empowering people to make informed decisions about the future.

In closing, financial security at retirement should not depend on whether someone asked the right questions at the right time. It should be supported by clear consistent information from those who hold the facts: the employers. Let us ensure no one who faces a retirement with regret simply because they were not informed. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, George, thank you. Secunder, please? *(Applause)*

TONY CHELERTON (London): Seconding Motion 109 - Employer Responsibility to Provide Pension Information. Congress, as our terms of employment get more complex, understanding the impacts of change gets harder. Employers give us the information we need when we work more flexibly or change the number of hours worked or have our jobs down-graded, but what is not explained is the impact that has on our pensions. This can mean that we are not able to prepare for a decent retirement. This motion calls for this to change and to make it the responsibility of the employer to inform workers of the impact changes to their employment have on their pension. At the moment it is up to the employee to be able to understand how this will affect their pension. This is not fair or right. By making it necessary for the employer to give information about the impact of employment change to pensions, employees will be able to make informed decisions about their employment and retirement planning. Quite often small changes to contracts can have considerable impact over many years to a person's pension. With the correct information, this can be corrected long before the damage is too great to deal with. Employers have the information available to them so this motion is only asking that this is offered proactively rather than leaving it to the employee to find out. Congress, please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. Mover of Motion 115.

## **PHASED RETIREMENT**

### **MOTION 115**

#### **115. PHASED RETIREMENT**

This Congress would like to instruct all the relevant GMB Officials to allow and implement a system of phased retirement in the workplace across the UK. Congress, I urge you to support this motion.

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

##### **MIDLANDS REGION**

*(Carried)*

ROB BROWN (Midlands): President, Congress, Rob Brown from the soon-to-be manufacturing power house of the Midlands Region. *(Applause)* I am speaking on the motion on Phased Retirement. Congress, it's been 40 years on from the 1980s when workers eagerly awaited the mantra of work/life balance, but what does that mean for the modern worker in 2025? In the new age of austerity, work/life balance seems such a pipe dream and for some living on the minimum wage times can be harder than they have ever been. Phased retirement, especially for the over 65s, could free up work spaces and encourage a younger enthusiastic influx into the world of meaningful employment, filling the void created by phased retirees. What we are asking for is for the CEC to look into options of reducing the working week on a graduated system, starting on a four-day, down to eventually a one-day working week, with a guaranteed minimum wage payment, at least for the days off, and guaranteed pension rights. The

days off would include things such as pension advice, how to join local clubs, hobbies, how to access local transport, and m basically utilise what is available if your area to assist life after retirement.

For some retirement is quite scary and daunting. Other people relish it. Some have a plan and some would, sadly, rather stay at work until they drop. What we are also asking for is for the CEC to look into these options with road show information available to all those who are eligible. We know not everybody wants to retire early. However, working to the grave is not really a good alternative. So, if we could adopt phased end-of-working-life options with an advice and support system, our workers' lives could be seriously enhanced.

During lockdown our factory entered into an early retirement deal with our workforce, with some of our workforce turning down this opportunity. Financially they would have been better off. Twenty-seven of those workers opted out of these retirement enhanced packages because most of them said they did not have a plan and they were lacking any idea what they could do in the future. Some workers were scared and said if a phased system had been in operation they would have been armed with the tools for early retirement and would have taken it. A work/life balance is not a pipe dream. We can make it happen together. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rob. Secunder?

SHAUN BARNES (Midlands): President, Congress, I will not be up here too long. I am from the mighty Midlands Region. (*Applause*) I am seconding the motion for

phased retirement. We must support our members who have contributed into society and give them the retirement they deserve. I second this, thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, anybody want to speak in opposition to either of those two motions? No? Can I ask Tracey Beeston for the CEC, please?

TRACEY BEESTON (CEC): Responding on behalf of the CEC on Motion 115. The CEC welcomes the principle behind this motion. Many workers want and increasingly need the option to step down gradually rather than move overnight from full-time employment to full-time retirement. We recognise that phased retirement arrangements already operate successfully in a range of workplaces.

Our qualification concerns pension security where phased retirement policies are negotiated for the first time. Employers must build in safeguards so that a reduction in hours of pensionable pay does not leave members worse off in retirement. That may mean amending scheme rules, topping up contributions or allowing services to be calculated on the member's previous full-time salary. Without such protections the flexibility designed to benefit older workers could erode the pensions they have spent a lifetime earning. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 115 with the essential qualification that phased retirement agreements must be accompanied by clear guarantees that a member's final pension will not be harmed. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tracey. Does Midlands accept the qualification on Motion 115? *(Agreed)* The CEC are supporting Motion 109. All those in favour of



109, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 115 please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 109 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 115 was **CARRIED**.*

### **Announcement**

THE PRESIDENT: Just got an announcement before the close of business today. At 5.30 today our young worker activists are meeting. If you are a member under 31, please go to the Equality Department stand at 5.30 today. Reps who want to support younger workers are also welcome.

Congress, just before we close we will show a short video from the Health Services Workers' Union in Ghana wishing us a great Congress. *(Video shown)*

That was nice, thank you Back here for 2 pm.

*Adjourned for Lunch*

## **TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION**

*Conference reassembled at 2 pm*

### **Call to Order**

THE PRESIDENT: Delegates, could you take your seats please, thank you. Could I please call Congress to order.

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, it is my great pleasure to announce the winner of the Mary MacArthur Award for the GMB Health and Safety Representative of the Year for 2025 is Abigail Young of GMB Midlands Region. *(Applause)*

Please watch a short video for this year's award winner. *(Video shown) (Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I would like just to say a few words about Abi. Abi is a GMB Health and Safety Representative for Swissport at Birmingham Airport. You may well have seen her this week on the campaign stand against abuse of airport workers where she is playing an important role.

Abi only became a Health and Safety Representative role in summer 2024. In a short period, she has more than doubled union membership in her workplace, *(Applause)* -- using health and safety to organise and empower her members and building solidarity. Her campaigning on welfare provision and facilities, and now on violence risks, has improved working conditions and her colleagues now have a safer, more secure environment.

Congress, Abigail is the youngest ever winner of GMB's Health and Safety Representative of the Year Award. *(Applause)* She shows that having determination and the confidence to speak up to management is just as important as knowing the

technical elements when it comes to being a great safety rep. She has made a huge impact in a short time as an activist and is a well-deserved winner of this award.

Well done, Abi, would you like to come up and receive your award. (*A standing ovation*)

ABIGAIL YOUNG (Midlands): I am quite emotional. I could not even tell you how many pages I have ripped out of this book trying to put my words together. I have never spoken in front of this many people before. (*Applause*) First of all, I just want to say a massive thank you to two people who have been absolute rocks throughout my journey so far. The wonderful Nathan Keightley (*Applause*) And she is not with us today but the amazing Sarah James (*Applause*). Your guidance and your steady support and encouragement have meant everything to me, from answering my never-ending calls and questions, to backing my ideas. I genuinely would not be standing here today if it was not for you. So thank you for believing in my journey so far.

Winning this Health and Safety Award means a lot to me, not just professionally but personally. As one of the youngest representatives in the room, I am incredibly proud of what I have managed to achieve in such a short amount of time. It has not always been easy and there has been a lot of learning on the go, but this moment reminds me that age doesn't define ability, and passion and dedication can take you a long way.

Now let's be honest, health and safety does not usually get the spotlight. You don't hear kids say, "When I grow up I want to do risk assessments"! Not all superheroes wear capes. However, I do wear a hi-vis vest with pride.

But here's the thing. When it is done right it saves lives, prevents injuries and makes sure people return home to their families in one piece. (*Applause*) At its heart, it is about caring enough to speak up, to put things right and to build culture where health and safety is not just a check-list, it is a mind-set. This award might have my name on, but it really reflects the shared effort of everyone committed to looking out for each other. To everyone coming up in the field, especially those just starting off, you can make an impact and your voice matters. If you are ever in doubt of yourself, remember, if I can win this award so early on in my journey, so can you. I would like to say a massive thank you again. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Abigail. Could I now have the movers of Motions 160 and 161 to the front and 160 to the rostrum?

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

### **GMB SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF CONFERENCE**

#### **MOTION 160**

##### **160. GMB SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF CONFERENCE**

Congress calls for a GMB to set up a National Conference for School Support Staff out of Term Time. Allowing an increased participation of GMB Members working in schools. London Region held their first conference for school support staff in September 2024 which was well attended as it was on a Saturday. It would be beneficial for GMB to host a National Conference for school support staff and reps to discuss concerns which affect members in schools nationally. This

would also be in line with other unions which support Teaching staff in schools as they have their conferences during the school holidays.

## **L45 LUTON BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

ABEDA UDDIN (London): The first thing I want to say, because I wanted to say this yesterday but couldn't, I am Abeda Uddin from the Luton Branch, and I would like to say thank you GMB for the local gift. Keech Hospice is a very worthy cause and one that is very close to my heart, so thank you. *(Applause)*

Now to the main bit. Congress, President and delegates, I am moving Motion 160 on the School Support Staff Conference. London Region held their first School Staff Conference on 5th September 2024 and it was well attended by school support staff. The campaign issues discussed at the conference were job evaluation, violence in schools, term-time only contracts, and workplace reps, including myself speaking on our experience of being a rep and why we or they chose to be a rep.

Building on the success of the last conference, London Region is hoping to organise further School Support Staff Conferences starting from 2025. In fact, we have two conferences this year, on 6th and 13th September. We also have been holding regular online webinars since the Conference to discuss concerns that reps and school support staff have in the London Region.

Congress, the motion calls on the GMB to build on the success and hold a national

School Support Staff Conference. This is to reaffirm GMB's organising and campaigning strategies nationally through lay member participation. Holding a National Conference for school support staff would show members that we are the trade union for them in the face of attack from the teacher's union the NEU. I move this motion. *(Applause)*

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

SHAISTA NAZIR (London): President, Congress, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Seconding Motion 160. I am the GMB rep for a school in Tower Hamlets. I became a rep last autumn and quickly got involved knowing change was needed in my school. Through our branch network I saw these issues were widespread, with poor job descriptions, failing health and safety, low pay and a declining education sector. Our members and the children we support are suffering. Speaking with other reps helped me understand these problems better, share best practice and realise the power of collective action.

We have started growing the union in our schools, re-engaging members and building strength, but this cannot stop at Tower Hamlets. These issues are national. Connecting with reps from inner cities, towns and rural areas shows we are all in this together. Support staff conferences are a great way to unite members for those in the local authority and especially those in the same academy trust. We stand together to improve our work and children's education.

A national school support staff conference would bring reps across regions together, help us tackle issues, share knowledge and build lasting support networks. I look forward to our London Region conference in September but we must go further. Please support this motion for a stronger, more connected networks of the school reps. Please support this motion for a national school support staff conference. Congress, I second.  
*(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, colleague. Mover of 161?

## **RISK ASSESSMENTS IN SCHOOLS**

### **MOTION 161**

#### **161. RISK ASSESSMENTS IN SCHOOLS**

This Congress recognises that many Head Teachers are failing in their basic Duty of Care to School Support Staff by not carrying out Risk Assessments. Our members are working with pupils with challenging and complex behaviours, unaware of the potential risks they face and without knowing how their Employer is removing, reducing or mitigating these risks. Members in schools are being harmed every day and are expected to deal with pupils that they may not be trained to work with. Congress notes that all employers have a legal responsibility to carry out Risk Assessments and yet in schools we know that they are not being done for even the most obvious of reasons such as lone working, working with SEND pupils and playground duties. We call on Local Authorities to ensure that Schools fulfil their legal responsibility and carry out regular audits and spot checks to monitor these are being completed

### **C11 CAMBRIDGE 2 BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

ABEDA UDDIN (London): So, here I am again! Good afternoon President, Congress and my fellow delegates. I am a first-time delegate and a second-time speaker - just now. *(Applause)* I am speaking on behalf of London Region, moving Motion 161. What I have come to realise is that our school support staff are being failed. Every day across the country thousands of teaching assistants, SEN workers and care staff walk into schools, working with pupils who have challenging and sometimes dangerous behaviours. Some of the school support staff are responsible for medical and physical needs which they are not fully trained and insured for, and yet no one has told them what kinds of risks and liabilities they are facing, or they will be facing. No one has shown them what steps have been taken to protect them. Why? Because too many head teachers are failing in their basic duty of care. They are not carrying out proper meaningful risk assessments.

Let me be clear, this is not a box-ticking exercise. This is not paperwork for the sake of it. This is about real safety. This is about preventing real harm - physical, emotional and psychological - to the people who keep our schools running.

When you fail to assess you are saying to your staff your safety does not matter, and we cannot let that message continue. We demand mandatory risk assessment in every school, full transparency with every staff member, real action - not just talk - to remove or reduce the dangers. Because let's remember, when you protect your staff you protect your pupils. When you respect your workers, you build a stronger and safer school.



Congress, we stand for action. It is time to tell every head teacher, every school leader and every employer: do your duty, protect your people or we will hold you to account. (*Applause*) Our members deserve better. They deserve safe workplaces, they deserve to go home at the end of the day without fear, without injury and without being worn down by preventable risks. Let's stand together, let's pass this motion because behind every risk assessment there is a person, a mother, a father, a friend, and they all deserve to come home safely. Let's make sure every school knows we are watching, we are united and we will not back down on the safety and dignity of our school support staff. Congress, please support this motion to ask GMB to ensure that local authorities carry out regular audits. Additionally, we also want this to extend to academy schools. Thank you. (*Applause*)

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

ADAM WACLAWCZYK (London): Good afternoon, President, Congress, friends. Second-time in Congress, second-time speaker. (*Applause*) From the strongest, the biggest London Region! (*Applause*) My predecessor presented how school principals do not fulfil their duties. The same demand in sectors where there should be more support. I believe that the Government and local authorities should allocate more money for that purpose. Teaching assistants work with children with various health problems such as ADHD, autism and speech problems. These children sometimes cannot express their needs and emotions so teaching assistants are exposed to assaults from speech and shouting but also physical violence. They bear full responsibility for the safety of their students when they go outside. The sports fields are not prepared for safe use because they are asphalt surfaces and not special rubber surfaces, which is

more expensive. That is why children if they fall, they are at risk of serious injury. I know these cases personally because my son is autistic. So, I would like to say to his teaching assistant Ms Popo(?), thank you very much for your hard work. Congress, please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, colleague. Does anyone wish to speak against the motions? If not, could I ask Christine Golding to come to the rostrum please for the CEC?

CHRISTINE GOLDING (CEC): Good afternoon Madam President and Congress. Responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 160 and 161. Motion 160 seeks to build on the success of London's recent regional conference by holding a national event. The CEC welcomes that ambition, but before committing resources we must be clear about the conference's purpose, scope and cost to ensure it delivers real value and fits our budget. Subject to that review we are pleased to support Motion 160 with this practical qualification. =

Finally, Motion 161 aims to strengthen safety procedures for staff and pupils. The CEC fully endorses the goals with two qualifications. Firstly, effective implementation will rest at regional and local levels where bargaining structures differ. Second, any policy must cover multi-academy trusts as well as local authority schools so that no support staff are left outside its scope. In summary, the CEC asks Congress, support Motion 160 and 161 with the qualifications stated. Thank you (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Christine. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 160? *(Agreed)* Does London accept the qualification on Motion 161? *(Agreed)* All those in favour of 160, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of 161, please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 160 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 161 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Can I now ask for movers and seconders of Motions 117, 118, 119 and 121 to come to the front, please, and 117 to the rostrum.

## **FAIR JOB APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW PROCESS**

### **MOTION 117**

#### **117. FAIR JOB APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW PROCESS**

This Congress acknowledges that applying for jobs online is often more convenient due to the streamlined application processes adopted by many companies. However, this is not advantageous for all applicants.

There are key reasons why online applications might not be equitable for all candidates:

- Digital Divide: Individuals lacking reliable internet access or computing capabilities are often excluded from the pool of candidates, as they cannot apply for positions online.
- Technical Barriers: The requirement to navigate complex forms or upload documents in specific formats may present a significant challenge to those with limited digital literacy.
- Accessibility Issues: Online applications may not be designed with accessibility in mind, hindering individuals with disabilities from applying. GMB believes there are potential solutions to mitigate these issues:

- Use alternative application methods alongside online applications. Recognised companies should offer paper applications or allow them to be printed from online so they can be posted or handed over in person and ensure applicants will still be included manually in the candidate pool. If company has already an existing pool.
- Create opportunities for in-person interviews to accommodate various applicant preferences, including those who are not expert in Artificial Intelligence and those who are suffering from neurological disabilities or from any other visible or hidden disabilities.

GMB notes that if the job does not require artificial intelligence skills, nobody should face discrimination for applying via a paper application by the recognised companies.

GMB resolves that recognised companies should facilitate alternative and fair job application and interview processes for people with disabilities and for those not skilled in artificial intelligence, instead of being inclusively online.

## **P17 PLAISTOW BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Referred)*

SHANZIDA FERDOUS (London): Good afternoon, a proud GMB London Region member. I am a first-time delegate still and a second time-speaker (because earlier this morning I was a first-time speaker). *(Applause)* Thank you so much, Congress, but I need your support on the motion, Fair Job Application and Interview Process, and I am moving this motion.

This Congress recognises that online job application might not be accessible to everyone because of the digital divide, technical challenges and accessibility of application(?). Those without regular internet and computer access, limited digital

skills and individuals who are suffering from disabilities might find it harder to apply online. To address these challenges, GMB advocates are offering various ways to apply. GMB encourages recognised companies who are offering online application and make sure these applications are considered on an equal footing even if there is a pool of applicants. Additionally, ensure these companies hold in-person interviews to accommodate various needs, especially for those who are less expert in artificial intelligence, information technology, and those who are suffering from various disabilities. Some people may be suffering from hidden or invisible disabilities. The GMB knows that if a job does not require IT or AI skills, applying via paper copy should not lead to discrimination. It encourages recognised companies to promote fair job application for all. Therefore, expanding job applications both online and in person will be fair for all. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

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

Mover of Motion 118, please.

## **REPEALING THE BAN ON LAWFUL SECONDARY INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

### **MOTION 118**

#### **118. REPEALING THE BAN ON LAWFUL SECONDARY INDUSTRIAL ACTION**

Congress welcomes the Labour Government's New Deal for Working People and the Government's commitment to strengthen trade union rights.

However, Congress notes that there are no proposals in the New Deal for Working People or in the Government's legislative programme on repealing the ban on lawful secondary industrial action. Congress notes that secondary industrial action is currently illegal in the UK. It is

expressly prohibited by section 224 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

Lawful secondary industrial action is recognised and protected as part of trade union freedom under ILO Convention No. 87 and the European Social Charter, and that the statutory ban on secondary action denies GMB members their rights under Article 11 ECHR, which guarantees the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions.

Congress notes and supports the GMB's commitment to ensure that all the industrial action that the GMB calls is compliant with the law in every respect.

However, Congress notes that the laws banning secondary industrial action are draconian and archaic.

Congress notes that legalising lawful secondary industrial action would allow the GMB members to picket workplaces other than their own — stopping workers, goods, or services moving in or out, and thus providing another means of striking at employers. Lawful secondary industrial action would also allow the GMB to enter into dispute with an employer's parent company, its suppliers, financiers or other contracting parties.

Finally, should this legislation be revoked, GMB members would not be compelled to cross picket lines if members of another trade union were participating in industrial action in their workplace.

Therefore, this Congress supports the repealing the ban on secondary industrial action.

Congress asks the GMB to campaign for the restoration of lawful secondary industrial action in the UK.

Finally, Congress asks the GMB lobby both the Labour Party and the TUC to ensure our laws are changed and that all trade union members have the right to participate in lawful secondary industrial action.

**X59 NW LONDON BRANCH**

## LONDON REGION

*(Carried)*

JAMES ROLLES (London): Good afternoon, Congress, President. On day one of Congress, I was really proud to move a motion from my branch, which is X59 North West London, where we called for the extension of the New Deal For Working People, and with the extension of the New Deal for Working People we called for the repeal of the remaining anti-trade union legislation. When we were debating this motion at branch, we kept coming back to the clause in the motion about repealing the ban on lawful secondary action, we felt this clause was so important that it merited its own motion. So here we are asking you to endorse our motion on repealing the ban on lawful secondary industrial action.

So, what does this mean? You will probably get a lot of naysayers, especially in the Tory Party and their cheerleaders in the right-wing press. They are saying if we had secondary action in this country, it would take us back to the bad old days of trade unionism, wild-cat strikes, bodies going unburied in the streets, et cetera, et cetera. It is really worth pointing out that was a generation ago and material conditions have moved on so far now it is completely different. Just as an aside to that, you have to be over 56 to have voted ever for Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister, which is quite extraordinary if you think about it.

I personally think that we do not have sufficient class consciousness in this country to go back to the Winter of Discontent, but in the 21st century what would repealing these pernicious anti-trade union laws look like? In Germany, secondary action is allowed if

it has a direct effect on the party involved in the dispute and it is proportionate and fair in its objective. In Italy, the constitutional court has acknowledged the legitimacy of secondary strikes if the genuine commonality of interest is present. So, what would this mean to the GMB? If this ban on secondary industrial action is revoked, it would allow the GMB to picket workplaces other than our own, striking at supply chains. We would be able to go into dispute with employers' parent companies, suppliers and other contractors. It would also mean that GMB members would not be compelled to cross picket lines of other trade unions.

I look to my colleagues here who are in the education sector and maybe local government where there are in workplaces where there are multiple unions. Can you imagine a day where, as it stood at the moment, if another trade union goes out in your workplace, you are technically compelled to cross that picket line and go and work for the employer, therefore undermining the industrial action? So, really what we are saying is it would be really good if we did not have GMB members having to cross picket lines and do the employers' bidding work for them. I know we do not always get on with other trade unions, but sometimes it is nice to give one to the employer.

So, this motion does not want GMB members to break the law. It says that the law is absolutely wrong and the law is unfair and it needs changing so please support.  
*(Applause)*

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

JAMIE WALKER (London): I am seconding Motion 118, Repealing the Ban on



Lawful Secondary Industrial Action. We say that an injury to one is an injury to all, but the law still says we have to walk past our own brothers and sisters on picket lines, which is not just unjust, it is shameful. The ban on lawful secondary industrial action - you can tell I have had too many Haribos already - means that even when we support each other in spirit we are gagged in practice, and it leaves employers with a convenient loophole to divide workers by a legal technicality, not a principle. This motion is all about solidarity, something that employers fear (and they should) and that previous Governments have stripped from us. It is about having the right, not the suggestion, to stand with the workers under attack and show them that their brothers and sisters in the movement support them.

Secondary action is recognised in international law. Other countries respect it. And it is time we stop pretending that the UK trade union rights are world leading when we are banned from supporting our work colleagues in the most basic of ways.

Congress, this is not about disruption for disruption's sake, even though we know the same old soldiers will say that to us. It is about restoring a right that should never have been taken away. If we believe in collective strength then we must fight for the tools that make collective action possible. Congress has previously stated that we will work to repeal all anti-union legislation, so we must make sure that we pressure and steer to ensure that our trade union disputes can work legally and protected, in sympathy with other members. Please vote for this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Jamie. Mover of 119?

## **4 DAY WEEK CAMPAIGN**

### **MOTION 119**

#### **119. 4 DAY WEEK CAMPAIGN**

This Congress welcomes the overwhelmingly positive results of the world's biggest ever four-day working week pilot in the UK with 61 participating companies and 3,000 employees. This builds upon the historic trade union led campaign a century ago to reduce working hours to 40 hours a week and give workers the weekend. We were also pleased to see that in September 2021, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) reaffirmed its support for a four-day working week with no reduction in pay.

This congress believes that:

- since the Covid pandemic there has been growing popularity and momentum behind a four-day, 32 hour working week with no loss of pay
- there is a growing consensus around the need for more flexible ways of working
- automation and technological gains in the future will reduce necessary labour time, which should be shared with workers in increased leisure time

This congress notes that:

- According to the TUC, British workers put in some of the longest hours in Europe, while having one of the least productive economies
  - According to the New Economics Foundation, since the 1980's, although productivity has increased, the reduction in working hours has stalled
- This congress resolves:
- To support our members to organise for a four-day working week with no loss of pay through campaigning and collective bargaining negotiations
  - To affiliate to the 4 Day Week Campaign

**B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH**

## LONDON REGION

*(Referred)*

JAMES ROLLES (London): I don't need to introduce myself – James Rolles, London Region. Workers of the world relax! We invented the weekend almost a century ago so we are long overdue for reform of our working hours. As Congress will be aware it is existing GMB policy to support a four-day week for our members. This motion reaffirms GMB and TUC policy for the reduction in the working week with no reduction in pay. It also mandates our union to use all political, industrial and legal avenues to ensure that every workplace with GMB members in it has a four-day working week. We are also asking the union to affiliate to the Four-Day Working Week campaign which is an important cross-union and cross-employer drive.

In the 19th century, Proudhon and Marx used the term “wage slavery” to criticise the exploitation of labour. In the 21st century we could easily use the term “time slavery” to understand how late-stage capitalism exploits our time as well as our labour. Please support. *(Applause)*

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

BEN CAMPBELL-WHITE (London): President, Congress, seconding Motion 119, the call to support and build the campaign for a four-day week with no loss of pay.

The results from the UK's four-day week pilot speak for themselves, 61 companies, 3,000 workers and an overwhelming majority reporting either the same or better

productivity and far better well-being. People were less stressed, more rested and more engaged. That is not just a workplace experiment, it is a blueprint for the future. This motion builds on a century of trade union progress. Just as our movement fought for the two-day weekend, which is now so familiar, we now have a duty to lead the charge for a four-day working week which reflects modern life and modern technology. Make no mistake, the five-day week is no longer fit for purpose in a world of rising stress, automation and overwork. British workers still put in some of the longest hours in Europe yet our productivity lags behind. That is not the fault of the worker. It is the fault of the system that rewards long hours over smart, healthy working. This motion is about fairness. It is about progress. And above all, it is about how we make work better for our members, our families and future generations. Let's move forward together, shorter hours, same pay, longer lives. Congress, please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Ben. Anyone wish to speak against the motions? I ask CEC speaker Simon Day to give the response.

I apologise; I am still trying to get done for Wednesday! Could I have the speaker for 121 up, please?

## **DAY 1 RIGHT TO REDUNDANCY PAY**

### **MOTION 121**

#### **121. DAY 1 RIGHT TO REDUNDANCY PAY**

This Congress notes that changes to the Employment Rights Bill give employees the long overdue right to protection from unfair dismissal from Day 1. However, it is disappointing that a

Labour Government has decided not to implement a similar provision to give employees a right to statutory redundancy pay from Day 1 of employment, thus allowing employers to make staff redundant at potentially no cost. This Congress therefore calls on GMB to campaign for statutory redundancy entitlement to be a Day 1 right.

**B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH**

**LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

ALISTAIR BLUNDELL (London): Madam President, Congress, top table, I am here to move Motion 121 on behalf of the London Region (*Applause*). Thank you comrades. I would like to move this motion and hope to get Congress to support. For years now redundancy pay has been stuck the past. Far too many employers will take on staff knowing that they plan to make cuts in the next six months. Shall we say that is reasonable of them? We have got the far right on the rise in this country. I do not know if any of you attended this meeting. And then they came for the trade unionists. Is that not a historical thing? Did a gentleman not go by the name of Adolph Hitler? The redundancy packages need to be looked at afresh, but what we are asking Congress to support is the right to redundancy pay from day one, to help to put a stop to some of the shady practices of companies. Just look at P&O, their fire and re-hire which now is going to become a thing of the past. If you are made redundant, and if you are lucky, you may get a termination package which should include statutory redundancy pay, holiday pay, unpaid wages, company benefits, for example if you work for Sports Direct. And do employers tell you statutory redundancy under £30,000 is non-taxable? They will not tell you that. Under section 139 of the Employment Act 1996, the fact an employer ceases or intends to cease, and the fact that “requirements of the business”

are reasons, just look at, for those colleagues that work for councils, the re-orgs that are forever going on. Employers are quick to use the old rule of “Last in, first out” to save money because they do not need to pay. The Government need to relook this. We cannot stand by and hide behind the fact that the Tories and Reform will always try to keep the status quo to help the people that pour money into their coffers. I recommend, Congress, that we become the union of reason and that we support and ask our Government - because it is our Government - if they do not help, if they do not assist in giving us a hand, we can vote them out of office the next time, although we would not want the Tories or Reform in.

If you have been an employee for two years, you get half a day’s pay for each full year if you are under 22, one week for 22 to 41, and one and a half week’s pay you will get if you are 41 or older. I also think the length of service being capped at 20 years is wrong. We need to relook at this and bring everything back into the 21st century. That is where we are now. We are not in the 19th century being dictated to by barons. I thank you and I move this motion, Congress. (*Applause*)

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

WAYNE OSWICK (London): London Region, leading the way. This is my tenth year as a delegate and numerous amounts of times speaking. I looked at this motion and I thought to myself, “I see a different essence to this motion.” In 2012, the Nasty Party attacked the working class and imposed yet again a hit on claiming and taking an employer forward to tribunal, by extending it by one year to two years, and you cannot

make a claim until you have done two years' service. It was called the "Unfair Dismissal" Bill. It always suited the employer. When Labour Party won the election last year, I thought we were in for a promise. In Labour's Workers Rights Bills, which was introduced in October 2024, they were going to abolish the two-year rule. But if you look on the Gov.com website today and search your redundancy package and what you are entitled to, the two-year period still stands. No redundancy for two years. We have staff working in various different commercial organisations who are agency workers and they sometimes get an employment contract at the end of their probationary period, but that can take two years, and none of that service counts. So, we are asking you to support Motion 121 under qualification to change the legislation from two years from day one for redundancy, include agency staff and make this a motion that we can run as a campaign. I support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Wayne. I now call Simon Day.

SIMON DAY (CEC): Thank you President, thank you Congress. James, thank you for that statistic you have to be under 56 to have never voted for Thatcher. I am over 56 and I have never voted to Thatcher, just to point that out for you. *(Applause)* And Jamie, I look forward to your two Haribo Congress motion next year. I am responding on behalf of the CEC on motions 117, 119 and 121.

On Motion 117, the motion before us presses further than existing policy by asking how online forms, automated scoring and opaque algorithms can reproduce or even intensify discrimination. Although the Equality Act 2010 offers legal protection, its remedies depend upon transparency, something algorithmic hiring often lacks. The CEC

believes that we need a deeper evidence base and fresh policy tools. We therefore ask for Motion 117 to be referred so that we can work with our legal, technical and equality specialists to craft the next generation of rights before committing the union to a definitive stand.

The CEC is asking for Motion 119 to also be referred. Colleagues will recall that in 2019 Congress adopted, and in 2022 Congress reaffirmed GMB's commitment to a shorter working week with no loss of pay. The motion requests GMB to affiliate formally to the external Four Day Week campaign. Under standard practice, any request for affiliation or financial support must first be considered by the CEC's Financial and General Purpose Committee. A referral will let that Committee assess the campaign's governance, finances and strategic fit with our existing policy. Finally on Motion 121 GMB has long argued that all employment rights including redundancy pay should begin on day one. We fully support the principle of the motion but we qualify that redundancy pay should be advanced as part of a comprehensive package of day one right covering other statutory elements. Pursuing a single strand in isolation to allow Ministers to claim process while leaving other gaps untouched.

In summary, Congress, the CEC asks for London Region to agree to refer Motions 117 and 119, and for Congress to support Motion 121 with the qualification set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you Simon. Does the London Region agree to refer 117? *(Agreed)* 118 is supported by the CEC. We will take a vote. All those in favour, please show. Any against? That is carried. Does London Region agree to refer 119? *(Agreed)*



And does London Region agree 121 with the qualification? (*Agreed*) We will take a vote on that then. All those in favour please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 117 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 118 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 119 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 121 was **CARRIED**.*

### **Union Organisation: Education & Training, Equality & Inclusion**

THE CO-CHAIR: Could I now have the mover of Motion 58 and 64, with 58 to the rostrum?

### **EDI TRAINING FOR ALL GMB STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES**

#### **MOTION 58**

#### **58. EDI TRAINING FOR ALL GMB STAFF & REPRESENTATIVES**

This Congress, we would like to acknowledge that discrimination and hate crime is rising in our society. Following the last general election and the rise of the Reform Party we have seen more people come out with their personal view where before they kept it hidden.

There is still an unconscious bias amongst people we may work with, this may be based on where they are brought up or their environment. There are those who still think because certain words were used when they were young there is no harm in using those words now. This attitude has been witnessed by my GMB reps, officers and colleagues in the numerous workplaces. Hate crime is about not recognising equality and treating people with respect no matter what protective characteristics they fall under. There are still people out there who sadly think, women, people

of a different race, LGBTQ+ and people with disabilities are not equal to them. Unconscious bias is still a major issue where most of us may still come across this with family, friends, colleagues or neighbours who use inappropriate language and feel uncomfortable saying something or challenging them. This is not because we agree with them but feel it could cause a division or falling out.

The objectives of the training are to explain sources of discrimination law; describe the protective characteristics; state the differences between equality, diversity and inclusion; state the types of discrimination; explain exemptions and exceptions to discrimination law; and describe good practice to ensure compliance with the Equality Act. Organizations and companies up and down the UK engage in EDI (Equality Diversity and Inclusion) Training which is mandatory for the managers, supervisors, and anyone dealing with staff (Appraising Managers). GMB needs to take ownership and train our own reps, our officers and our staff to be a leading force in EDI to service each and every one of our GMB members. Be the first of all unions to make this mandatory and inclusive.

Mandatory EDI Training for current and newly appointed induction training for officers and reps should be part of our future learning.

## **L27 LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF BRANCH**

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

*(Referred)*

ATU HASHIM EQUIANO (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): From the great big region of North East, Yorkshire & Humberside. Moving Motion 58, Mandatory EDI Training for All GMB Staff and Representatives. Congress, after submitting this motion last year, I was encouraged by many delegates in Bournemouth across all regions to resubmit this again as it hit home to so many members in GMB.

Organisations across the UK have mandatory EDI training and for decades across our nation all organisations have an equal opportunities policy enforced. A lot of these organisations are now running EDI training for their managers, team leaders, supervisors and anyone that has responsibility for their staff.

EDI stands for “equality, diversity and inclusion”. This is a crucial concept in today’s ever-changing world. It goes beyond a mere “nice to have” and plays a crucial role in organisational success. Let me break it down for you. One, equality. This refers to ensuring fair treatment and equal opportunities for all individuals regardless of their background, characteristics or circumstances. Two, diversity. This encourages the variety of human differences including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion or socioeconomic status. Three, inclusion. This involves creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and included. EDI training equips individuals and organisations with the knowledge and skills to identify specific challenges related to EDI within their organisations, take practical steps to overcome these challenges, create psychological safe environments where trust can thrive, evaluate people’s practices to ensure workforce is representative of and reflects the communities and organisations that it operates in, and address inequalities using data-driven insights.

Sadly, in 2025, there is still a lot of unconscious bias out there. The rise of Reform UK proves this. GMB needs to challenge. There are still some people out there who think women, people of a different race, LBGTQ+ people and people with disabilities are not equal to them. The GMB needs to show these organisations and members that EDI training is a mandatory part of our structure, especially through representation.

The workers' protection amendment of the Equality Act 2010 now at 2023 came into force on 26th October 2024. This places a new legal duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. This should also be included in EDI training. EDI goes beyond legal obligations and encompasses ethical and moral standards and it is about creating an environment where every individual feels safe and valued and empowered.

THE CO-CHAIR: Can you wind up please, colleague?

ATU HASHIM EQUIANO: Can do. The region is agreeing to this motion being to be referred, but personally I would like to see it carried through without delay. Where I work in Leeds City Council where there are panels like interviews, grievances disciplinaries these cannot take place ---

THE CO-CHAIR: Sorry colleague, can you finish.

ATU HASHIM EQUIANO: -- Until everybody is EDI trained. Congress, I ask you to support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you. Secunder?

SHARMAYNE HAZEL: Good afternoon President and Congress. I am from the great big North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. (*Applause*) I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*). GRASP Ambassador, Cohort 2. I am seconding

Motion 58. We have all heard from my colleague Hashim the importance of EDI training for all GMB staff and representatives and a reminder of what equality, diversity and inclusion means. We have all witnessed that Donald Trump took over the Oval Office and one of his first attacks was on America's diversity, equality and inclusion strategies and programmes across workplaces and education settings. Whilst on the GMB Race Achievement Scholarship Programme, one of our educators reminded us that ideas cross borders. So what are we waiting for? We need to ensure that GMB staff and officers and reps and convenors have access to good-quality EDI training. We must have dedication to be able to hold employers accountable for their performative EDI training and programmes, which largely goes on without monitoring, review and measurement of its success. We need to make sure that we do not allow ideas of inequalities to fester and grow, or ideas of dismantling EDI to become a risk. What are we waiting for? Any kind of inequality for any protected characteristic or GMB equalities strand is an attack on us all. Everyone in this room is a protected characteristic in some way and for many of us intersectionality can makes us a triple or quadruple target. So, what are we waiting for? If ideas can cross borders, they can easily permeate a workplace. Let's get ahead of the curve before employers beat us to it. We do not need to wait for it to happen. Congress, support this motion. *(Applause)*

## **RAISING AWARENESS OF COERCIVE CONTROL**

### **MOTION 64**

#### **64. RAISING AWARENESS OF COERCIVE CONTROL**

Coercive control is a pattern of abusive behaviour which can include psychological or emotional abuse; physical or sexual abuse; financial or economical abuse; harassment or stalking and on-line or digital abuse The Serious Crime Act 2015 made coercive control a criminal offence in

England and Wales and yet the maximum sentence is just a 5-year custodial sentence, with many convictions being dealt with as a low-level community order. In the year ending March 2023 there were 43774 offences of Coercive Control recorded in England and Wales, with just 811 prosecutions of which 566 resulted in a conviction. Of these 97.7% were men.

It can be difficult to prosecute/convict as there may not be clear evidence. Generally speaking, coercive or controlling behaviour doesn't break bones or leave bruises or scars – and in many cases do not escalate to physical violence but once it starts it is likely to go on for years, although one leading Domestic Abuse support agency estimated well over 80% of cases involving physical violence started with this kind of behaviour.

We need to change these statistics and support our members – because the chances are at least one of your members is a victim-survivor of coercive control. The starting point is to review our Domestic Abuse Charter and by raising awareness about this behaviour with our reps – give them the knowledge and confidence to have those difficult conversations with members and to deal with this issue as sensitively as possible.

Members of the W&SW Women's Forum are developing a workshop/training course and we want to see this as essential training for our reps. Please support this motion.

#### **CARDIFF 1 C48 BRANCH**

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

*(Carried)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, colleague. Mover of Motion 64.

GEORGIA CHEDZEY (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 64. I stand to move this motion on coercive self-control not only because it is right but because it is long overdue. Coercive control is a pattern of behaviour that destroys lives quietly. It does

not always leave bruises, it does not always end in a headline, but it does leave its victims trapped, diminished and often tragically unheard.

The Serious Crime Act 2015 finally recognised this as a criminal offence in England and Wales; a victory we should acknowledge. But, Congress, we must ask what good is the law if it has no teeth? The maximum sentence is just five years and many who are convicted walk away with a community order. Last year there were over 43,000 offences of coercive control recorded, only 811 prosecutions and just 566 convictions. That is barely over 1% of cases ending in justice. We know why. Coercive control often leaves no scars, no CCTV footage, not one moment where someone can say: this was the crime. It is slow, it is persistent and it is devastating, and it nearly always starts small before it grows. More than 80% of cases involving physical violence began with coercive control. We must act on it.

This motion calls on us to do what we have always done best: to stand together, to protect our members and to take real meaningful steps. Let's review our domestic abuse charter, let's educate our reps, let's empower them to spot the signs, to speak up and support.

The Women's Forum in the Wales & South West Region are already doing this work. They are developing training and workshops to guide reps through these difficult and delicate situations. We owe it to our members to make this training essential because whether we know it or not someone in this room or someone they represent is living through coercive control. They are waiting for us to take this step. Congress, this is about justice yes, but more than that, it is about dignity and about safety, and about

restoring power to those who have had it taken from them. Please support. I move.

*(Applause)*

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

SUZANNE WILLIAMS (Wales & South West): President, Congress, seconding Motion 64. Colleagues, I am proud to second this important and necessary motion. Too often we have seen the signs of coercive control ignored or misunderstood, not just by society at large but sometimes within our own structures. That must change and with this motion we are taking a bold and responsible step in the right direction. Our reps are on the front-line. They are the eyes and ears of our union and sometimes the only trusted contact a victim or survivor may have. But they need the tools, the training and the confidence to act. This motion ensures that becomes a reality. Congress, this is not about reinventing the wheel. It is about honouring our longstanding values of solidarity, justice and care for one another. It is about doing what we have always done: Standing up for those whose voices are quiet by fear or shame. Let us take this opportunity to strengthen our character, educate our representatives and build a culture where coercive control is seen, named and challenged. Let the GMB lead by example for our members, for our communities and for the generations who will look back and ask, “When it mattered, did they act?” I urge you to support this motion. I second.

*(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Suzanne. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition?

No? I will now call the CEC speaker Elaine Daley.



ELAINE DALEY (CEC): President, Congress, Speaking on behalf of the CEC to outline our position on Motions 58 and 64. First, on Motion 58, the CEC wholeheartedly embraces the principle that every GMB activist should receive robust equality, diversity and inclusion training. However, an all-union education review is already under way and the National Equality Team has submitted detailed proposals which are fully in keeping with this motion to strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion content across the revamped GMB@Work programme. To avoid duplicating or pre-empting that work the CEC ask for Motion 58 to be referred until the review is complete, ensuring that any new material is woven into one coherent curriculum.

Turning to Motion 64, we thank 48 Branch for bringing this urgent issue forward. Coercive control is an insidious form of abuse that too often escapes notice. The CEC supports the motion yet with a practical qualification that we ask the branch to liaise with the National Equality and Inclusion Department before calling for a fresh review and a domestic abuse charter. The current toolkit already covers controlling and coercive behaviour and our new representative training, which is also undergoing revision will signpost all equality resources including the charter. By co-ordinating in this way we can keep the guidance comprehensive without duplicating existing material.

In summary, the CEC is asking for North East, Yorkshire and Humber to refer Motion 58 and for Congress to support Motion 64 with the qualification I have set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Elaine. Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber agree to reference back on 58? (*Agreed*) And does Wales & South West accept the qualification on 64? (*Agreed*) We will now go to the vote. All those in favour of 64, please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 58 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 64 was **CARRIED**.*

Can I have the movers and seconders of Motion 61, 62 and 71 to the front please and 61 to the rostrum.

## **ADDRESSING MISOGYNOIR IN THE WORKPLACE**

### **MOTION 61**

#### **61. ADDRESSING MISOGYNOIR IN THE WORKPLACE**

This Congress recognises misogynoir—the systemic discrimination faced by women of the Global Majority due to the intersection of racism and sexism—as a deeply ingrained issue in workplaces and society. It highlights how misogynoir undermines career progression, perpetuates harmful stereotypes, and disproportionately impacts women of colour through unfair treatment and disciplinary action.

The motion calls on Congress to:

- Update the GMB Reps Handbook to include guidance on recognising and addressing misogynoir
- Provide mandatory training for all GMB reps to equip them with tools to support affected members and challenge discriminatory practices.

- Campaign for inclusive workplace policies, including anti-discrimination training for managers and robust reporting systems.

- Advocate for societal education to dismantle barriers and stereotypes that marginalise women of colour

This motion urges GMB to lead the fight against misogynoir, ensuring fairness, equality, and solidarity for all members.

## **CAERPHILLY COUNTY C22 BRANCH**

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

*(Carried)*

JACQUELINE SHORTE (Wales & South West): President, Congress. I am moving Motion 61. *(Applause)* Colleagues, I rise today to move this motion with a sense of pride, duty, history and deep conviction. Throughout our proud trade union tradition we have fought shoulder to shoulder against injustice in the workplace, on the picket lines and across society. I am proud to move this motion which speaks about our reality which is often overlooked: the discrimination faced by women of the global majority where racism and sexism collide. This is what we call misogynoir, and it is not just occasional, it is systematic. We know the truth, that women of the global majority are more likely to be disciplined unfairly, passed over for promotion, spoken to in ways that would never be tolerated elsewhere. We are subject to both harmful stereotypes and structural barriers and it is happening in our workplaces today. Simply put, we are tired of living under the concrete ceiling. As a union we have always stood up for injustice. We have fought for safer workplaces, for equal pay and for dignity on the job. Now we must act again because silence helps no one and justice delayed is justice denied.

This motion calls for clear steps an updated GMB reps handbook and guidance on tackling misogynoir, deliver mandatory training for all our reps, campaign for proper policies in the workplace from anti-discrimination training for managers to robust reporting systems. Let's go beyond by advocating for wider societal education, breaking down those stereotypes that hurt women - us women - of colour every single day.

Colleagues, comrades, friends, we are not calling this a problem. We are also stepping up with solutions. Let us be the union that leads the fight, as we always have. I urge Congress to move this motion. *(Applause)*

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

EMMA CAUSER (Wales & South West): President, Congress, seconding Motion 61. Colleagues, I proudly second this motion because it reflects what GMB has always stood for: equality, dignity and real action. Misogynoir is not a new problem, it has just often been ignored, but the impact is real. Women of the global majority are more likely to face unfair treatment, harsher scrutiny and be left out of opportunities others take for granted. Colleagues, we need to give our reps the tools to recognise it, challenge it and support those affected. This means proper guidance in our handbooks, it means training that is not optional but mandatory, and it means workplace policies that are built to protect, not to just tick boxes.

We also need to look outwards, pushing for better education and awareness in society

because discrimination does not stop at the factory gate or the office door. Our motion is simple yet powerful. It calls for practical action, updating the GMB rep book, mandatory training for our reps and campaigning for inclusive workplace policies. It recognises the need for education and awareness, not just inside the union but in broader society because we know that true change begins with understanding. Let this Congress send a clear message: GMB will not allow any form of discrimination to thrive unchallenged. Together we can ensure that every woman knows she has a union that will fight for her, stand by her and never walk away. This is not just the right thing to do, it is the union thing to do. Please support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

## **REPRESENTATIVE AWARENESS OF DISABILITY TRAINING AND TOOLS**

### **MOTION 62**

#### **62. REPRESENTATIVE AWARENESS OF DISABILITY TRAINING AND TOOLS**

This Conference recognises the struggles and discrimination that disabled staff face in the workplace on a daily basis. This Conference believes that members with unseen or non-visible disabilities, commonly described as hidden disabilities, continue to be treated significantly differently within the workplace. In the GMB National Policy Guide 2023, only 23 policies are listed under disability, that's if you include the section on supported employment.

Invisible disabilities, also known as Hidden Disabilities or Non-visible Disabilities, are disabilities that are not immediately apparent. It's important to remember this term can cover a whole range of conditions, some examples include autism; Chron's disease; chronic pain conditions; depression; bipolar disorder; diabetes; epilepsy; learning differences including dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia; and rheumatoid arthritis. Although the above are just examples, in many cases, having an unseen disability often has an impact on daily life. The Equality Act 2010 gives

employers legal responsibilities in respect to disability as a protected characteristic, and in the public sector this goes further with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Congress 2018 called for a national campaign to raise awareness of hidden conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADHD and autism spectrum conditions. This was backed up by further motions to Congress 2023. In response, policy documents tell us GMB has launched the Thinking Differently at Work campaign which includes awareness and support materials. If you can find them.

This Conference resolves as follows:

- To run a new campaign on the issue. Raising awareness of the tools available to reps and members and where to find them;
- To ask GMB to highlight the tools more clearly on the website;
- Raise awareness of training available to Reps and ensure that all training provided is accessible, includes training on conscious and unconscious bias and includes planning local campaigns;
- To encourage reps to raise awareness of these issues in their individual workplaces with employers and members;

#### **CARDIFF & DISTRICT X12 BRANCH**

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

*(Carried)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Emma. Mover of 62.

ANDREW MILLS (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 62. Colleagues, we stand on the shoulders of those who built this union to be a stronghold of justice, fairness and equality, but the measure of our solidarity must not be judged only by how we treat those whose struggles we can see, also by how we uplift those whose battles are hidden.

Hidden disabilities, conditions such as Crohn's disease, autism, bipolar disorder, dyslexia and diabetes affect countless members in our workplaces and within our union family. They are not always visible to the eye. I can give you a good example of that myself. I have had two amputations in the past. I have had battles with diabetes to try to save one of my lower legs. They are very real; they have a real impact on your daily life and your dignity and your ability to thrive at work.

It is deeply concerning that in the GMB National Policy Guide of 2023 only 23 policies reference disability, and that is being generous by counting supported employment. We can and we must do better. Let us not forget the call made in Congress in 2018, and echoed again in 2023, for a national campaign to shine a light on these invisible conditions. We applauded the launch of the Thinking Differently at Work campaign, but many of us ask where is it? Where can our reps find it? If our representatives struggle to access it, how can our members benefit?

This motion is not about creating something new from scratch. It is about honouring our past commitments and building on them. It is about ensuring that every rep, new or seasoned, has the training, the tools and the confidence to speak up, stand up and make visible the invisible challenges of their fellow members. Therefore, we call on GMB to reignite the campaign to make our tools easier to find help, to ensure training is accessible and to help our reps plan campaigns at the local level. Let's encourage every rep to be a beacon of awareness and be an ambassador in our workplace. Let's remember when we support members with hidden disabilities we strengthen the very fabric of our union. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

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

IAN DAVIES (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 62. Colleagues, I am proud to second Motion 62. For generations trade unions have fought to give a voice to those who were silenced and overlooked. That fight continues today for our members living with hidden disabilities. Too often these members are misunderstood, misjudged or simply forgotten. They face barriers that are invisible to most but burdensome to bear, and while the law, through the Equality Act and the public sector equality duty, offers some protection, enforcement and understanding are still sorely lacking in too many workplaces. GMB already have tools, campaigns and policies. What we do not have is consistent visibility or clear access. If our reps cannot find the support, how can they extend it to others? We need action, we need clarity, we need guidance and, above all, we need to hold fast to the values that brought us here: justice, fairness and dignity for all workers. Let us honour those values now by passing this motion and ensuring our reps are equipped to champion the rights of every GMB member seen or unseen. Please support this. I second. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Ian. Mover of 71?

## **EQUALITY DATA COLLECTION**

### **MOTION 71**

#### **71. EQUALITY DATA COLLECTION**

Congress, GMB has been consistent in collecting Equality data from members and much work has been done to ensure we have very high-quality monitoring data. There is still a large piece of work to be done to collect data from members who joined prior to when the data collection



was started. Congress, we want to ensure that this happens and that there are sufficient resources to collect the data.

## **L16 LB GREENWICH BRANCH**

### **SOUTHERN REGION**

*(Carried)*

GEZALA UMAR (Southern): President Congress, comrades, brothers and sisters, I am from the superb Southern Region proposing Motion 71, first-time delegate, extremely nervous first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I want to speak about a vital issue that sits at the heart of our values as a union - equality. As trade unionists we know that we cannot tackle inequality unless we see it clearly. That is why the consistent collection of equality data from our members is not just a technical task, it is a matter of justice, a matter of fairness and a matter of progress. Congress, GMB has been a union since 1889. The world has changed in the last 136 years. Congress, there was a time when members could not declare their partner preference because of the real risk of being lynched. Congress, there was a time when faith could not be openly practised for the fear of repercussions in both home and work life. Congress, there was a time when genders did not work or pursue their preferred profession for the dread of being mocked or ostracised. Congress, the world and attitudes have changed and progressed. The union needs to move with the times, be united and proud.

Over the past few years significant strides have been made. Thanks to the hard work of our staff, activists and equality reps, we now are high-quality equality monitoring data that gives us a clearer picture of who our members are. This data helps us fight discrimination, allow for targeted intervention, shape inclusive policies and ensure that

every voice in our union is heard and valued. But Congress, we must be honest, there is still work to do. Many of our members joined before current data collection systems were in place. That means there are thousands, tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of voices we still need to hear from: members whose identities, experiences and needs are not yet fully reflected in our data. If we are to be a truly inclusive union, we must close that gap.

We are calling today for a renewed commitment that GMB will prioritise the completion of this work, and that sufficient resources, time, tools and training will be allocated to ensure we reach every member. This is not just about ticking boxes. It is about building a union that reflects the full diversity of our movement and can act with confidence and clarity on behalf of all its member. As Kelvin said earlier, GMB has a space for everyone to achieve something. Let's make sure no one is left behind. Let's ensure that every member, regardless of when they join, has the opportunity to be seen, heard and represented. Let's be the voice of the voiceless. Congress, please support my motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, colleague. Anyone wish to speak against the motions?

Sorry, seconder. I will get done for Wednesday!

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CHRISTOPHER WONGSOSAPUTRO (Southern): Vice-President, Secretary General, Congress, good afternoon. I am Chris Wongsosaputro, first-time delegate, second-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am from K19 Branch in Southern Region. We are very proud to host you, Congress.

Congress, Southern Region would like to second Motion 71 on Equality Data Collection. We fully support what Gezala has mentioned earlier. Southern Region agrees that GMB has been consistent in collecting equality data from our members. A lot of work has been put in to make sure we have quality and consistent data monitoring. This is evident in the way the delegate equality monitoring data is collected during this Congress, as you can see from this form which you have in your delegates booklet. However, there is still much to be done in data collection for members who joined before the start of the data collection process.

“Why does this motion matter?” you might ask. Congress, this is not a pointless exercise which takes up everyone’s time and effort. It matters because we believe the GMB needs to understand its member demographics, including class background which Gary has referenced in his speech. When the GMB is looking for views of under-represented members, we must understand the equality monitoring data so the information we gather represents the views of the group. Only by having this information can GMB understand members’ lived experiences and serve you, our members in the best possible way. The data will also help GMB communicate how our union has served the different strands of our membership base.

Therefore, Congress, the Southern Region would like to call on GMB to continue working on equality data collection. Doing so requires sufficient resources including time, effort and money so we as members can then be confident in the equality data GMB has. Congress, I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Christopher. Colleagues, the CEC is supporting all these motions so we will go straight to the vote. All those in favour of 61, please show. Any against? That is carried. 62 please show. Any against? That is carried. 72, please show. Any against? That is carried.

*Motion 61 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 62 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 72 was **CARRIED**.*

THE CO-CHAIR: Congress, we have had some powerful speeches this week on very emotional topics. If you have been or feel affected by what you are hearing on motions on difficult issues, please make sure you approach your delegation lead or regional secretary for any support. The Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy is also available at the info desk.

Can I now ask for movers of Motions 73, 74 and 75 to come to the front and 73 to the rostrum.

## **MATERNAL HEALTHCARE FOR BLACK GLOBAL MAJORITY WOMEN WORKERS**

### **MOTION 73**

#### **73. MATERNAL HEALTHCARE FOR BLACK GLOBAL MAJORITY WOMEN WORKERS**

Congress notes that Black Global Majority mothers receive less support, are not respected, and treated unfairly in all workplaces, in comparison to white maternal mothers.

Congress recognises the severe disparities in maternal health outcomes for Black Global Majority women; and the structural discriminatory barriers they face in workplaces, including significant pay gaps and lack of progression opportunities. The barriers at work are exacerbated by bias and disparities in maternity care, with devastating effects on health, career advancement, and economic security. Congress notes with concern the deeply disturbing maternal mortality rates between women from Black Global Majority background and White women. Black women are still four times more likely than white women to die in pregnancy or childbirth in the UK and women from Asian ethnic backgrounds face twice the risk.

Congress is called upon to:

1. Consider a campaign to highlight, raise awareness, and work for stronger workplace action to support Black Global majority mothers and tackle maternity-related discrimination, ensuring fairness in pay and progression.
2. Consider a campaign to promote workplace policies that protect Black Global Majority mothers, including equitable maternity leave and improved access.
3. To consider working with the appropriate select committee's and APPG's (All Party-Political Groups) to voice the serious concerns of Black Global Majority mother's experiences in the workplace for equitable support.

## **E10 EALING BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

TARANJIT CHAN (London): Moving Motion 73. Congress, black maternal healthcare is not merely a statistic; it is a matter of life, death, dignity and justice. Maternal healthcare is crucial for ensuring the health and well-being of mothers and their children. However, the experiences of black and global majority women in the

UK reveal significant disparities in access to quality healthcare services. Studies have shown that black and global majority women face higher maternal mortality rates compared to their white counterparts. These disparities are rooted in systematic inequalities including racism, socioeconomic disadvantages and inadequate access to healthcare services. Maternal healthcare must be culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of black and global majority women. This means healthcare providers must be trained to understand and respect the cultural differences, beliefs and practices that influence maternal care. The importance of support systems cannot be overstated. Black and global majority women often juggle multiple roles. They are workers, they are care givers, community leaders. Access to comprehensive maternal healthcare services, including mental health support, is essential to their well-being. The challenges faced by black and global majority women workers in the UK are multi-faceted: workplace inequalities, racial bias in healthcare, economic barriers.

Congress, let's call for a push for policies that promote equitable access to maternal healthcare services, including paid maternity leave, affordable childcare and comprehensive healthcare cover for all workers, training and education for healthcare professionals on cultural competence and unconscious bias to ensure that all receive respectful and appropriate care during pregnancy and childbirth. Building partnerships with communities is crucial because it can raise awareness and provide resources for black and global majority women, which can be a vital support, offering information, advocacy and assistance. And more research is needed. Maternal healthcare for black and global majority women is not just a health issue. It is a social justice issue. We must work together to dismantle the barriers that prevent the care we deserve. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

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

ROBERT WHEELER (London): Vice-President, Congress, good afternoon, seconding this motion. I am proud to second and support this crucial motion, Maternity Healthcare for Black and Global Majority Women. Congress, this is not only a health crisis, it is a workers' rights issue across our industries and communities. Black and global majority women, our colleagues, our members, our friends and families face disproportionately high maternal mortality rates. These are not isolated tragedies. These are systemic failures rooted in inequality, bias and neglect. As a trade union we stand for justice, dignity and equity for all workers. That must include the right to safe, respectful and culturally competent maternal care. Because when one group is left behind, we all are. Investing in maternal healthcare for black and global majority women strengthens our workforce, our families and our future. It reduces long-term cost, improves outcome and builds trust in a system meant to protect us. We have the power to demand better from employers and policy makers and from the healthcare system itself. Let us use our collective voice to push for change. This is not charity, it is your solidarity, and solidarity is a foundation of our movement.

Congress, I support this motion and I urge you to support this motion too, not just with your votes but with your continued advocacy and action. Congress, I second and support. (*Applause*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Robert. 74.

## **RACIALISED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN WORKPLACES EXISTS**

### **MOTION 74**

#### **74. RACIALISED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN WORKPLACES EXISTS**

This Congress notes that sexual harassment experienced by Black & Global Majority (BGM) women in the workplace goes unreported, unacknowledged, and very rarely discussed. Congress commends the TUC Report on sexual harassment of BGM women in the workplace titled “Then it Clicked” as groundbreaking research where, probably for the first time, the voices of BGM women are heard and acknowledged. Congress also notes that Hair discrimination is not only an everyday issue for BGM women, but also a form of violence against them, with Misogynoir being a daily occurrence.

We call upon Congress to:

1. Consider recognises that misogynoir is a form of violence and racialised sexual harassment of BGM women and a health and safety issue in the workplace.
2. To consider actively adopting the term misogynoir when referring to BGM women’s experience of racialised sexual harassment, particularly in the workplace.
3. To consider an industrial response to racialised sexual harassment.
4. To look into a campaign, if not already done, on Hair discrimination in the workplace.
5. To consider a campaign for zero tolerance on racialised sexual harassment in the workplace.
6. To look into producing guidance on how unions/ reps can incorporate racialised sexual harassment into health and safety provisions.

### **E10 EALING BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*



ANN WEEKES (London): Moving Motion 74.

I am making a tough decision right now to waive my anonymity

To talk about a subject that is very personal to me

I make no apologies to you for the words which I choose

To get my message across, I need to ensure I touch everyone in this room

In many roles and career levels women have a positive effect

But it doesn't matter what job we do, we continue to fight for respect

However, differences come into play when we separate by colours

And the white woman's versions of sexual offences will differ from the others

Misogyny is the despisement of all women near or far

Add to this the abuse of black and brown women then you call it misogynoir

Over-representation is the category, makes us vulnerable to workplace abuse

Racial and sexual harassment is rife, it's insidious, and uncivil too

"Go back where you come from," they whisper quietly

But I was born in Lambeth so where should "go back" be?

Big hips, big tits, big lips, big fit, "Ooh you've got a sexy big bum"

"Shut your mouth, you gobby black cow before I give you one"

"I heard coloured women are tigers in bed; is there any truth in that?"

"You're normally aggressive so stop being shy, come here and sit on my lap."

"You what, you who, say what, say who? You're gonna make a complaint about me?"

And who will listen to your inferior voice over my superiority?"

"They're eating the dogs, they're eating the cats", says President Trumpety Trump  
Trump

Who publicly brags about how he grabs the women in their front

Attacking the hijab, the faithful cloth that covers my brown sister's head, neck and locks.

Mocking the burka, jeering the block, they scold her and call her a "letterbox".

Don't touch our hair, the black sister's hair of our hereditary

Warning truth of sisters scalped bald by the masters during slavery

And sexual trauma beyond the workplace for many of us isn't new

The sexual violence, the first time of many, began for me when I was two

Now I'm not oversharing to evoke a popularity vote of sympathy

I'm standing here representing union women who aren't as brave as me

Our stories aren't just marginalised to the journey through our workplace drama

Many black and brown women carry scars of relentless all round-trauma

It's tiring all this code switching and the hiding of our identity

We want inclusion for all women to feel safe, including the global majority

The ground breaking TUC report entitled "And Then it Clicked" should be a mandatory read for all GMB people across the national pick

Misogynoir should now be a term recognised across GMB

And a campaign for us which includes our hair and general incivility.

The worker protection 2023 introduces a new preventative duty

For employers to take reasonable steps to prevent workplace sexual bullies.

And the Monaghan Report is in place to remind us of our past mistakes

On an industrial response we'll help steer this on

Zero tolerance is what it takes

Now my personality isn't everybody's cup of tea

I understand, let's not get that twisted

But quite honestly what others think of me is really none of my business.

Walk a mile in my shoes, be black or brown for a month

Let's see how you get on with that

Relinquish your privileges for a little while and then come back to me and let's have a real chat.

So finally please, stand with me all the black, brown women in this room

Get on your feet in solidarity with this motion which needs to be moved

*(A standing ovation)*

Let everyone see the intersectionality and the beautiful melanin colours

In our GMB where we are proud to be and we'll be respected like every other

Congress, I move. *(Applause and cheers)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Thank you, Ann. Congress, it is now 15.30 and I can now confirm that the ballot has now closed. Secunder for 74, please.

OMOTAYO ABADINA (London): President, Congress, seconding Motion 74. To date very little research has been undertaken that focuses on the specific experiences of black women when considering sexual harassment in the workplace. It is important that we create spaces where women can talk openly about their experiences in an acknowledgement of the collective harm and injustice that they have experienced. Ever since the TUC survey found that of those who responded, 65% experienced sexual harassment of some form, with high rates of unwelcome verbal sexual advances, unwanted touching or sexual jokes. Some 35% said that they had experienced negative gender-based attitudes that diminish women in general, or black women specifically. Some 51% said that their experiences of sexual harassment had a negative impact on

their mental health, 60% said they felt less confident at work, 77% felt isolated at work and 22% said that their experiences had had a negative impact on their performance at work.

We need the GMB and our sister unions to document the over-exposure of black women to racialised sexual harassment, which includes introducing safe reporting mechanisms, processes and policies that investigate reports and proactive action plans that outline preventative measures.

We call on Congress to focus on recruiting more black women into the union who can act as specialists in racialised sexual harassment, sexual violence, and who can support local branches and the union as a whole. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Well done. Could I have the mover of Motion 75, please.

## **SICKLE CELL IN THE WORKPLACE**

### **MOTION 75**

#### **75. SICKLE CELL IN THE WORKPLACE**

This Congress recognises that in the United Kingdom, there are approximately 17,500 people living with Sickle Cell disorders, with 300 new cases identified each year impacting on families. Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is an inherited blood disorder that affects the red blood cells and is particularly common in people with an African or Caribbean family background. This is a serious and lifelong health condition that affects the shape of the red blood cells and the flow of oxygen around the body. The lack of oxygen flow, and other factors such as dehydration, exposure to

cold environments and infections etc. can cause the sickle shaped blood cells to stick together, blocking the small blood vessels. When this happens, sufferers can experience extremely painful episodes known as a sickle cell crisis. When in a crisis the person often has to take strong pain relief, which impacts on their concentration and their ability to complete tasks. Medical treatment can help to manage many of the symptoms this lifelong condition presents, such as painful episodes referred to as sickle cell crises which can often lead to hospital admissions. These crises can be extremely severe and last for days, or even weeks. There can also be an increased risk of serious infections and anaemia. This is due to the compromised immune system and the lifespan of the red blood cells in a sickle cell being approximately 20 days in comparison to someone without sickle cell whose red blood cells' lifespan being 120 days. Due to the lack of red blood cells this causes anaemia as there are not enough healthy red blood cells to carry the necessary oxygen around the body, which can cause tiredness, fatigue and shortness of breath; things healthy people take for granted. Some people with Sickle Cell experience more serious implications, such as delayed growth, strokes and lung/heart problems.

People with Sickle Cell Disease rely on regular specialist medical treatment and medication throughout their lives in order to maintain a healthier life as possible, so it is important that they look after their own health, using self-care measures, being mindful of triggers such as stress, strenuous activities and managing pain.

As a person with Sickle Cell grows older, they may develop different and more serious medical problems. This happens when organ tissues don't receive enough oxygen resulting from the sickle shaped cells permanently blocking the small blood vessels causing implications such as Avascular Necrosis (AVN) of the bones and sickle retinopathy leading to joint replacements and sight loss.

However, most individuals with Sickle Cell Disease go on to live healthy lives, only suffering intermittent short-term disability usually because of painful sickle crises. These crises are highly

exacerbated or precipitated by environmental factors. Although Sickle Cell is recognised as the most common hereditary blood disorder worldwide and it is the fastest growing genetic disorder in the UK. It is increasing in prevalence due to historic and continuing immigration, the rise in interracial relationships and the gene being passed down into families outside of the African/ Caribbean race, where sickle cell is known to originate from. As Sickle Cell is recognised as a disability which falls under the Equality Act 2010, employers have a Legal duty under this Act to prevent discrimination towards disabled employees and provide reasonable adjustments. An example of such adjustments for someone with sickle cell might be consider increasing the overall temperatures of the workplace, or to reduce the use of air conditioning units within the work environment, particularly during the winter months, as cold environments or weathers can trigger a crisis. Another could be providing health and safety inspected individual portable heaters, heated jackets, or specialist ergonomic heated office chairs for employees with Sickle Cell. The question is, how many organisations understand or recognise this health condition and are willing to make these reasonable adjustments? A survey of major employers conducted in the West Midlands suggests that there is only very limited public understanding of Sickle Cell Disease and that there is a failure to distinguish between healthy carriers of the trait and cases of the disease is common. People with Sickle Cell disease need individual help with finding and keeping suitable employment. In Birmingham, it was found that individuals with Sickle Cell disease are likely to be unemployed and that most have lost jobs because of problems with the disease and not being fully supported in the workplace to carry out their duties effectively, due to the lack of understanding regarding the lifelong health condition. There is a need for greater information and understanding about the disease for potential employers and an educational program for the public. Raising awareness by educating the workforce and the general public. This will ensure a greater understanding of the disease nationwide and subsequently improving working conditions for Sickle Cell sufferers which will in turn also reduce the number of Sickle

Cell sufferers claiming benefits and increase their ability to sustain employment. An example is a quote from a focus group participant in February 2021: “no allowance or accommodation were offered to help me manage Sickle Cell at work. If Occupational Health had been more informed, then this would have trickled down and been a starting point. I felt I had no other choice than to leave my job. We need to bridge the gap between health advisers and employers”. Our Branch has an existing grievance raised by a Sickle Cell sufferer which echoes that of the focus group participant. “More effort needs to be done to develop the awareness of Sickle Cell Disease within corporate and public sector organisations to give people like me a fighting chance, to be able to fulfill our desired careers and sustain our employment. Sickle Cell sufferers who have the ability to work just want to be treated fairly and not be forced to take out grievances just for our voices to be eventually heard. We would like to continue working and not have to rely on handouts from the state and be labelled with the stigma that comes with it. Many of us are capable and simply just require support and adjustments in the workplace to effectively compete with our counterparts”

We are calling on Congress to lobby for a change to working practices in relation to Sickle Cell and to force workplaces to hold awareness workshops, train their managers and change their policies and procedures to reflect the growing need for this change in the workplace.

#### **H55 HARROW PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH**

##### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

FUNMI NWAGAGBO (London): President, Congress, I am a first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you. I am here to move Motion 75 on Sickle Cell Awareness in the Workplace.

This Congress recognises that in the UK there are about 17,500 people living with sickle cell disorders and about 300 new cases identified each year impacting on families. Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that affects the red blood cells and is particularly common in people with an African and Caribbean family background. This is a serious lifelong health condition that affects the shape of the red blood cells and the flow of oxygen around the body. The lack of oxygen flow and other factors, such as dehydration and exposure to cold environments and infections and so on, can cause the sickle-cell shaped blood cells to stick together blocking the small blood vein vessels. When this happens, the sufferers can experience extremely painful episodes known as a sickle cell crisis. When in crisis the person often has to take very strong painkillers, which impacts on their concentration and their ability to complete tasks. Medical treatments can help to manage many of the conditions this lifelong condition presents, such as painful episodes referred to as sickle cell crises, which can often lead to hospital admissions. These crises can be extremely severe and last for days or even weeks. There can also be an increased risk of serious infection and anaemia. This is due to the compromised immune system and the lifespan of the red blood cells in the sickle cell being approximately 20 days in comparison to someone without the sickle cell disease whose red blood cells' lifespan is 120 days. Some people with sickle cell disease experience more serious implications such as delayed growth, strokes, lung and heart problems. People with sickle cell disease rely on regular specialist medical treatment and medication throughout their lives in order to maintain a healthier a life as possible. It is important that they look after their own health using self-care measures and being mindful of triggers such as stress, strenuous activities and managing pain. Most individuals with sickle cell disease go on to live healthy lives, only suffering intermittent short-term disability which is usually because of painful sickle crises.



These crises are highly exacerbated by environmental factors. Although sickle cell is recognised as the most common hereditary blood disorder worldwide and the fastest growing genetically disorder in the UK, it is increasing in prevalence due to historical and continuing immigration and the rise in inter-racial relationships and the gene being passed down into families outside of the African Caribbean community where sickle cell is known to originate from.

There was a survey for major employers concluded in the West Midlands which suggests there is only very limited public understanding of sickle cell disease and that there is a failure to distinguish between healthy carriers and common traits. People with sickle cell disease need individual help finding and keeping suitable employment.

THE PRESIDENT: Could you wind up, please?

FUNMI NWAGAGBO: Yes, I will. Our branch actually has an existing grievance raised by a sickle cell sufferer which echoes that of a focus group participate. We are calling on Congress to lobby for a change in working practices in relation to sickle cell and to force workplaces to hold awareness workshops, train their managers and change their policies. Congress, I move this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, well done. Secunder for Motion 75?

BARBARA ADJEI-KYEM, (London): President, Congress, I am a second-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am seconding this Motion 75 on Sickle Cell Disorder. Why should those people who suffer from sickle cell disorder (LCD) be

denied the right to work or to be treated the same as non-sufferers at the workplace? There are duties of employers under the 1996 Employment Rights Act to provide a contract and not to dismiss the employees unfairly. Under the Equality Act 2010, the employer has to make reasonable adjustments for disabled workers at the workplace, including disabled workers being treated fairly.

As sickle cell disorder (LCD) disproportionately affects BME communities, an employer should ensure that they should not engage in direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation, harassment at the workplace against those employees. Giving support to people suffering from sickle cell should allow the sufferer to carry out their job as effectively as non-sufferers at the workplace. I ask you to support this motion, Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, thank you, Barbara. Any delegate wish to speak in opposition to those motions? No. Because the CEC are supporting them all, I will take them as one group. All those in favour of Motion 73, 74, 75, please show. Anyone against?

*Motion 73 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 74 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 75 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now move on to debating an emergency motion from North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region on the Local Government Pension Scheme. Could I have the mover and seconder please for Emergency Motion 2?

## **DEFEND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME**

### **EMERGENCY MOTION 2**

#### **DEFEND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME**

On the 3rd of June Richard Tice, the Deputy Leader of Reform announced that in the 10 councils now controlled by Reform new employees would not be allowed to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The announcement made to the Telegraph is an outrageous attack on local government workers and their terms and conditions of service.

Whilst it might be easy to discount the announcement as performative nonsense from a politician, himself in benefit of arguably the most generous pension scheme in the UK, in the form of his MP's pension, it represents a broader threat upon ordinary workers' pensions.

Over the last 15 years Local Authority workers have already seen their terms and conditions worsen. Not only is the LGPS scheme the key remaining benefit, but without new additional contributors it becomes financially impossible to sustain.

This Congress condemns Richard Tice's announcement in the strongest possible terms and resolves to use the full force of the union to defend the LGPS against this, and any future attacks.

**BRANCH: W45 Wakefield Public Services**

**REGION: GMB North East, Yorkshire & Humber**

*(Carried)*

KARINA DEXTER (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good afternoon, everybody, President, Congress. I am a first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am proud to be GMB's first ever convenor at Wakefield Council. *(Applause)* I rise to move

this emergency motion with pride and with purpose because the attack we are seeing on the Local Government Pension Scheme is not just about pensions, it is about power, it is about dignity, and it is about the future of working people in this country.

Earlier last week Richard Tice, a man who enjoys a gold-plated MP's pension decided to tell the workers of this country that they do not deserve a decent one of their own. He announced that in Reform-controlled councils new starters would be banned from joining the local government pension scheme, with no consultation, no impact assessment; just pure ideological spite, wrapped up in a press release from the *Telegraph*. Let's be clear, this is not performative politics. This is a real and dangerous attack on working people and it sets a chilling precedent. Because if you weaken a pension scheme by cutting off new members, you do not just hurt future staff, you undermine the scheme for everyone. It becomes less viable, less sustainable, and that is not reform; that is sabotage.

I work at Wakefield Council and I know the pressure our members are already under. They are working long hours in vital public services, often for poverty wages. It is the union, the GMB, that has fought, and continues to fight to lift those workers up to win decent pay, decent conditions and the right to retire in dignity. The Local Government Pension Scheme is not just some perk. It is a benefit fought for and earned over generations. It reflects a simple truth, that after a lifetime of service, working people deserve security, not anxiety in retirement.

Cutting off new workers from that promise is cruel and it is reckless and it opens the door to the wholesale dismantling of decent pensions across the public sector. Let's call this what it is: it is class war. Because of the real pensions crisis isn't that a care worker or a street cleaner might one day retire with a modest income. The real scandal is that billionaires and politicians hoard wealth while telling people who build, clean, care and serve that they should expect less. Not on our watch! (*Applause*)

Congress, I am asking you to send a clear united message today. We will not sit back while political opportunists attack our pensions. We will not allow the Local Government Pension Scheme to be run down by stealth. And we will not let Reform or anyone else divide workers between the deserving and the disposable. GMB will use every tool, every resource and every ounce of our collective strength to defend the Local Government Pension Scheme and the dignity of the workers who rely on it. Congress, I move. (*Applause*).

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Karina. Secunder?

LESLIE TIMBEY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): President, Congress, I am proud to be seconding this emergency motion on behalf of the North East, Yorkshire & Humber. We already know we are a great region! Reform UK have not been in public office five minutes yet they are already showing their true colours by attacking the very people who hold our communities together. This is not policy; this is politics of division, targeting hard-working local government staff, including those in the Red Wall seats they claim to represent. Let's be absolutely clear, every current local

government worker is at risk. Every future local government worker is at risk. And our communities are at risk because what they undermine in pensions, you do not just attack retirement, you attack the ability of councils to recruit, retain and value staff. This weakens services, weakens councils and openly weakens communities.

Now we must organise and mobilise. Now is the time for workers to join the GMB and get organised because strength is in numbers, and only through collective action will we stop those attacks and make work better for everyone. Congress, we must stand firm, support the motion, back our members and send Reform a message: we are ready, we are organised and we will fight you for every worker's hard-earned pension. Congress, I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Les. Anyone wish to speak in opposition? Didn't think so. The CEC are supporting this Emergency Motion 2, so all those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Emergency Motion 2 was **CARRIED**.*

### **Video of Solidarity**

THE PRESIDENT: We will now play a video of solidarity from our Italian trade union colleagues from their federation SGIL. *(Video shown) (Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I think it shows how international solidarity is so important. Our problems here are the same problems around the world, and it is great we can hear messages of solidarity from other countries.

## **CEC Special Report: Anti-Racism and Combatting Hate**

### **CEC Special Report - Anti-Racism and Combatting Hate**

#### **Summary of policy adopted**

- GMB is determined to build a truly anti-racist trade union that tackles antisemitism, Islamophobia and all other forms of racism and hatred head-on. Hate, Racism and Fascism stand against every aspect of GMB.
  - An equitable anti-racist society cannot be achieved without our workplaces being anti-racist . We must be actively anti-racist in the workplace, empowering all GMB reps to tackle racism and hatred wherever they find it.
  - We must advance anti-racism and anti-fascism in our workplace organising, bargaining and campaigning agenda through education and training, organising support and solidarity actions.
- Tackling racism at work today
- GMB to campaign to ensure our members' employers monitor, log and appropriately act on race/religion related incidents or concerns raised within the workplace and share these with reps to be jointly addressed.
  - Employers must be required legally to address discriminatory behaviours as part of their safety management systems by expanding Sections 2 and 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act to explicitly cover discrimination by managers, employers, and third parties.
  - Employers should work with GMB representatives when seeking to implement training for staff in workplaces that promotes anti-racism, such as training in equality, diversity and inclusion.

- The Labour government must deliver on its proposal for legislation that will give stronger protections from pay discrimination for ethnically diverse workers and introduce mandatory pay gap reporting for ethnicity and disability. Labour should also ensure that voices from all ethnically diverse backgrounds are properly heard in drafting this legislation.
- Because of the weakness of enforcement of the law we will need strong, inclusive trade union organisation in every workplace to push employers into upholding the law everywhere GMB members work.
- GMB will continue to collect research on instances of racism and discrimination across all sectors to help with our understanding of the types of issues our members face at work. It is important that we understand how we should always have an intersectional understanding of discrimination.

### **Building an anti-racist trade union**

- GMB has a zero-tolerance policy for incidents of racism and hate against our members, in line with existing GMB policy and rulebook commitments
- GMB should expect that all members properly reflect our union's values in their behaviour in the workplace and beyond so as not to bring the union into disrepute, in line with GMB rules and procedures set out in our Union's Rulebook.
- GMB to ensure our principles and values of safety, dignity and unity for all are well publicised in the workplace so that everyone knows what we stand for and that GMB values the contributions of all its members.
- GMB to continue positive action programmes to promote opportunities for ethnically diverse members to participate at all levels of the GMB, such as the GMB Race Achievement Scholarship Programme (GRASP)



- GMB reps must be the champions of our members rights and dignity. They must be empowered to recognise racism and hate whenever they see it, challenge it, and stamp it out of the workplace.
- Through the GMB Comprehensive Education Review, we will establish a training module for all who formally carry out union duties covering core aspects of anti-racism. Regular training updates, via regions, to meet reps' ongoing training needs will be important.
- GMB to further develop the No Place for Racism Toolkit to provide GMB reps with additional tools for recognising racism and hate at work, challenging it and ending it.
- Action to ensure our Branches and Branch Race Officers are active and effective in promoting diversity, with guidance and support and opportunity to connect and engage with their ethnically diverse membership.
- Through the GMB Comprehensive Education Review revise and develop how our core delivery of education and training supports becoming an anti-racist union. Regular updates, via regions, to meet reps' training needs as and when will also be important
- GMB will also work to build link networks between areas of our ethnically diverse and non-diverse membership to promote solidarity and mutual understanding of our members' experiences
- GMB to establish a 'Building Workplace Unity' Initiative where Regions and National teams can work collaboratively together to address emerging issues of division amongst workers that are, or could, affect the safety or quality of GMB members' work, in line with the Union's organising agenda.

### **Building an anti-racist movement**

- GMB is a proudly anti-racist and anti-fascist trade union. In line with our Rulebook we must be ready to stand united and ready challenge it wherever it is found.

- The rise of racism and the far-right is an existential challenge to trade unions. The rise of the Reform UK party has often been regarded as a 'gateway' to far-right politics, and reports are that Reform is gaining ground amongst voters who are trade union members.
- GMB will play a leading, visible role in opposing the far-right in our communities alongside other trade unions, anti-fascist and anti-racist organisations whose aims match our own. Here GMB's unity is not the only source of strength; but also, our regional democracy.

**The full document can be accessed here:**

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/assets/media/downloads/3382/anti-racism-and-combatting-hate.pdf>

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now move on to the CEC Special Report for this afternoon on Anti-Racism and Combatting Hate. Can I call on Sonya Davis to move the report and Simon Day to second.

SONYA DAVIS (Southern): President, Congress, comrades and friends, moving the CEC Special Report: Anti-Racism and Combatting Hate. Congress, the Special Report before you for consideration represents a first step on the road to making GMB a conscious, campaigning, anti-racist trade union. It acknowledges the struggles of our black, Asian and ethnically diverse members in forging the GMB, in being there every step of the way, from Alvin Christie in the wartime workshops of Liverpool, to the Grunwick dispute and the Caribbean (?) strike of recent years. It acknowledges the contribution of our black, Asian and ethnically diverse members in workplace struggles and successes, recognises the challenges that they have faced and the victories they have won in standing up to racism and injustice where and whenever these twin evils rear their ugly heads.

We should celebrate these small, and often not so small successes far more often than we do, rather than tamely accepting the way a fundamentally unequal and unjust world currently operates. Congress, believe me, we do have successes to celebrate and individuals to recognise within GMB for their commitment, adherence to principle and dedication to the cause.

Here I need to pause and recognise the inspiration, the hope and the vision that that driven every endeavour undertaken by our dear comrade and friend Ty Nosakhere. *(Applause)* Ty cannot be with us today but rest assured he is with us every step of the way.

Congress, the document before you combines the vision of our way forward towards our goal of making GMB a truly anti-racist union, with practical measures to realise those ideals. This will not be easy, and there may be challenges along the way, but then nothing worth fighting for comes easily. However, through working together at all levels in all our workplaces, communities, GMB, branches, regions, we can transform the words of this report into radical and positive actions that will reshape our great union, making it welcoming and inclusive for all. and a true heir to our founders, who understood in every fibre and sinew of their beings that an injury to one is an injury to all, and who fought to challenge and change society and the balance of power within that society at every level.

Congress, there is nothing that we cannot accomplish together when we are united in spirit, word and deed. This report recognises those principles and serves as a guide to

firm action. Consequently, I wholeheartedly recommend its adoption by this Congress.

I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sonya. Simon to second, please.

SIMON DAY (Midlands): Midland Region, equal to and united with all the other glorious regions represented here today. (*Applause*). I am privileged to second this Special Report on Anti-Racism and Combatting Hate. Congress, this is a report that is not an end in itself but a statement of beginning of a journey that we have to walk together. It provides a platform for us to hold each other to account, to hold our employers to account. and to hold the societies in which we live and work to account. It is a clock-in card for us together to step up and do some of the long overdue work of change, because racism is a problem for every one of us and the solution to it runs through our collective, principled, practical action. Congress, if we cannot do this together, we won't do it at all. This report helps enable GMB together to become an inclusive anti-racist trade union, one ready, willing and able to combat the hatred of the far right. We will not get there overnight. It will take co-ordinated, collaborative and sustainable work across our union but the report is clear: everyone needs to play their part.

This report is not just for encounters of racism our members face every day. We need to also recognise, as the report, does indifference; for our sisters and our brothers who have lived a life not knowing what racism looks like, sounds like or feels like to be directed at you.

My branch, like many of our branches, is exceptionally low in diversity, predominantly white European and unrepresentative of the communities it serves. My branch is like this because my workplace is like this. We need to be ready to educate, to organise ourselves, to change our workplaces for the better, to make them more diverse as we seek to be more diverse, because that indifference will leave a space for division and for hate to grow if we do not challenge it, if we do not change it.

In my sector, the ambulance service an NHS manager has appeared online in meetings against a backdrop of Nazi flags. Some people when questioned about this even said, “He’s always been into Nazi stuff.” This manager still remains in post while the whistleblower who raised this to the media has now had their career ruined.

Congress, whether it is politicians, managers, or whoever demonising and attacking people because of their diversity, whether it is people standing up against migrants who seek safety on our shores, reinvigorating Fascist figures in Europe making speeches that sound like Enoch Powell, we realise history is never far away from repeating itself. Entities like Reform UK may not be the BNP now, and our members thinking of voting for Reform will not be displaying racist behaviour or far-right views, but we realise that plenty of Reform UK election candidates have publicly shared anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic and pro-othering content to tell us that indifference to Reform brings the far right closer to marching on our streets once again.

Congress, as this report shows, GMB has beaten back the far right in its history before. And we can and will do it again. We will do it shoulder to shoulder with a movement

united in aims and values; the same collective spirit and hope that defeated fascism in 1945, established the NHS in 1948 and built the NHS, through the Windrush years and through other migration and immigration that I am so proud to work in today.

Congress, this report is just the start. It will help us to combat racism and hate towards our members at work and at home. It will reconnect our members and our union to a progressive and truly anti-racist culture rooted in the values that we take into the workplace. It offers hope and our hope will overcome hate and set us apart from our foes. Its watchword of unity is our strength. Racism and fascism shall not pass. Congress, I urge you to adopt this Special Report. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. I will now take a delegate from London Region first to respond.

ROBBIE SCOTT (London): London Region supports this Special Report: Combatting Racism as a crucial step towards making GMB a truly anti-racist union in action, not just in words. Our workplaces are not isolated from society. The rise in far-right violence and hate crimes in 2024 made clear how misinformation and division hurt ethnically diverse members. Racism and fascism threaten not only our communities but our unity at work.

This report rightly calls on us to put anti-racist and anti-fascist organising, campaigning and bargaining at the very top of our agenda. It demands mandatory ongoing anti-racism training for all workplaces and tailored support for our reps to manage

difficult conversations about race and confront hate. Importantly, it commits to ensuring that ethnically diverse voices are heard clearly in the Governments Race and Equality Act legislation, a vital first step in challenging the laws to protect workers.

Congress, we also recognise the importance of partnering with national anti-fascist groups including Stand Up to Racism. However, our regions and branches need to be aware of what organisations we support. We are asking that the CEC regularly reviews our affiliations with anti-racist organisations and informs regions of the current position. Our union cannot stand on the sidelines while others lead the fight against the far right. Engaging with these organisations helps us build solidarity, combat dangerous ideologies and attract vulnerable workers into the trade union movement. Let us honour our proud history of opposing racism and fascism from the Beckton Gasworks to Cable Street and to commit to the report's vision. Please support the report on combatting racism. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Robbie. Midlands?

ARSHAD HUSSAIN (Midlands): President, Congress, sisters and brothers, I speak in support of the CEC's Report on Anti-Racism and Combatting Hate from the Midlands Region. Congress, I want you to focus your mind on what we are currently facing. We are facing a tide not a disagreement but of deliberate division. The kind that seeks to turn worker against worker, neighbour against neighbour. And it is not just in the shadows, it is now on our screens, it is in our newspapers and now standing at the ballot box under the name of Reform. Let's be honest, Reform is not about politics. It is about poison. The words are calculated to divide, to blame migrants, to shame

communities, to stir resentment and badge it as patriotism. Congress, we know better because history shows us hate never stops where it starts. It may begin with race but it never ends there. Next it targets your faith, then your gender identity, your disability, your sexual orientation: your difference. Hate does not discriminate in its ambition, only in its victims. That why with the full support of our Regional Secretary Martin Allen and our Regional Equality Forum, we have launched a High Five campaign in order to meet Reform head on. A campaign to confront their hate in every form and to protect and uplift all of our GMB equality strands. This is not just about saying no to hate. It is about saying yes. Yes to solidarity, yes to inclusion, yes to a union where every member feels safe, seen and supported.

The CEC report gives us the direction. Now we bring the determination. Let us make this clear. There is no room in this union for racism and there never will be. There is no home here for hate, only for hope. And there is no future for division because we are stronger together. Let the far right spread fear. We will spread unity. Let them pedal blame. We will build belonging. And we are GMB. We fight for every worker and we stand against every injustice. And one injustice we all must unite also against is freedom for Palestine. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Arshad. North East, Yorkshire & Humber? (*Formally adopted*) North West & Irish Region?

KELVIN ENABULELE (North West & Irish): President, General Secretary, Congress, proudly North West & Irish Region. (*Applause*) Congress, this report it is not just words on paper. It is a call to action. It is rich, detailed and courageous. Please read it



and it will guide you. Let me speak plainly as a black man. I have been physically assaulted on the street. I have been denied opportunities in the workplace. I have been sidelined even within our union because of the colour of my skin. But I am still here! *(Applause)* And I am speaking today because of people who refuses to stay silent. I want to thank the incredible team before behind this report, men like John Carlo(?), our National Race Organiser Ty Nosakhere, Ann Burns, and our own Ross. Yes, he is from my region before the National Office stole him! On behalf of the National Race Network and GMB, thank you for your tireless work. *(Applause)*

Congress, let's be clear, there is no place for hate in our workplaces, communities and union. Not racism, not Islamophobia, not homophobia, not transphobia, not disability hate. We are one people, one union. We fight for everybody! *(Applause)* And the most powerful weapon we have is our voices. We must speak out, speak against and speak up! Any time, any anywhere!

On Sunday I received the Will Thorne Award, but that moment was not just about me. It was also about a woman I don't know. A white British woman, who saw my pain and chose to act. She spoke up when I could not. Her name is Joanne Ware(?). *(Applause)* She helped me heal my pain. She reminded me that solidarity knows no colour. Joanne, thank you. You are what this union is about.

Congress, let me leave you with these words of Will Thorne, our father. Over a century ago he said, "There is a world of freedom, beauty and equality to gain, where everyone will have an opportunity to express the best that is in them, for the benefit of all." That world is still possible but we only have to build it together. Congress, support this

report let us make our union a beacon of justice, equality and hope. Thank you.

*(Applause and a standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: GMB Scotland?

ANNE MARIE SMITH: President, Congress, first-time delegate, first-time speaker.

*(Applause)* I am speaking in support of this Special Report. Congress, at a time when the far right is on the rise in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, this Special Report is needed more than ever. Whilst not everyone who voted for Trump shares his views, his re-election has emboldened the far right across America. With the rise of Reform in UK politics, we are seeing those views becoming more and more apparent under an increasingly professional outfit. The cost of this will be the basic rights and dignity that our members, union and movement have fought so long and so hard to enshrine in law.

It is not just enough for us to look abroad or in Parliament. We have to look within our own union and our workplaces to instil a firm anti-racist and anti-fascist stance. Branch race officers are the tip of the spear in promoting diversity and equality. In fact, all reps share this responsibility in our own workshops and workplaces. But for some it can still be daunting to call out language or behaviour. GMB has to instil that confidence, training and supporting reps will mean they challenge racism wherever it appears. But nor is it enough for us just to call out racism, as we should. We have to put in place the mechanisms that combat it and promote equity. When Reform are playing on people's anger and frustrations by pointing a finger, we have a responsibility to combat it and build the links between the ethnically diverse and non-diverse memberships of our

union. We have a unique part to play in that we are a member-led organisation made up of working people across the country. Not only do we have access, we have trust that we can build upon to strengthen the bonds between communities. Congress, support this report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. And Southern?

MARIA CHARLES (Southern): Madam President, Congress, comrades, General Secretary. I am a Southern Region, L26 Branch Race Officer, Regional Equality Forum Chair and Race Lead. I welcome the CEC Special Report as it highlights not only what has been done but what is yet to come. We need to welcome the new and embrace the old. Twenty-two years after the Elizabeth Henry report was published, we are about to welcome the proposed changes to equality law in 2025 following the new Employment Bill. We are still committed to ethnicity pay gap reporting and will hold employers to account on their pay gaps. We know there is still a lot of work to do and we have to remain resilient to all employers who flout their duties of care under the Health and Safety Act 1974. There are far too many employees facing racism in the workplace.

All employers should be reassessing risk, especially in this current climate. And let us not forget the riots of last summer. As a union we must remain on high alert to possibilities of further racist attacks on our members. How will we ensure they remain safe at work as a bare minimum?

GMB calls on the Labour Government to deliver on its proposal for legislation that will give stronger protections from pay discrimination for all black and ethnic people and

those with a disability. Our voices need to be heard. We must remain united and maintain workplace unity, and communicate, support and engage with each other at all times. We need to create safe spaces in branches for reps. We need to keep educating and sharing knowledge with each other. The branch race officer must be supported with networks created to provide guidance, knowledge and sharing of skills. The GMB should tailor training and education for reps relating to equality anti-racism and hate relevant to workplaces. Most importantly, we need to hold those difficult conversations. We must debate the far right-narrative, the media and tackle all inequalities. We will embrace the progress we make as a union together and united. I support this CEC report. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Maria. Wales & South West?

JACQUELINE SHORTE (Wales & South West): Madam President, General Secretary, thank you, from the heart of the Wales & South West region for the CEC report. It is a document well overdue, well needed and at a time when we really need to pay attention.

I started my journey in conference by talking about the All-Wales Action Plan and the commitment by Welsh Government to make Wales an anti-racist state by 2030. We must go further as a union. The document highlights the need for allyship, for solidarity, for understanding, for strength, for compassion for each of us. I have heard some very powerful speeches today, from Kelvin, (it helped me being last because I had to compose myself) and from others who mentioned some quite poignant and personal journeys that they have made to get it to this point in time. But we are a union of seven disparate regions. Racism/discrimination knows no boundaries. We must

collaborate more. We must understand each other more. We must be there for each other, not just in solidarity in unionship, but in regions and sections alike. We have the right to make this challenge. We have the right to come together, to empower each and every one of us to take this challenge further. I wanted to thank you for GRASP and my GRASP-ers for making me feel as though I can do it. *(Applause)* I am getting very emotional now but I am coming to the end. I want to thank you my region for taking the time to always be there to support me. Thank you. *(Applause)*. I want to thank my Regional Secretary for taking me from GRASP and making me believe what I could believe. Congress, thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jacquie. Before I take the vote on the Special Report, we will hear Motion 69 from North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region, which was originally part of Composite 4. After North East, Yorkshire & Humber have moved and seconded, I shall ask Simon Day of the CEC to respond with their position and we will then go to the vote on the Special Report. If the report is carried then the motion will fall, if the region does not agree to withdraw.

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Point of order, colleagues. Congress, President, this is a really positive report, but so is our motion. We do not think that passing this Special Report should automatically make our motion fall. Was this a SOC decision? If no, we want this to be referred to them. And if yes, we want them to explain why. We have had nothing from the SOC informing us of what is happening or any clarity but we would like this to be referred to them before we make a decision or vote on our motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzana. It is a CEC decision.

## **GMB TO AFFILIATE WITH ‘STAND UP TO RACISM’,**

### **MOTION 69**

#### **69. GMB TO AFFILIATE WITH ‘STAND UP TO RACISM’, NATIONALLY AND REGIONALLY**

Regardless of race or background; we must unite in the fight against racism and fascism. Therefore, GMB union should affiliate with ‘Stand Up to Racism’. We live in a world where racism continues to divide, to harm, and to silence millions of voices. From the workplace to our communities, from our schools to our streets, the shadow of racism looms large. But it doesn’t have to be this way. Together, we have the power to change the narrative, to demand that justice and equality become more than just words, but actions we live by every day. ‘Stand Up to Racism’ is a campaign that has proven time and again that solidarity is our most powerful weapon. It brings people together, across communities, across generations, and across borders, to say enough is enough. They stand on the front lines of resistance, fighting for a world where everyone can live with dignity and respect. By affiliating with ‘Stand Up to Racism’, the GMB would send a powerful message. We would be standing not just for our members, but for everyone who faces the daily reality of racism, bigotry, and injustice. We would be showing that the fight for workers’ rights cannot be separated from the fight for racial equality. Our union has always been about more than just improving pay and conditions for workers. It’s about standing for justice in all its forms. We have always fought for the rights of the oppressed, for the marginalised, and for those who have been silenced. This is a fight that transcends borders, and now more than ever, we must unite in confronting the scourge of racism and fascism. Affiliating with ‘Stand Up to Racism’ is an essential step. It would give us the platform and the network to amplify our message, to connect with like-minded organisations, and to mobilise our members in solidarity against racism

and fascism. It would give us the chance to take direct action, whether that's through protests, campaigns, or other initiatives, to create a society that stands for peace, equality, and the dignity of all people. We are witnessing a profound shift in the political landscape. Far-right, fascist, and racist ideologies are increasingly gaining traction, both in the UK and globally. A key figure in this alarming rise is Tommy Robinson, who has a long history of fostering hate. He was a member of the Nazi British National Party, and he founded the English Defence League – an organisation known for its Islamophobic and racist actions. In 2024, Robinson held successive mobilisations, culminating in a rally that saw up to 25,000 people march in an incredibly Islamophobic demonstration. Months prior to this, he had incited riots and racist violence, contributing to the unrest that plagued the summer months. Internationally, the far-right is also on the rise. Earlier this year, Donald Trump was inaugurated for another term, giving fresh confidence to the global far-right movement. Perhaps even more disturbingly, figures like Elon Musk – once seen as a tech mogul – are now key players in the far-right ecosystem, stoking racism and Islamophobia. Domestically, we are seeing the far-right emboldened by political forces such as Reform UK. This party now boasts over 170,000 members, surpassing even the Conservative Party in membership, and is setting the agenda in British politics. Their hardline, racist stance is giving dangerous confidence to fascists and hate groups. Tommy Robinson's call for a protest in February this year is nothing more than a continuation of an agenda to promote racism, Islamophobia and building the forces of fascism in Britain. We must unite against the forces that seek to divide us. 'Stand Up To Racism' has been at the forefront of challenging fascism and racism, and it is calling on all of us to join the fight. By affiliating with 'Stand Up To Racism', we are not just making a stand against one man or one group, we are standing up for the values of unity, equality, and justice for all, and we will not allow our communities to be torn apart by hate. This congress resolves to:

- Support the protests called by 'Stand Up To Racism' to stop the far-right.

- Build a strong trade union presence at demonstrations to challenge hatred and division.
- Support the 'Stand Up To Racism' organisation, nationally and regionally.
- Support future anti-fascist initiatives organised by 'Stand Up To Racism'.

We must stand together to fight the rise of far-right extremism, challenge racist and fascist agendas, and protect the values we hold dear.

## **B24 BRADFORD DISTRICT CARE TRUST BRANCH**

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

*(Fell)*

HAFSHA AHMED (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good afternoon, President. I am from Bradford District Care Trust, North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am moving Motion 69 for the GMB to affiliate with Stand Up To Racism.

Congress, first, I will address the elephant in the room. When I first started talking about submitting this motion, I was warned that I would not be universally popular, but as I said to my regional colleagues, the feeling on the ground is so strong that it is essential to have this debate. The CEC have called for us to withdraw this motion in favour of the Special Report but it is our united view that the report simply does not go far enough. In short, Congress, the CEC report provides lots of warm words but delivers very little action. At least six times in the first few pages of the report I read that the GMB are determined to build an anti-racist and anti-fascist trade union, but I cannot seem to find exactly where it says how they will do this. The report repeatedly mentions providing training for members, but training on what? Let's be frank,



everyone knows what racism is. The vast majority of our black, Asian and ethnically diverse members will have at some point in their lives experienced racism. We do not need more training on what racism is, although that would help. We need action and we need it now. Education and training are just not enough on their own. We must build our presence at anti-racist and anti-fascist demonstrations, marches and protests. Solidarity is our most powerful weapon. Therefore, we are calling on the GMB for the organisation of support and solidarity campaigns. For years thousands of people have gathered to stand up to racism in all its forms. In fact, just this weekend people came from across the country to Say No to Racism. It is on the front page of the newspaper that was on everybody's desks yesterday.

Finally, I come back to where I started. I know that there may be regressive elements within organisations like Stand Up to Racism, but I also know that when we are up against a powerful enemy like we are with the far right then we need to build a broad coalition. That is not to sign up to all the politics within anti-racist organisations, but it is to say on this matter we are united.

Passing this motion would send a clear message that we the GMB, are serious about our role in tackling the rise of the far right. We would be standing up not just for our members but for everyone who faces the daily reality of racism, bigotry and injustice.

So, Congress, I urge you to support this motion. Let's make it clear that our great union is committed to tackling the far right and that justice and equality become more than just words but actions that we live by every day. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Can we have a seconder, please?

AMJAD SATHI (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Bradford 24 Branch, seconding Motion 68. Good afternoon, President, Congress. I honestly cannot think of anything more important to talk about in 2025 than the terrifying rise of the far right and how we as a union respond. Throughout history, the union movement has always sought to influence the world around us and make it a fairer and progressive place. Playing that role is now more important than ever. While it may be the responsibility of employers to tackle racism in the workplace, it must be our duty to prevent racism creeping into the workplace. We must not only do this work, we must be seen to be doing this work. The longer we fail to participate in anti-fascist demonstrations, the more our members and the wider community take note. So now is time to set aside past differences, to set aside sectarianism and instead to bring the movements together to unite and fight the rise of the far right.

Congress, last year we saw the horrific scenes on the news and some of us in person. The fascists mobilised in the streets and started attacking hotels where vulnerable refugees were given a roof over their heads. There were crates set on fire, bins set on fire outside the entrances and the exit doors, police being attacked and a lot of looting and shops being smashed and cars being smashed. When the community got together and outnumbered the fascists, they were not seen. Families were worried if their loved ones would get home safely after work. Congress, we are requesting our union to actively get involved in demonstrations with our GMB flags and banners held high and send a clear message saying there is no place for racism in our communities and

workplaces; the fascists cannot divide us. Congress, please support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Amjad.

AMJAD SATTI: Solidarity to the videos that we have seen. I work in the NHS and I feel for the doctors and the nurses and all the healthcare professions that have passed serving their duties in the deadly environments that they work in. Free Free Palestine! Free Free Ukraine! and Free Free all --- *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Amjad. It is a standalone motion, so do we have anybody in opposition to this motion? Can we show respect, please.

ANDY NEWMAN (Southern): I am speaking against Motion 69, which is calling for affiliation to Stand Up To Racism, on the simple basis that Stand Up To Racism is a front for the Socialist Workers' Party, an organisation which has a record of anti-Semitism and also let us remember, only a few years ago disgustingly covered up the alleged rape of a young woman by their General Secretary Martin Smith, who was also known as Comrade Delta back in the day.

What is being proposed here is by affiliating to Stand Up To Racism that organisation would be able to use the GMB logo to organise events and then people would come along to them, and maybe at a national level they find naive people and the great and the good who will sit on the Stand Up To Racism platform, but at the local level in your town it will be the Socialist Workers' Party and people will turn up for that event lulled

into a false sense of security by the GMB logo on it, and they will find that they are being sold the *Socialist Worker*, pulled into the Socialist Workers' Party orbit and taken in entirely the wrong direction. Not the direction of the broadest unity against racism but of a cult which is just out to build their own splinter group away from the movement. We have a fantastic tradition in this union of fighting against the far right, of fighting against racism, and we have always stayed clear of fronts to the Socialist Workers' Party. Let us continue with that, reject Motion 69 and support the fantastic report from the CEC. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Right of reply. Simon, it is the right of reply first. You are too keen.

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Thank you. I don't like the podium as much as Andy does! I was not expecting to be up here a second time. (*Applause*) I will just keep it brief. We are not saying we have to sign up to all the politics within other organisations that organise events, demonstrations, marches but we are saying we need a bit of meat on the bone. This report is fantastic; I am not disputing that but we need a little bit more than just the words that are written in the report. We need action. As somebody who faces racism regularly, and a lot of my colleagues here will today, we all know the struggle of it, it is difficult and we need to do something about it. The GMB are anti-racist, anti-fascist, but we need to be seen more. We need to be in the public. We need action. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Simon, now you can speak.

SIMON DAY (CEC): Thank you, President. I am glad you sat me down when you did! The CEC appreciates the position of the region and wants to affirm that the report supports regions, as at 5.10 it states: “GMB Regions will therefore be best able to lead on how we respond, including which external groups GMB Regions wish to affiliate or partner with in this work. Regions have historically worked closely with Hope Not Hate (e.g. campaign against the BNP in Barking in 2006-2009). Some GMB Regions and the TUC more widely have and continue to mobilise a strong presence for demonstrations, campaigns and initiatives against the far right called by Stand Up to Racism and other organisations.” organisations.”

Congress, it is you as Congress and regions who put the meat on the bones. That is our job. That is what this report gives you the responsibility to do. It is not one size fits all and it does not intend to be one size fits all. Regions can in conversation with the CEC Finance and General Purposes Committee express support in a way that they and their members wish to. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber agree to withdraw the motion? (*Agreed*) I will now take the vote on the CEC Special Report: Ant-Fascism Combatting Hate. All those in favour, please show. All those against? That report is carried so Motion 69 will fall.

*The CEC Special Report was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 69 **FELL**.*

## **Social Policy: Equality & Inclusion**

THE PRESIDENT: That takes us on to debating motions under on Social Policy: Equality & Inclusion. Can I have the mover of Motions 78, 79, 80 and 81 to the front and the mover of 78 to the rostrum?

### **PUSHING FORWARD ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED**

#### **MOTION 78**

##### **78. PUSHING FORWARD ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED**

This Congress believes government is not helping or encouraging smaller businesses when upgrading their premises, to help with disabled access. Accessibility requirements set out in part M of the Building Regulations 2010, only apply at the time when building work takes place. We think money needs to be made available in local councils grants which in turn they can apply to government to be refunded. The bigger businesses are moving out of town, which is a great disadvantage to people with a disability. It's necessary that people with disabilities gain access to small local businesses in smaller towns and villages and we call on this Government to overhaul these Regulations.

#### **K17 KINGS LYNN BRANCH**

##### **LONDON REGION**

*(Carried)*

ALAN LAW (London): Moving Motion 78, Pushing Forward Access for the Disabled. Congress. In 2010, the Coalition Government was formed by the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. This brought in the Equality Act, which is to protect

individuals from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in various aspects of life. The Equality Act was a huge move forward in lots of different ways. Unfortunately, the Equality Act does not quite cover all the issues that it should cover. I say this because accessibility requirements set out in Part M of the Building Regulations of 2010 only applies when building works take place. Existing buildings do not have to modify to comply with current building regulations. However, if an existing building is converted to a shop, restaurant or pub, the access must be upgraded. Existing buildings in the UK will need to be upgraded to comply with the Equality Act. This requires small businesses to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. This means they should anticipate the needs of disabled people and take reasonable steps to ensure their needs are met. Access should be enjoyed equally by disabled and non-disabled people. There should be no discrimination. The Equality Act does not state which specific measures apply to small businesses.

Congress, we need to use all our means that we have available to us. We have to put pressure on the Government to make some kind of funding or grants accessible if small business has any structural changes. This will give the disabled people much more opportunity to enter shops and small businesses. It opens up a new world for them. I have been in touch with my local borough council Norfolk County Council and there is no local funding to help accessibility for the disabled. The GMB are big enough and clever enough to help get the Equality Act up-to-date and allow everybody the same privileges. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Alan. Secunder?

JAN SMITH (London): Seconding Motion 78. You have heard what my colleague has said about access for the disabled. I know the problems they have through family members particularly my husband, in getting into places. They have a right to be able to go into a shop independently without having a struggle to get in. Many shops and businesses have got steps or little trip bars which creates a hazard. We the GMB need to campaign to get these places up-to-date and modernised to cover all our persons regardless of who they are. They have a right to be able to access all properties, et cetera. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Mover of Motion 79?

**REPLACE DISABILITY PASSPORT WITH A HEALTH PASSPORT AND  
LOBBY FOR THEM TO BECOME COMPULSORY**

**MOTION 79**

**79. REPLACE DISABILITY PASSPORT WITH A HEALTH PASSPORT AND LOBBY FOR  
THEM TO BECOME COMPULSORY**

This Congress calls for the Disability Passport to be replaced with a Health Passport and also calls for GMB to lobby government to make these Health Passports compulsory and run campaigns with employers asking them to sign up to using Health Passports while we wait for legislation to hopefully catch up. This Health Passport would apply to all employees in a workplace, some may hold no information but by it applying to all employees it means that everyone is being treated the same. GMB members often don't see themselves as disabled even though they may require adjustments at work. By changing to a Health Passport, the stigma that is often associated with the word disabled is removed and employers themselves say they see



a more positive engagement from employees. It is important when we are asking employers to sign up to Health Passports that part of what they are signing up to includes that when there is a change in line manager that as part of their movement into the role they must review on a regular basis all the employees they are responsible for and look at their Health Passports so that those who require adjustments don't have to re explain and justify their adjustments again and again as they are clearly there in writing, this will prevent those who do need adjustments from having to fight for them over and over and result in more people remaining in the workplace. Congress resolves for GMB to campaign nationally for disability health passports to be brought into legislation, whilst locally arguing for their introduction locally as part of T&C discussions.

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

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

*(Referred)*

JACQUELINE KITCHEN (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): President, Congress, moving Motion 79, Campaign Health Passports to be Introduced Across UK Workplaces. What we are trying to do by this motion is to protect the rights of so many workers across the country. Take myself, for example. I am type 2 diabetic; I'm on lifetime medication but I do not consider myself to have a disability. Day-to-day I do not need my company to put in reasonable adjustments for me but on odd occasion I do, for example, if I have a diabetic hypo. In those circumstances I expect my employer to make a temporary reasonable adjustment so that I am not discriminated against by my employer, but I also need them to know the medication and the help that I need in those circumstances. To us that is what a health passport allows for people like me – and like many of you - and hundreds and thousands of other workers across the country who have a medical condition rather than a disability but who still need reasonable

adjustments and to be protected at work. We understand that the CEC have asked for a referral on this motion which we agree to. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder? *(Formally seconded)* Mover of Motion 80, please.

## **DISABLED WORKERS' ACCESS TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS MOTION 80**

### **80. DISABLED WORKERS' ACCESS TO REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS**

This Congress asks the GMB to pursue implementation of more specific guidance for employers on matters relating to Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Workers.

The TUC report, 'Disabled workers' access to flexible working as a reasonable adjustment', was published in 2021 and contains recommendations for Government, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Employers and Trade Unions. Some of the recommendations have been put in place – for example, government has implemented a day 1 right for workers to apply for flexible working. However other recommendations within the report have not yet been carried out. The EHRC last updated their Statutory Code of Practice in 2019 – 2 years prior to the recommendations made in the TUC report. Disabled workers requesting flexible working as a reasonable adjustment are subject to the same process as non-disabled workers. The right of a disabled worker to be treated more favourably, in line with the equality act, is often overlooked and the statutory business reasons for refusing a flexible working application are used by the employer. We believe that strengthening the rights of Disabled Workers can be achieved by more specific guidance on this subject, including the removal of the business reasons for refusal of flexible working applications for disabled workers.

**EM1 GMB@EMAS BRANCH**

## MIDLANDS REGION

*(Carried)*

IAN BURTON (Midlands): Afternoon everyone, President, moving Motion 80, Disabled Workers' Access to Reasonable Adjustments. We are asking the GMB to pursue implementation of more specific guidance relating to reasonable adjustments for our disabled workers, but why do we need this? We have the Equality Act, right? We have plenty of other literature that tells us what can happen? But the guidance just is not good enough. Being disabled does not need to be a barrier to being a good employee.

I am a proud GMB member and rep. I am proud to be a paramedic in the NHS. But I am embarrassed and I am frustrated by some of the decisions that my employer makes when they are making decisions about reasonable adjustments for disabled workers. I am led to believe that these challenges are seen in other areas of employment and not just the NHS.

I represented quite a good friend of mine, a colleague of mine who just so happens to be disabled. She would not consider herself to be disabled. She likes to be as active as possible, but every now and again she needs a bit of help. But a senior manager in my organisation said, and I quote, "Just because she's disabled and covered under the Equality Act, it doesn't mean we have to treat her more favourably." I read the Code of Conduct for Congress and heeded Barbara's warning from the other day, so I cannot tell you what I thought. But I mean it is not difficult. It is well documented. I believe

that the Equality Act explicitly provides legal protection for employers to treat disabled workers more favourably.

This is difficult. I can almost forgive the manager for making that sort of statement. He has probably been promoted without any training. But I struggle to accept the HR adviser who was present and remained silent. More guidance is clearly needed for employers on this subject. Simply refusing such requests with no consideration for colleagues' rights under the Equality Act keeps happening. It certainly does where I work. I am afraid to report that the case I have just mentioned is not the first and will not be the last. And nor was this statement the worst thing about the case. You are going to hear more about that in a few minutes. Action is needed from employers and the HRC to ensure that disabled workers have their access rights in this area and that the barriers they face are proactively removed. With the improved guidance putting into place the recommendations from the TUC report that was published in 2021 on this subject, it would be more difficult for employers to ignore the rules, whether that is with discriminatory malice or just through incompetence. So thank you, and please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian, and thank you for respecting the Code of Conduct. Secunder please for Motion 80?

HOLLY SHARPE (Midlands): President, Congress, seconding Motion 80, Disabled Workers' Access to Reasonable Adjustments. I am the colleague who was subject to this discrimination by my employer. Due to my disability, I requested a flexible working adjustment. When made this request it was refused and I was informed that I

did not meet my employer's needs. If this had been granted, the adjustment would have removed many barriers that I faced and allowed me to continue in my career. Instead after 17 years of being in the NHS service they terminated my contract. This I believe was due to either a blatant refusal to adhere to the Equality Act or the fact that neither my manager or HR understood the legislation. Fortunately for me my GMB rep did understand the legislation and appealed my termination - and he is amazing. *(Applause)* I won my case which led to the flexible working plan that was created. If the guidelines we are asking for existed at this time, my family would not have gone through what I can only describe as three months of hell, due to stress, anxiety, depression and alopecia brought on by the stress. The feeling of desperation for being made to feel utterly worthless by my employer I would not want anyone else to experience, living with a disability who wants to continue working, to go through. I believe that the guidance would reduce the potential for employers to misinterpret their responsibilities regarding flexible working. Congress, I second this. Please support. *(Standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Holly, that was powerful. Mover of Motion 81, please.

## **SETTLEMENTS ABUSING DISABILITY RIGHTS**

### **MOTION 81**

#### **81. SETTLEMENTS ABUSING DISABILITY RIGHTS**

This Congress notes that some unscrupulous employers are bypassing disability protections, by approaching disabled workers or those that become diagnosed with a condition with "Without Prejudice settlement agreements" to force them out. This usually starts with an informal meeting without warning but with a manager and senior HR. Who raise that the employee is about to be put under a process for sickness absence or performance levels, but to support them the

company is willing to save them the embarrassment of dismissal and recognise loyal service to date by offering them a small settlement, if they choose to leave. This usually comes with a short timescale to decide and a claim that the offer will be removed, and they will instead be dismissed under process, as the case against them is apparently strong.

We call upon Congress and the GMB to lobby government and get tighter legislation on the use of settlements, and stop them being used as a cheap way to abuse employment, disability and Equality rights.

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

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

*(Carried)*

ROB KENWOOD (Wales & Suth West): I must say I do not quite know how to follow that one but I will try my best. President, Congress, I am moving Motion 81. *(Applause)* Colleagues, this Congress must confront a deeply troubling practice that undermines the rights and dignities of disabled workers and members across our workplaces. We have learned that some unscrupulous employers are exploiting the use of “without prejudice “settlement agreements to bypass disability protections and force vulnerable employees out. This often begins with an unexpected informal meeting involving a manager, a senior HR, where the employee is told they face a sickness absence or a performance process. Yet instead of fair treatment they are pressured with a so-called generous settlement offer, framed as a kindness to save them the embarrassment of dismissal and recognise their service. The catch? A very short deadline to accept the threat that refusal will lead to dismissal under a disciplinary process supposedly with a strong case against them. This tactic is not just unfair, it is an abuse of employment, disability and equality rights. The without prejudice label is

meant to protect genuine settlement discussions where there is already an existing dispute but when used this way without real dispute, under pressure and with discriminatory intent, it becomes a tool of discrimination and injustice. Disabled workers already facing barriers are coerced into giving up rights for a pittance without adequate time or support to consider the offer properly.

We need to support our disabled members and colleagues to ensure that they are protected against exploitation and outright bullying. We call on this Congress and the GMB to take a stand. We must lobby the Government for tighter legislation and regulate and restrict the use of settlement agreements. We need laws that protect disabled workers from being cornered into unfair access that requires transparency, fairness and proper safeguards. This is about justice, dignity and ensuring that disabled rights are not hollow promises but real protections in the workplace. Please support this motion to protect our disabled members and all workers from this exploitative practice. Together we can demand stronger laws and a fairer workplace rule. I move.

*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Robert. Secunder? And can movers and seconders of Motions 240, 242 and 255 come down as well. The are our last set of motions.

EMMA CAUSER (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 81. Colleagues, this is an important motion. I wholeheartedly second this vital motion. The exploitation of without prejudice settlement agreements to push disabled workers out is a serious and growing concern that strikes at the heart of workplace fairness and equality. Disabled employees often face unique challenges, and the law recognises this by providing

protections under the Equality Act and other legislation. Yet some employers are circumventing these protections by using settlement agreements as a weapon rather than a tool for genuine dispute resolution. The short time-scales, the pressure tactics and the threat of dismissal if the offer is not accepted create an environment of fear and coercion. The current legal framework, while providing some safeguards, is insufficient to prevent this abuse. The without prejudice principle should not shield employers who use these agreements to discriminate or to force out disabled workers without proper process or respect for their rights. We need clearer, stronger legislation that closes these loopholes and ensures the settlement agreements cannot be used as a cheap way to undermine disability and equality rights. By supporting this motion Congress will send a clear message: we stand with disabled workers, we oppose exploitation and we demand government action to protect the most vulnerable in our workplace. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Emma. Is anybody speaking in opposition to any of these motions? It looks like we have an opposition speaker. No, he is not. You are ahead of your time. Sit down. I am asking for opposition speakers. In that case I will ask Tracey Ashton from the CEC.

TRACEY ASHTON (CEC): Responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 78, 79 and 81. On Motion 78, the CEC fully endorses the goal of making every workplace and public venue accessible. Our qualification is a practical suggestion to strength the campaign. Many local authorities and devolved Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland already run grant schemes that help small businesses install ramps, automatic doors, accessible toilets and similar adjustments. We urge branches and



regions to map these funding streams and press councils to promote or expand them. By pairing the motion's calls for wider access with concrete local grants, we can turn principle into bricks, mortar and working lifts.

Turning to Motion 79, the CEC is asking for this motion to be referred as we would like to work with the region and utilise their activist learning to build on GMB work improving conditions for disabled members. This includes those with long-term health conditions who are not aware that they would be considered disabled by law and entitled to the Equality Act protections. The CEC notes that it is important that we use the word "disabled" and build awareness about what being disabled means and about the legal right to reasonable adjustments. We also think it is important to keep references to "disabled" and "reasonable adjustments", and we would like some more information and statistics before committing to lobby to make health passports compulsory. However, we would like for the branch and the North East, Yorkshire & Humber Regional Equality Forum to work with national disabled activists to find a way forward which takes on board the learning from the branch's work where health passports have been successful.

Finally, on Motion 81 we share the motion's concerns and support it in principle but we wish to add a qualification about method. Employees must retain their legal right to conclude a settlement agreement when it genuinely suits them. We do not wish to erect legal hurdles that could trap members in drawn-out disputes. Instead, we would recommend practical safeguards. Union reps should insist on a meaningful reflection period, say 28 days, for any settlement offer, and remind employers that the duty to accommodate disability extends to the negotiation process itself. Where a member

believes a settlement offer is being used as a blunt instrument of discrimination they should be advised to seek legal counsel immediately. With those practical refinements, in summary, the CEC asks Congress to support Motion 78 and 81 with the qualifications outlined for the North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region to agree to refer Motion 79, thank you (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Tracey. Does London Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) I heard it in the speech but just to confirm just North East Yorkshire & Humber refer? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does Wales & South West accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Okay I will put those to the vote all those in favour of Motion 78, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 80, please show. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 81, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. Thank you.

*Motion 78 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 79 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 80 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 81 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to our last group of motions for today can I have mover of Motion 240. You can come up now.

## **ACCESS TO WORK IN CRISIS**

### **MOTION 240**

#### **240. ACCESS TO WORK IN CRISIS**

This Congress calls on the GMB to ask the Government to investigate Access to Work, improve the speed on applications and reduce the disability employment gap. The Government Access to Work scheme is in crisis and needs urgent reform to tackle long delays in applications. Disabled people waiting for decisions has more than quadrupled in the last year. More than 20,000 disabled people are waiting for decisions compared to just under 4,900 last year. The waiting list is more than twice as high as it was from the start of the pandemic in February 2020. These delays will be making the disability employment gap even worse; it's become with so much bureaucratic incompetence and obstruction in recent years that, in many respects, Access to Work is no longer fit for purpose.

## **W87 WIGAN BRANCH**

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

*(Carried)*

JOE SMITH (North West & Irish): Congress, President, General Secretary, from the fabulous city of the Liver Birds to the magical island of Ireland: the North West & Irish Region. Congress, in June 1994, Access to Work was launched, bringing a whole new element in providing accessibility to disabled people in the workplace. There were two types of Access to Work provisions: assessments, involving exploring workplace-related barriers to employment and making recommendations on how these can be overcome. And elements - these are put in place to provide any additional support this is required. Congress, 31 years later and the old system is in crisis. Disabled workers face delays of more on six months before their application is even assessed, meaning they lose work and have job offers rescinded and most important, lose confidence. All this comes when the Government is desperate to get disabled people back into work. The Government cannot justify under-resourcing Access to Work, saying it is too

costly. It is a vital tool that is needed to support disabled workers in the workplace. If Access to Work helped people like this more people would be in work. As of April 2025, it is not just having a huge effect on disabled workers, it is also businesses employing disabled people. Some are owed thousands and could result in having to let disabled workers go. Under the Access to Work scheme companies and employers can apply for grants to help and support disabled people into work. But there are also huge backlogs, huge payment delays leaving them out of pocket. Some businesses are owed over £200,000 by Access to Work, and they are worried they may close.

We have seen nine different Prime Ministers since 1994, six Tories and three Labour including the one in power now, and they are now in the process of destroying Access to Work. We have already seen the demolition of supported employment, close of Remploy with the loss of over 3,000 disabled workers. This continuous slide into decline has to stop and we need a change. These delays will make the employment gap even worse. It has become so bureaucratic and incompetent in recent years making Access to Work not fit for purpose. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

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

JO PITCHFORD (North West & Irish): President, General Secretary, Congress, seconding Motion 240. The failings in the Access to Work scheme currently in place are quietly crushing opportunities and deepening inequality. This scheme is failing the very individuals it was meant to support. The backlog has soared from thousands to tens of thousands, trapping these workers in an agonising wait for the help that they need to do their jobs. The system is buckling. It is forcing people into financial

instability, anxiety and ultimately, unemployment. The disability employment gap is growing not shrinking and yet little is being done to fix it. This harms diversity, talent retention and ultimately, our economy.

I spoke to a GMB member in education last week who told me yes, the delays with claims are an issue. “I tend to do a week or so at a time because you have to wait so long. It is also awkward doing a larger claim because you can only upload one receipt at a time.” I currently have four separate claims waiting for payment. The earliest was confirmed by work on 9th May and the figure for this is just showing today with no date which means, hopefully, it is due in the next five days.” And this payment is for about £96. Enough is enough. The Government must address the inefficiencies plaguing the scheme, streamline applications and ensure that people with disabilities aren’t left waiting. Because when we invest in accessibility, we invest in talent, innovation and fairness. This is not charity, it is economic sense, it is justice. Let us demand better. Let us fight for change because an inclusive workforce is not just an ideal; it is a right. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, thank you. Mover of Motion 242?

## **RETURN THE CONCEPT OF FEMINISM WHERE IT BELONGS**

### **MOTION 242**

#### **242. RETURN THE CONCEPT OF FEMINISM WHERE IT BELONGS**

This Congress proposes an idea to separate feminism from the gender critical movement to safeguard all women, indicating that both movements are not compatible. Feminism advocates for equality between men and women, whereas the gender critical movement questions the

validity of gender identity and its impact on society. Opponents of the motion may argue that feminism and the gender critical movement both share a common goal of protecting women's rights and challenging societal norms, and that separating them may weaken the struggle for gender equality. The gender critical movement's discourse often excludes and marginalizes transgender women, who are also vulnerable to misogyny and violence. Ultimately, the debate around this motion highlights the complexity and diversity of feminist perspectives and the ongoing need to address the intersectionality of gender, sexuality, race, and other social factors. Congress we ask:

- GMB to recognise the position that feminism should focus on embracing intersectionality and supporting all women, including transgender women, and not just those who conform to traditional gender norms.
- GMB ensures that equality training is available for both stewards and our members.
- GMB to remind members of this commitment and encourage adherence to this principle.

## **S11 SCOTTISH PRIMARY CARE NURSING BRANCH**

### **GMB SCOTLAND**

*(Carried)*

CIORSTADH REICHLE (GMB Scotland): Moving Motion 42 - Return the Concept of Feminism Where it Belongs. Congress, today we gather at a pivotal moment in the ongoing discourse around feminism and the gender critical movement. This motion before us seeks to clarify the often-contentious relationship between these two ideologies, advocating for the separation to safeguard the rights and dignity of all women, in particular transgender women. At its core feminism has always championed the equality of all individuals, advocating for the rights and opportunities of women in

every aspect of life. It is a movement rooted in inclusivity, dedicated to dismantling the systemic barriers that prevent marginalised women from meeting their full potential. However, the emergence of the gender critical movement poses a challenge to this inclusivity, often side-lining transgender women, non-binary and intersex individuals who can and often face the same misogynist discrimination and violence.

To move forward we must embrace intersectionality and recognise that the struggles for women are multi-faceted and cannot be separated from issues of race, sexuality, class and gender identity. Our union GMB, must take a strong stand for a feminism that uplifts every woman, including transgender women, whose rights and dignity are intrinsically linked to our broader goals. Education is vital in dismantling prejudice and fostering understanding. By equipping ourselves with the knowledge to engage compassionately on these issues, we strengthen our commitment to equality in all its forms. It is important to actively remind our members of this commitment, reinforcing the principle that feminism should not exclude anyone, especially those who do not conform to traditional gender norms.

So in conclusion, let us stand together solidarity. We must promote a feminism that is bold, inclusive and intersectional. Together we can build a movement that prioritises the rights and safety for all respecting the diversity of identities and experiences that enrich our life. I urge you all to support this motion, to be part of a transformational shift towards a more equitable society, one in which everyone is valued and heard. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ciorstadh. Secunder?

MELANIE GALE (GMB Scotland): GMB, Scotland - the Brave - seconding Motion 242. (*Applause*). The reason that I have said I would second this motion is because I feel in society, we are now going back the way instead of moving forwards. Feminism is all about all genders having equal rights and equal opportunities. Nobody should be excluded from this. It is about respecting the diversity of women's experiences, their knowledge, their identities, strength, and to empower all women. And that is all women - realising their full rights. This is feminism that it is not exclusively just for women only. Men are included, too. And we should be able to achieve all parts of our equality to ensure everybody has the same respect that should be shown right across. It should be including challenging gender stereotypes, addressing discrimination and advocating for social and political change. We need to educate.

In GMB we all need to stand together, leading the way, with our union showing what this union means to all, not leaving anybody out. Nobody should be excluded. Nobody. Please support this motion. I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Melanie, thank you. Mover of Motion 255?

## **HIGHER EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE AND FUNDING**

### **MOTION 255**

#### **255. HIGHER EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE AND FUNDING**

Congress notes Motion 172/Congress 2023 and in line with our policy, union has a commitment for demand led growth and free higher education for all. Congress believes that the introduction of tuition fees has in effect privatised higher education. Congress notes that historically the UK



Higher Education (HE) sector is a significant source of export earnings. Congress notes that GMB policy is to oppose tuition fees Congress notes the coming funding crisis in the universities sector and calls on the Labour Government to restore grant funding for students and universities and to forgive the student debt book. Congress calls on the Labour Government to reverse the Tory ban on overseas students bringing their families with them when accepted on courses of study or on research contracts. It also calls on the Government to abolish the health service surcharge for people entering as students or researchers and their families. Congress believes that a key driver for economic growth is the human capital of the nation and that tuition fees are an effective inhibitor to that growth. Education should be free for all and that the HE sector should be able to recruit the best talent from around the world.

## **X58 LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH**

### **LONDON REGION**

*(Referred)*

DAVE LEVY (London): Moving Motion 255 - Higher Education, Knowledge and Funding. We heard this morning from the Chancellor, Labour's revised plans on expenditure and its industrial strategy led plans for growth. To me one of the highlights of her speech was the belated recognition that growth will only help if people feel it in their pockets or bank accounts. While GDP growth is the central policy objective of this Government, we believe there are several problems with their approach. The first is it would seem that the purpose of growth is to reduce the national debt, not increase people's incomes. Japan is borrowing 294% of its GDP. We are borrowing 98%. I am no quite sure where the money shortfall is. The national debt is not the problem the government seems to think it is and certainly voters do not think so. By observing last year's US Presidential election results, we can be assured that both US and UK voters

are more concerned with the cost-of-living costs than even jobs, let alone the national debt. The Government's growth strategy, its industrial policy, is based on classic innovation and start-up incubation, and we need to ask whether it is good enough. It has not been before. Even the Government's industrial policy document identifies innovation adoption as an inhibitor to growth. As to private partnerships, the so-called investment crowding in, investment in the UK has usually been from retained profits and not the capital markets. London's capital markets are not patriotic and I do not see what's changed.

One of the missing dimensions in the growth strategy though is education. Human capital is a key driver for growth. They should not be hobbling regulators, weakening consumer protection and the enforcement of employee and privacy rights. There is a need for a vibrant and contributing university sector. Today the UK has that but that is facing a financial crisis and Brexit and the hostile environment have reduced the attractiveness of the UK as a place for foreigners to want to work and live.

The central truth is if the Government is looking to invest in and grow the economy then it must invest in the university sector, which this motion appeals to occur. I would ask you to listen to the CEC reply. They focus on the introduction of tuition fees and loans by New Labour and their then student praetorian, many of whom today are in the Cabinet, and while relevant it is not central to the arguments. I am particularly unimpressed with the phrase, "It is difficult to see the current Labour Government being persuaded to reverse long-standing policy." Can you imagine, Congress, our response or that of our founders should that have been said about a Tory Government or a Victorian management? It is even more offensive when applied to our party who should

be accountable to our needs and demands. They also suggest that GMB policy of free higher education for all is difficult, if the impossible. I do not agree, but maybe our branch should have been more careful with the words we used. Before people say it is not a trade union issue, first, macroeconomics is, and my branch organises both blue collar and black gown staff in the universities, and we heard earlier in the week about the rapid casualisation of academic staff. I wish we could do more. The question I ask is: what are the CEC waiting for? The country's growth strategy needs a secure, resilient university sector, earning foreign exchange and establishing long-term goodwill with the peoples of other countries. The CEC have asked us to refer. We asked them to change it to support with qualification which they did not, so we agree to refer but we have learned to read the spreadsheets and will be tracking action against this motion. Some may say this is overly critical of the Labour Government, but advising friends of theirs is not an act of aggression. I fear that unless the Government changes course in a number of areas, and this being one of them, Keir Starmer's name will go down in history in a consecutive - I have got four words left - in a consecutive footnote to Papandreu's PASOK.

Let's adopt this policy, or let's refer this policy and campaign for policy change and build the alliances necessary to make this effective. Thank you. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: That was more than four words, but that is fine. The seconder please for 255?

BRUCE WILMOT (London): Madam President, Congress, seconding Motion 255. Higher education in the UK faces a crisis. The introduction of tuition fees has

effectively privatised our universities, transforming education from a right into a commodity. GMB policy is clear: we oppose tuition fees. Education should be accessible to all based on ability, not wealth. The current Labour Government must restore grant funding for students and universities, forgive the student debt book and remove the restrictions on international students and abolish the health service surcharge that deters the brightest minds from choosing the UK. We recognise the political challenges - previous Labour Administrations played a role in the commodification of their education - but our movement has never shied away from the difficult fights. What we propose is a new vision for higher education, truly meritocratic, providing equal opportunities and challenging the market ideology that dominates the sector today. Working with other education unions, we must develop a practical blueprint for radical change that recaptures the vision of education as the engine of social mobility and national advancement.

Congress, the fight for free accessible education is about equality, opportunity and justice: fundamental values of our union. I second the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Bruce. Any delegate wish to speak in opposition to any of these motions? Can I ask Dawn to come and give the CEC response, please?

DAWN LOVATT (CEC): Responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 242 and 255. On Motion 242, the CEC supports the motion with qualification. We support the motion's focus on inclusive intersectional feminism which respects all women and demands human rights for people of all genders. Our qualification is that capacity for training for all members is limited but rep training will continue to include vital equality

content.

On Motion 255, the CEC is asking for this motion to be referred. As the motion states, higher education is in crisis and has become market orientated to the extent that the ability is now the determining factor in the sector, a direct consequence of watering own commitments to the meritocratic principle: free tuition and reductions in student grants in the 1980s and 1990s and then the accelerated commodification of education and of HE in particular since the turn of the century. Within this context it is difficult to see the current Labour Government being persuaded to reverse long-standing policy. Furthermore, free higher education for all is a difficult if not impossible ask.

A better approach for a higher education policy is one based on meritocratic principle and seeks to provide equal opportunities for all, capable of breaking down the class and economic privileges that are endemic in the sector that challenges the dogma of marketisation and the highly ideological nature of what passes for higher education. What GMB, together with the other higher education unions, needs to do is to advance its own practical and costed blueprint for radical change in advance.

Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 242 with the qualification I have set out and for London Region to agree to refer Motion 255. Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dawn. Does GMB Scotland accept the qualification on 242? *(Agreed)* And I did hear it in your speech, Dave, but I need to confirm, do London Region agree to refer? *(Agreed)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. So, I will put those to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 240, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 245, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 240 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 242 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 255 was **REFERRED**.*

### **GRASP Presentation**

THE PRESIDENT: I am now proud to introduce the 2025 GRASP presentation. They will join us on stage after their banner procession led by Allison Simon, Chair of the GRASP Ambassadors.

### **GRASP Procession**

*(A standing ovation)*

ALLISON SIMON (Chair of the GRASP Ambassadors): Madam, President, Congress, my name is Allison Simon, Chair of the Race Ambassadors and I am proud to be here today with GRASP Cohort 2. Today I am speaking in the absence of our National Race Officer Tyehimba Nosakhere. It is my honour to officially welcome the newest additions to our team of Race Ambassadors: Simeon, Ash, Lisa, Stella, Jacqueline, Sharmayne(?), Izzy. Unfortunately, Shabir and Sid(?) could not be here with us today,

but they are here in spirit. We are growing in numbers and with that growth we are becoming stronger and a more unified force within the GMB. Together we are building a movement that reflects the true diversity of our union and the workplaces we represent. (*Applause*)

As some of you may know, I come from an education background, and I am deeply passionate about learning in all the stages of life. I am a firm believer in our motto GRASP - opportunities once grasped, forever held. For those of you who are thinking, “What’s she on about, GRASP, what’s that, I keep hearing this GRASP.” GRASP stands for the GMB Race Achievement Scholarship Programme. It is a leadership development programme created specifically for members of ethnically diverse backgrounds. It provides the tools, support and confidence needed to lead, influence and thrive within both the GMB and beyond.

Congress, we must remember equity and justice must live at the heart of every workplace, including our own union. As a union we must practise what we preach. We must lead by example and ensure that employers follow our lead when it comes to challenging inequality and racism within the workplace. This year’s cohort represents every GMB region and a wide range of industries.

Like any parent knows, every child is unique. Even when raised in the same home, in the same way, each GRASP participant brings their own strengths, perspectives and lived experiences, and just like a parent guides and nurtures each child, we will continue to support every member of this cohort in their own individual journey.

Congress, I now introduce to you Race Ambassador Simeon. (*Applause*).

SIMEON: Madam President, General Secretary, the Regional Secretaries here present, Congress, great members of our great union GMB, ladies and gentlemen, visitors and guests here today, it is a profound honour to stand before you here as Cohort 2 Ambassadors celebrating the completion of six months of GMB Race Achievement Scholarship Programme - GRASP.

This journey has been an intensive exploration of history, strategy and skills, focused on embedding diversity, equality, and the inclusion of the global majority across our union's management, organisation, recruitment and member support in line with Dr Henry's report. We salute Comrade Ty Nosakhere and every member of the Race Network, and all the leaders and team mentors who have at one time or the other come to be part of this great Cohort 2, giving us knowledge and leading us through what it is necessary for us to grasp for the GMB.

We are (unclear) in designing a comprehensive programme that has challenged and equipped us. We also thank the National Office team for going above and beyond to ensure we were armed with knowledge and skills that truly stands out today. When we began some of us had no lay leadership roles. Today, as active reps, branch officers or holding regional positions, many have secured promotions or new roles, including within GMB, thanks to the confidence and skills GRASP has given us. You will see this in the majority of our ladies here who are first-time delegates and have delivered their motions in the most respectful and successful ways. We have seen the performance of some of our members today in this Congress. As Ambassadors we



bring fresh insight and energy to build and strengthen our union. We deeply appreciate GMB's investment in us and pledge to be visible, tangible agents of change in all areas of our union work.

Looking ahead to Cohort 3 and building on Cohort 1's policies and strategies across all seven regions, we commit to the collaboration and continuity of this great project. We appreciate and once more thanks to the GMB for being a union for everyone, and for leading on inclusion, not just in words but through bold actions. Together let us grasp learning to Make Work Better, for our members, our communities and our union and the future of the world. Grasp! Grasp! Grasp! (*Applause*)

ALLISON SIMON: Thank you very much, Simeon. We are just going to do a quick presentation for all the Graspers for completing their scholarship programme. We are very proud of all of them. I would like to call up Race Ambassador Simeon, please. Race Ambassador Ash. (*Applause*) Race Ambassador Lisa. (*Applause*) Race Ambassador Stella. (*Applause*) Race Ambassador Jacqueline. (*Applause*) Race Ambassador Izzy. (*Applause*) Race Ambassador Charmayne. (*Applause*) Again we won't forget Race Ambassador Shabir and Race Ambassador Sid. (*Applause*) I would like to thank Ty and all those involved with the logistics and organisation of GRASP Cohort 2. I would also like to thank the GMB for continuing to support the GRASP programme - and may it continue. Thank you, everyone. (*Applause*)

## **Election Results**

THE CO-CHAIR: Congress, we can now give you the results of the President and Vice

President elections. Thank you all for casting your votes and to all the candidates for their excellent addresses this morning. I will now ask Kevin Fox, the GMA member, to come to the rostrum to announce the results.

KEVIN FOX (GMA Member): Honorary Co-Chair, Congress, Kevin Fox GMB Member Auditor. I am reporting the result of the elections for the two elections held today for National President and Vice President.

Dealing first with the election for National President, we had 386 ballot papers distributed to Congress delegates and members of the CEC in attendance who are entitled to vote. Voting closed at 3.30 pm. Votes have been counted by myself and Jayne Davies, General Member Auditor, the Secretary to the General Member Auditors and the Executive Officer.

I can tell you that 386 ballot papers were returned. Zero ballot papers were spoiled or invalid. Therefore, all 386 ballot papers were valid.

The result is as follows:

Gordon Gibbs 90 votes

Barbara Plant 296 votes (*Applause*)

I therefore declare Barbara Plant duly elected as National President. (*Applause*)

Dealing secondly with the National Vice President election, 386 ballot papers were distributed to Congress delegates and members of the CEC in attendance who were

entitled to vote. Voting closed at 3.30 pm. The votes have been counted by myself and Jayne Davies, General Member Auditor, the Secretary to the General Member Auditors and the Executive Officer.

I can tell you that 386 ballot papers were returned. Zero ballot papers were spoiled or invalid. Therefore, all 386 ballot papers were valid.

The results are follows:

Tracey Ashton 32 votes

Kevin Buchanan 69 votes

Sonya Davis 134 votes

Dave Douglas 118 votes

Kevin Jones 33 votes

*(Applause and a standing ovation)*

I therefore declare Sonya Davis duly elected as National Vice President. I would like to congratulate both of you on your elections. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE CO-CHAIR: Colleagues, if either of the winners would like to say a word of thanks, please come to the rostrum.

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, can I just say thank you to all the candidates that took part in the election this morning. *(Applause)* I thought all your speeches were excellent and really heartfelt and I just think it shows what great people we have got in this union and you have on your Central Executive Council. And Gordon, thank you, because I

think it shows that your union is a democracy and that is really important. And Sonya, well done. *(Applause)* I am going to miss Malcolm. Malcolm, I am going to miss you as Vice President but, Sonya, I look forward to working with you. And here's to Southern Region. *(Applause)*

Just to everybody in this hall, thank you for giving me your confidence to be elected back as National President. As I said this morning, it is a real pleasure, it is a privilege to be your National President. Just keep on inviting me to your regions and to your nations, because that is what I love best, coming to visit you in your workplaces. I spent all my life in education and it is always an eye opener to come into a factory or a shipyard or a nuclear power plant. So I look forward to that. I am also looking forward to Blackpool because I have never been. I am looking forward to going to Blackpool next year and chairing Congress then. Thank you so much. *(Applause)*

SONYA DAVIS: Wow, I didn't really expect this so -- *(Applause)* Thank you, everyone. Standing before you as the newly elected National Vice President of GMB, it is an immense honour, one that I really don't take lightly. First and foremost, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the members who have put their trust in me. I really appreciate it. I have just got no words. Your belief in me is both humbling and empowering. To the London and Southern Region, I have got to give you a big thank you from the utmost of my heart because you have supported me from the outset. *(Applause)* So I have got to give the biggest thank you to you and to all those other regions and everyone else that went and put their cross against my name, I really, really appreciate it.

Today we celebrate not just an election victory but a triumph over barriers -- sorry, I am just overwhelmed. -- triumph over barriers that once seemed unbreakable. That phrase “smashing glass ceilings” is not just about personal success, it is about paving the way for those who come after us. We are rewriting the narrative, proving that determination, resilience and collective strength can shatter limitations. This role is not just a title, it is a responsibility: a responsibility to uplift voices, fight for fairness and ensure that our union continues to protect and empower all members. I pledge to stand firm in that commitment. To listen, to lead and to be a relentless advocate for working people. We are stronger together and together we will continue breaking barriers, demanding justice and shaping a future that reflects the strength and diversity of our workforce. Thank you all once again.

I want to say thank you to Dave - Trigger. Your speech was awesome and I felt it was going to be you so when I heard I had got more votes than I just couldn't believe it so thank you, and thank you to everyone. I look forward to working with you, Barbara, I really do and, as I said to you, Malcolm, thank you for all your dedication and all the work that you have done. Onwards and upwards, everyone. Thank you. (*Applause and a standing ovation*)

THE CO-CHAIR: Colleagues, I will now close Conference and wish to see you all at 9 o'clock all bushy-tailed and ready. Thank you. Have a good evening.

*Congress adjourned.*

