

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

.....

PROCEEDINGS

DAY FOUR
(Wednesday, 11th June 2025)

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FOURTH DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 11th JUNE 2025

MORNING SESSION

(Conference assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

Call to Order

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call Congress to order, please. Morning, everybody. I hope you all had good evenings at your regional events last night.

We will be starting this morning's business with a report from the Standing Orders Committee by way of SOC Report No. 5, followed by North East, Yorkshire & Humber's Successes video.

I must also give you all a bit of a warning ahead of the video as it contains flashing lights. Then we will also have our final awards of the week. Karen?

Standing Orders Committee Report No. 5

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): Moving SOC Report No. 5. Withdrawn motions. The SOC has been advised that the following motion from Wales

& South West has been withdrawn Emergency Motion 1 - Urgent Clarifications to Protect Trans Women Considering the Supreme Court Narrow Definition of a Woman.

Emergency motions. The SOC has agreed a further emergency motion. This is Emergency Motion 7, from GMB Scotland - Access to Free Period Products at all GMB Events. The time that this will be heard will be advised as soon as possible.

President, Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No.5.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to that report? No. Can I put that the vote, please? All those in favour of? Anyone against?

*Standing Orders Committee Report No. 5 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Just to let you know there a slight change in the order of business this morning. It is all happening this morning but it might be in a slightly different order so if you could listen out carefully because your motion or rule Amendment might have come in a different place.

North East, Yorkshire & Humber Regional Video

THE PRESIDENT: We will now move on to watching the North East, Yorkshire and Humber video. *(Video shown) (Applause)* A great video North East, Yorkshire & Humber. A great upbeat way to start the morning, thank you.

John McClean Health & Safety Awards

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, it is my great pleasure to announce the winner of the John McClean award for the GMB Health and Safety Team of the years for 2025. John was the former National Health and Safety Officer and he remains much missed. This year's award is presented to the Bestfood Logistics National Health and Safety Team, for their outstanding efforts in changing the health and safety standards not only in their employer but also raising standards at the third-party sites that BestFood deliver to. We will watch a short video first. *(Video shown) (Applause)*

Congress, this is a textbook example of organising around a multi-site organisation, using committees and the power of safety representatives to make tangible gains. Organising in this sector is extremely difficult so this is a substantial achievement worthy of recognition.

I would like to invite Mike Vearer, Simon Wilde, Laal Flynn and Paul McCarney to come and receive the award, please. *(Applause)*

A SPEAKER FROM BESTFOOD LOGISTICS: Congress, thanks very much. We are honoured to receive the award. It just goes to show what we can do in the workplace, getting organised, getting a step ahead. Basically, I want to thank the GMB for all the courses and the knowledge they have given us. It inspires you to take that to the company. However, regardless of the training and knowledge, it means nothing if you

have not got that spirit and fire in your belly to do that, so don't be afraid, challenge everything. Keep your workplace safe. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Union Organisation: Union Benefits & Services

THE PRESIDENT: Well done again. Congress, we now move on to Union Organisation: Union Benefits & Services. Before I explain how that debate will work can I just say that Emergency Motion 7 will be debated this morning towards the end of the session, so the mover and seconder of that emergency motion need to be ready.

Congress, we will now be debating motions relating to Finances and Union Benefits and services. And also the Financial Proposals and Annual Accounts which will be moved by the General Secretary. I will explain how I will take this debate so listen carefully to this. Delegates will move and second Motions 34, 35, Composite 5 and Motion 41, with any opposing speakers, so if they are ready to come down to the front that would be helpful. The General Secretary will then respond with the CEC positions then move the Financial Proposals and Annual Accounts. Regions will have the opportunity to speak on the financial proposals and as always, I will call them in a certain order.

We will then take the vote on the Financial Proposals and Annual Accounts and then the votes on the motions. So, if I could have the mover of Motion 34 please and the other movers and seconders of 35, Composite 2 and Motion 41 down the front, please. On Composite 2, three speakers are allowed so it is so North East, Yorkshire & Humber,

Southern to second, and then I think a third speaker may have been agreed between the regions London and Midlands.

COST OF LIVING RISE – INCREASING THE OVERNIGHT MEAL ALLOWANCE FROM £20 TO £25

MOTION 34

34. COST OF LIVING RISE - INCREASING THE OVERNIGHT MEAL ALLOWANCE FROM £20 TO £25

This congress notes the continuing rise in the cost of living and an area that has not been reviewed for some time is the overnight allowance our lay members receive when they are away from home carrying out trade union activities. This allowance allows our lay members, activists, and post holders to be reimbursed for an evening meal if one is not already provided when they are working away from home.

For as long as we have known there hasn't been a review on the overnight allowance that is received for food and drink when staying away from home. We ask for your support to increase this amount so members who partake in union activities are not regularly out of pocket for a meal because of the rise in costs that the food and hospitality industry is facing. We want to encourage more working people to engage and work with us and these costs can often be a barrier for them to represent the sector or workplace they work in. Without our lay representatives and post holders we cannot function as a union. Congress please support.

X20 NEYH CENTRAL BRANCH

NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

(Carried)

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire and Humber): Speaking on Motion 34 on Increasing the Overnight Meal Allowance from £20 to £25. Congress, an area that has not been reviewed for some time is the overnight allowance. Our lay members receive this when they are away from home carrying out trade union activities. This allowance allows our lay members, activists and postholders to be reimbursed for an evening meal if one is not already provided when they are working away from home. The cost-of-living crisis has created an environment whereby our members are having to choose between paying an essential bill or buying food. For as long as I have known, there has not been a review of the overnight allowance that is received for this and, Congress, we should not be forced to eat junk food or heavily processed food just because that is all we can afford when we are away from home. We should have that choice. This impacts our health and well-being, and much later on in life as well. When we are taking part in trade union activities, we should not always be out of pocket is the bottom line and the rising cost of the cost of living and the hospitality industry adding in costs and putting that on to us, increases the pressures on us.

We want to encourage more and more working people to engage in our processes and work with us in the trade union movement and these costs are often a barrier. It does not allow them to represent their sector, or the workplaces they are in, and without our lay representatives and postholders we cannot function as a union.

Congress, please support this motion. This helps us carry out these roles without worrying about being able to afford it. This affects our mental health and well-being whilst we are doing this. Congress, it took four years to provide a 5 p increase to mileage and, on that basis, it could take decades. We might not even be here and it will

still be going through a review. I just feel like we need to make this decision today. Congress, you are the supreme decision-making body of our union, so I would like us to vote on this today. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzana. Secunder?

SARAH YOUNG (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Morning. Seconding Motion 34, Cost of Living Increase in Overnight Meal Allowance from £20 to £25. President, Congress, Gary, proud to be an active campaigner, so here is my campaign for the day. It may only take two minutes to explain but it will not only help everyone in this hall but all our lay activists. It is called: “Don’t Be a Miser ...” (*Shouts of “Give us a Fiver!”*) (*Applause*) Our lay members work hard for our union voluntarily but we are also skint. In this cost-of-living crisis, the cost of food makes you go dizzy at the till, wage rises have deflated like my car tyre did the other week (*Blows a raspberry*) with a dirty great big nail in it and I could have done with a fair few fivers after that. And energy companies are more greedy than a rich git dodging a tax bill.

Joking aside, it is very common for people to live month to month, hoping their hard-earned wages last until the next payday. Those on a minimum wage really struggle to make ends meet and it does not take much to reach the overdraft some months. When our lay members are away from home carrying out trade union duties if a meal is not provided then the meal allowance allows £20 to cover the cost of a meal. However, with the increase in food prices our lay members often find themselves out of pocket due to the increasing costs of the hospitality industry. Congress, just think about what

you have spent this week. In our hotel a burger alone is 25 quid and don't even get me started on the cost of pint. I know we are a long way down south but bloomin' heck.

The allowance amount has not been reviewed for some time, so we ask that we keep up with the times and increase it by just £5 in order for our hard-working lay members not to worry about being out of pocket in difficult times. No one should be put off or left out of pocket for carrying out GMB duties, so please, Gary, Don't be a Miser ..."
(Shouts of "Give us a Fiver!") I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sarah. Mover of Motion 35, please.

RAISE THE DAILY SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE

MOTION 35

35. RAISE THE DAILY SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE

Congress, we note that over the last decade workers' pay has slowly been eroded and more working people are in poverty than ever. Regions pay members their travel, overnight accommodation and subsistence when attending GMB meetings especially when away from home. However, there is a cost-of-living crisis and food costs have increased. This Congress believes that the monies paid by members in membership fees, should reflect this and the subsistence allowance should be increased.

L16 LB GREENWICH BRANCH

SOUTHERN REGION

(Carried)

DENISE SCOTT-McDONALD (Southern): Gosh, I have to follow someone that had a way more exciting speech than me! Good morning, Congress, good morning, President. I am a first-time attendee of GMB and a first-time speaker at this Conference. (*Applause*). So please be gentle with me. I am here to speak on Motion 35. A huge shout out for Sonya who is from Southern who won yesterday. Well done Sonya. And Barbara, congratulations, too.

I am here to say the cost-of-living crisis is not over. Even though it is away from the headlines, even though it may not be mentioned in the newspapers, it is still very real today for so many of us. For over a decade workers' pay has been held down while prices have surged, wages have stagnated, insecure work has grown, and now in one of the wealthiest economies in the world, we are witnessing more working families slipping below the poverty line.

Congress, it is nothing short of shameful that full-time workers - our members - are having to choose between heating their homes or feeding their children. That is the reality they face and when these same members are called upon to serve our union, to attend our meetings, to represent their branches and contribute their experience and their wisdom, attending training courses, they should not be expected to lose financially. This motion is not about extravagance. It is about fairness. Subsistence allowance exists for a reason: to ensure no member is financially disadvantaged when fulfilling their union duties. But the truth is that current rates are simply no longer sufficient. Food, transport, overnight stays - everything costs more. And what is more a sandwich which used to cost a fiver a few years ago now is a lot, lot more. And yet subsistence rates have remained largely unchanged.

Congress, this is not sustainable. We must ask ourselves, what message are we sending if we expect our members, many already struggling, to foot the bill for supporting their union? Our union is funded by its members. They pay their dues week in, week out. That money must not only be used for campaigning and negotiations but to ensure that participation in union activities is accessible to all, not just those who can afford it. If we fail to act, we risk excluding the voices of the very people we claim to represent. We risk turning union representation into a privilege for the few rather than a right for all.

Congress, this motion asks that we put our values into practice. It is opportunity to say clearly we value the time and sacrifice of our members, we recognise the pressure they face we will not allow union participation to be a financial burden. Raising the subsistence allowance is not a luxury, it is a necessity. I strongly urge Congress to support this motion and ensure are that no member is left behind simply because the price of a meal has become unaffordable. I move this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Denise, well done. Secunder?

JANET BRUIN (Southern): Seconding Motion 35. President, Congress. I am a proud member of the National Care Committee. First-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am extremely nervous so please bear with me. Let's be honest, working people are struggling. Wages have stagnated, prices have soared and today more people in work are living in poverty than ever before. Our members and our workplace representatives are most likely having to use food banks to support feeding their

families, and yet when our members step up to represent our great service, this union, travelling, staying overnight, attending meetings, they are often left out of pocket. The subsistence allowance - or was - meant to prevent that but it has not kept up with the cost of living. Pop into a supermarket and the cost of a meal deal has doubled. Lunch in a cafe can cost an arm and a leg and a sandwich and a drink that once cost a fiver now costs £10. A simple evening meal in most towns needs you to take out a bank loan and in some establishments, it is no longer affordable for many.

Congress, our members, who keep this union running, the very least we can do is ensure that no one is financially penalised for belonging to and supporting the union they helped build. Raising the daily subsistence allowance is not a bonus, it is a basic fairness. It means that all our members no matter their income can participate fully without financial worry. It keeps this union inclusive and it honours the commitment of our members. Please get behind this. Let's pass this motion and show we understand the realities our people face. I second this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Janet. Mover of Composite 2.

COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELFARE SUPPORT FOR GMB REPRESENTATIVES

COMPOSITE MOTION 2

Covering Motions

38: GMB Welfare – London Region

39: Comprehensive Mental Health Support For Representatives – Southern Region

40: Reps Mental Health Support – Midlands Region

42: GMB Activists - GMB Scotland

C2. COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELFARE SUPPORT FOR GMB REPRESENTATIVES

This Congress recognises the importance of the mental health and welfare of all GMB reps. Statistics have shown that over the last decade the amount days lost at work have changed from muscular skeletal physical conditions being the highest reasons to now being days lost caused by stress and mental health illness being the highest reasons for employees losing time from work. You have to show that your mental health problem is a disability to get the protection of the Equality Act. It's not a given that your condition is covered by the 2010 Equalities Act.

This Congress notes that some employers are micromanaging their staff which results in members being off sick with stress and mental health conditions. We have examples of this across our members working in local authorities, care homes and schools amongst some. GMB representatives play a crucial role in supporting members, often handling complex and emotionally challenging cases involving safeguarding concerns, harassment, health and safety incidents, near-misses, and even fatalities.

As a GMB Reps/Activists, Shop Stewards we are increasingly supporting and representing their members in more difficult, challenging, and emotional aspects of their work and home lives. The earlier intervention and the correct advice we give to our members can assist in preventing time off work and an all-round better mental health and wellbeing. Representatives frequently face situations where they must advocate for members in ways that may conflict with their personal beliefs or values. This emotional burden can result in stress, anxiety, and burnout, particularly as many representatives balance these duties with full-time employment and personal responsibilities. The information we receive from members can place a heavy weight on our shoulders and place a high demand on us to ensure we are offering the best advice and

representation we can. As reps, we feel helpless. Instead of signposting our members to an assortment of charities and other organisations, we call on Congress to look into a welfare service for our members like the schemes other Unions offer which provide confidential advice and support services for members and/or their dependents. Representatives should have access to mental health and emotional support services at all times, including outside of standard working hours, to ensure they receive timely assistance when dealing with particularly difficult cases. Ideally a form of counselling sessions, advice and overall support professionally should be offered to our reps knowing the pressures and stressors that some encounter going about their service.

Some employers ask employees if they would like to volunteer to become a certified mental health first aider approved by mental health first aiders England within their workplace and offer paid time off for training and support in this role, but not all employers do this GMB would support any activist who wishes to become a certified mental health first aider within their workplace. Every GMB activist should be provided with information regarding the free “Hub of Hope” mobile app where upto date information is stored to enable them to have the knowledge to signpost and better represent our members suffering from mental health conditions. I would encourage our union to go one step further and offer our activists who are the unpaid workers of our union the support we need when our stress and mental health is being pushed to the limits, a supportive framework we can reach out to help us. We would like to agree in Congress to provide a support network across the UK to alleviate this growing issue.

Not all GMB activists are employed by employers where they can access the organisations metal health support system such as counselling sessions, and not all employers even offer this support to their employee's.

The NEYH region currently offers a five-day dealing with stress and mental health in the workplace course for activists in their regional education programme. This course is not

mandatory and has a wait list due to the popularity of the course. We call on congress to ensure that each region has employed qualified counselling advocates where activists/ reps/ convenors/ shop stewards can gain access to and help us, the people that are helping our members in their times of need.

This Conference Resolves to:

1. Establish a 24/7 confidential mental health support helpline dedicated to GMB representatives, providing professional counselling and guidance.
2. Implement regular resilience and mental well-being training for representatives to equip them with coping strategies for handling difficult cases.
3. Develop peer support networks within regions to allow representatives to share experiences and provide mutual support, fostering a sense of solidarity and reducing isolation.
4. Ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the provision of mental health services, including funding for emergency sessions with mental health professionals when required.

Congress, we urge you to allow this to happen.

Moving Region: North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region

Seconding Region: Southern Region

(Referred)

KAVEH DAMESTANI (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Proud member of the North East, Yorkshire & Humber delegation, on behalf of Durham Local Authority Branch. First-time delegate, second-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am speaking regarding Composite 2 - Mental Health Support.

Mental health support is something close to my heart. I have been a GMB rep for over 18 years within Durham Local Authority and am a team leader of a diverse and talented

team. Throughout that time, I have supported members going through a whole range of difficult and sometimes dangerous situations. All too often I have been the first of line support for people in incredible vulnerable situations. I have been there for workers responding to workplace problems who have broken down, who have suffered psychotic episodes and who have sadly lost all perspective and looked to take their own lives.

But just as importantly, I have been through my own challenges. Two and a half years ago I lost my wife to the cruelty of cancer, and while struggling to come to terms with my grief I lost both my mum and dad within months of each other. My entire immediate family was lost to me in just eight short months. I am not ashamed to say that I needed to reach out for help. Help that I was lucky to get from the NHS, my loving family, friends and from colleagues at Durham GMB, who have been nothing but outstanding.

So, I know how important it is that we are there to support our members when they are struggling themselves, but sometimes that can come at a price. Being there, being on the front-line can affect our reps in a really significant way. Far too many people are let down by a postcode lottery number of NHS mental health support and their local GMB rep ends up on the front line as a therapist or counsellor.

Recently I had a young member who was struggling with mental health and felt that his life was no longer worth living. He felt comfortable opening up to me and I helped point him in the direction of support and listened to his issues. I openly admit that I felt out of my depth in this situation and I am fully aware that me saying the wrong thing could have had disastrous consequences. This is a heavy burden to put on to our reps

and has a lasting impact on our mental health. We must take this challenge seriously. We must be there as a union for those who are supporting others.

This motion is about recognising the amazing work that our activists are doing across the UK supporting those suffering mental health problems, but, just as importantly, it is about acknowledging how providing this support can impact upon our activists. We must do more to support those who are on the front-line supporting others, making sure that they have the support they need to stay fit and well themselves.

I have learned a huge amount over the last few years, not only about myself but about mental health and how it affects so many of us. I have taken it upon myself to talk about this subject because it is the right thing to do and I hope that by speaking out I can improve things for others as well. Congress, I urge you to support this motion and make sure that we do everything we can to support every single one of our activists. Thank you for listening. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?'

MARZENA ZBOROWSKA HUGGETT (Southern): Good morning, Congress. Once again congratulations to Barbara and Sonya for yesterday. A huge well done! Congress, I am proud to second Composite 2 because behind every successful case, every grievance upheld, every member protected there is a GMB rep. And that rep is often carrying a heavy emotional load. We represent members through some of the most traumatic and morally complex situations: safeguarding concerns, harassment, near misses, workplace deaths, and sometimes we are asked to argue for outcomes that

conflict with our own values because that is what representation demands. But who supports us? Reps do this on top of their full-time jobs, family responsibilities and union admin. We are volunteers, dedicated, passionate - but not invincible.

This motion is about building a real support structure for reps; one that does not leave us to break down in silence. We need a 24/7 helpline. We need access to professional counselling. We need resilience training, not just once but regularly. And we need peer networks because sometimes the only people who understand what we are going through are other reps.

This composite brings together motions from across most of our regions, if not all. That tells you everything you need to know. This is a national issue and we need a national solution. So today, I ask people to back this composite not just for the reps who had struggling now but for the future of our activist base because if we want strong reps we have to keep them well. Support this motion. Support each other. Thank you.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done Marzena, thank you. And a third delegate from whichever region has agreed to speak - Midlands?

CLARE SEMMENS (Midlands): Good morning, Madam President. Good morning, Congress. I am from the amazing Midlands Region, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Every one of us in this hall knows how vital our union reps are. They stand with members in their darkest hours through disciplinaries, sickness reviews, restructures, bullying and more. They give everything to support others. As

we all know, that support comes at a cost. Too many reps are running on empty. They are absorbing the stress, trauma and pressure day after day, case after case, with no outlet, no debrief and no structured support. And we wonder why some of them are burnt out and step back. We talk a lot about members' welfare and rightly so, but we must now talk about rep welfare.

Seconding this motion means backing the creation of a national support network across the GMB because, let's be clear, looking after reps is not a luxury, it is a necessity. If we want strong representation in workplaces, we want experienced reps to stay, if we want a union that truly cares, then this motion is part of the answer. Congress, we cannot continue to pour from an empty cup. Let's refill, let's rebuild it. Support this motion. Support our reps. Support our union. Thank you. (*Applause*)

WELLBEING SUPPORTING FOR REPS AND EMPLOYEES

MOTION 41

41. WELLBEING SUPPORTING FOR REPS AND EMPLOYEES

This Congress recognises the crucial role shop stewards, health and safety reps, and branch officers play in supporting GMB members across the country every day; further recognises that GMB reps are continually fighting hard to protect members' rights at work – including their health and wellbeing – in pursuit of a more productive, equitable and safer workplace. Congress notes that the extent of this work can be detrimental to reps' own health and wellbeing due to it being stressful, sometimes lonely and emotionally draining which may lead them to abusing or becoming dependent on alcohol and/or drugs as a coping mechanism; understands that asking for assistance with these issues can be difficult and daunting, but can be made easier if the person asking knows they will be supported and who they can turn to; and recognises that there

are little to no mechanisms or processes in place within GMB for reps to notify their Union that they need support for these issues or for GMB to deliver the appropriate support where requested. Congress calls on the Central Executive Council to create appropriate guidance for supporting reps who come forward with alcohol and/or drug abuse or dependency issues which includes a process for those reps to alert GMB they are in need of support and a process for signposting to local services; to examine other appropriate ways support can be offered such as funded counselling services; and to incorporate this guidance into the training of all reps and branch officers.

S86 EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE BRANCH

GMB SCOTLAND

(Referred)

GERALD MALLON (GMB Scotland): President, Congress, raising Motion 41 – Proper Well-Being Support for Reps. Congress, I must start with clarity for the CEC. This motion is for appropriate well-being support for shop stewards, safety reps and full-time convenors, not for the full membership.

This motion is important to me because of my personal experience. In 2017, I was feeling stressed, emotionally drained with the work we do. I reached out for help from the union. With little or no help available, I had to step down from all union duties after nine years as branch secretary/convenor for my own mental health well-being, only returning in October 2022 after five years away. I would not have had to do this if there was appropriate well-being support available to me and others in a similar situation.

While researching for this motion I realised I was not alone in feeling that way. Repeatedly the biggest reason for shop stewards and safely reps giving up being active with the union is when reaching out for help they did not feel there was appropriate support from the union. Mental health in the workplace is high on every trade union's agenda, but why not for shop stewards? This is not good enough. *(Applause)*

Congress notes that the work we do day in, day out for this union can be detrimental to reps' own health and well-being, due to being stressful, sometimes lonely and emotionally draining, which can lead reps to abusing and becoming dependent on alcohol and/or drugs as a coping mechanism.

One way as a union we can help with this is by training more branch officers and full-time convenors as mental health first aiders, to help support and signpost shop stewards and safety reps to help them access mental health and addiction professionals when needed. This would allow reps to reach out and know that there will be listened to and will be supported and that there are mechanisms or processes in place with GMB for reps to reach out to the union for the support they need for those issues and for the GMB to deliver appropriate support when requested by reps with better support for members.

Now, we all talk about the GMB union as a family. That being the case, Madam President, top table, that must make you the parents. Your children are asking for help. Please listen. *(Applause)* And help us all. Congress, please support this motion for you, me, and all that follow us, who work hard for this union day in, day out. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Gerry, that is not an image I had thought of before but I take the point. It is a fair point. *(Laughter)*

ANNETTE DRYLIE (GMB Scotland): Seconding Motion 41, Well-being Support For Reps. Congress, four years ago, I and a small number of my GMB Scotland colleagues undertook mental health first aider training and most have subsequently renewed it earlier this year. This has been most useful to me to enable me to help and support members through difficult situations that they are experiencing at that time. It has also helped me put things into perspective when I myself went through a traumatic experience in my personal life and knew exactly where to get help during this crisis. Only shop stewards have the insight into what another shop steward may be experiencing and delivering that help and support for members who, not all, can be deemed as challenging, demanding and demoralising to that shop steward. What we need is a network of shop stewards, convenors and branch secretaries who are well trained and willing to help those reps who are struggling; someone to talk to who is very familiar with what is being experienced by that rep. Some may have access to well-being support through their employer. Most will not have access, particularly in the private sector. Please support this motion and give our valuable shop stewards the support they need and deserve. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Annette. Does any delegate wish to speak in opposition to those motions? No, then I will ask Gary Smith to --- Oh sorry.

KIM HENDRY (London): I am speaking in a personal capacity. First of all, I want to

emphasise I am not speaking in official position. This is about raising a concern and that is all I wish to do. It is on Composite 2, which I support, and it is specifically a caution about one paragraph in it which has also been mentioned in other motions, which is about mental health first aid.

I want to ask people just to raise some concerns that are out there in the wider movement, including in my day job I work for another trade union, and I was Head of Learning for a long time and we did not get involved in it because we had concerns. I completely recognise the strength of feeling and I support that strength of feeling and I support the wider support networks, but I just want to draw delegates' attention to some of the concerns that have been raised in the union movement about mental health first aid very quickly.

The TUC, for example, I am just looking at a report now, published some concerns about mental health first aid including in *Hazards* magazine, expressing concern there was no evidence that the mental health first aid training actually had any impact in supporting individuals (notwithstanding I heard the points being said) who are experiencing mental health problems in the workplace. There is consistent evidence that mental health first-aid training raises employers' awareness of mental ill-health conditions, but its conclusion is there is no evidence that the introduction of the training has resulted in sustained actions in those trained.

The other final point I wanted to raise is, because I have looked into this and looked at the agendas and the training, it also talks about diagnosis and recognising what they call "mental health conditions". I think that is problematic. I think that is us

overstepping the mark, particularly because there is a rising movement in this country about challenging some of that medicalisation of disorder and distress. That is really just the point I wanted. I support everything in this motion but just to flag up some concerns that exist in the wider movement about mental health first aid. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Kim thank you. That is fine. I am not taking a right of reply because you are not actually opposing the motion. It was just very helpful information. I now move on then to the CEC speaker Gary Smith.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, President. General Secretary and Treasurer speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to Motions 34, 35, 41 and Composite 2.

On Motion 41 and Composite 2, the CEC is asking the region to agree to refer back so that we can undertake a proper review on how we can best support our dedicated activists. Although that debate was enormously powerful, and I mean this, colleagues, I hear you, we all hear you. From the bottom of my heart, I have never forgotten where I came from in this union. The backbone of this union is the shop stewards, the safety reps: people in the workplace who are at the point of crisis for members, often every day. We did commit apparently to doing something around this before Covid and then Covid hit. That is no excuse. We need to get on with it. We have to do something. Kim, I thought the points were very well made and thank you for that. We have provisionally looked at some of this and it is not that simple or straightforward. We have looked at the experience of other unions. We have started to look at some of the models that other unions are doing and working with charities, trying to put systems in

place. It is not simple and it is not easy, but I am absolutely with colleagues. We have to do something to better support our reps. When I was up at the Regional Council in North East, Yorkshire and Humber, I heard that debate, and I heard it loud and clear. There is no quick fix. We want to do something meaningful. We have got a lot of experience we can tap into already. I know we have mental health first aiders in British Gas. Kim's point - is that working, is it useful for us? I do not know but let's talk about that experience. You go to Hinckley Point, a big nuclear site, and see our shop stewards and safety reps walking round with a mental health first-aider sticker on their helmets. We have members who are working away from home for protracted periods of time, it is really tough, and they have a great point of support on the sites. We should tap into that experience. We are committed to doing something. It is not easy, but I promise you we are going to move that forward, and we are going to have meaningful engagement, but please give us the opportunity to do that properly. It is never lost on me the job that you do, dealing with members at a point of crisis, and being caught often between members and management. It is a hugely stressful job, and we need to support the people who are the backbone of the union.

On Motion 35, Denise, Janet, again I hear you loud and clear. We are going to move that forward and we want to move that forward quickly, but please agree to refer that. We will seek to address that. I am the best-paid person in this room I suspect (maybe apart from Matt from Hinckley!) but I am just staggered with the cost of coming to events like this now, going for a drink or something to eat. We do not want low-paid workers to be put off getting involved in the democracy of Congress. Please refer it and I promise you we will look at that.

In terms of Motion 34, it is a bit different. Dear, oh dear! If the naughty troublemakers from North East, Yorkshire & Humber do not withdraw or do not refer it, the CEC is asking you to vote against this reckless motion. (*Cries of “Boo!”*) Poor Alison has been awake since Friday worrying about this motion and where we are going to get the fiver from. She and Michael have been hitting the drink. You are asked to refer the motion. I suspect you are not going to, but I have got a duty today. Thank you, President. (*Applause*)

CEC Financial Proposals and Annual Accounts

Financial Proposals Congress 2025

The financial statements of GMB for 2024 confirm that once again, the CEC has successfully delivered an operating surplus. Income has increased; expenditure has been well managed and the Union's asset base has strengthened. Membership continued to grow in 2024, with an increase of over 9,000 grade 1 and grade 2 members.

However, despite this growth, income for the year remained below 2020 levels. Encouragingly, membership growth has continued into 2025 and we have introduced new initiatives aimed at re-engaging former members.

While we have budgeted for a modest surplus this year, the CEC are also mindful of the significant challenges that lie ahead. Our costs have risen significantly and although we have worked hard in recent years to reduce expenditure without compromising the service we provide to members, we, like all organisations, have suffered from the recent increases in National Insurance and energy.

Although the UK is not currently in recession, recent developments, such as the introduction of Trump-era tariffs, have increased the risk of an economic downturn in 2025. Growing concerns about workplace closures and potential job losses underline the seriousness of the situation.

In deciding whether to recommend an increase in contributions, the CEC carefully considered both the challenging economic climate and the need to maintain a level of income that supports the delivery of a high-quality service to our members. Following thorough deliberation, the CEC concluded that a contribution increase is necessary in light of increasing costs. However, conscious of the importance of keeping union membership affordable, the CEC is proposing a below-inflation increase: an additional 7p per week for grade 1 members and 2p per week for grade 2 members. Combined with continued tight control of expenditure, this increase would help ensure we can continue to meet the needs of our members effectively and sustainably.

The CEC has reviewed the contribution for retired membership. This was formerly up to £40 per year, but the charge was removed in 2015. As a result, many members were reclassified as retired life members without them taking an active decision to remain involved in the Union. This led to a disproportionate increase in retired membership numbers.

The CEC believes that reintroducing a nominal weekly fee for current and future retired membership would allow the Union to rebalance membership numbers and to ensure the retention of those who have an active interest in the Union.

The CEC propose to reintroduce a fee at the rate of 25p per week.

The CEC believes that certain aspects of the Rules for Union Funds and Regional Funds are outdated and should be revised to align with current practices. There is provision for a Central Fund, raised by way of levy on the Regions, and from which officer costs will be met. The manner in which GMB collects contributions means the concept of the Central Fund is no longer appropriate and indeed it is no longer in existence. Income is now divided between National

Office and Regions based on an agreed formula which ensures cash resources are available as and when required.

The CEC seek to remove the Central Fund from Rule and instead introduce to Rule the General Fund, which is the principal Fund of the Union and through which the day-to-day business of the Union is transacted. Regions have been responsible for setting their own annual budgets, subject to CEC approval, for many years. All hold investments in growth funds which are included in their balance sheets. The CEC seek to write this into Rule.

The CEC believes that creating dedicated Regional Funds would allow Regions to advance the Union's aims and objectives beyond the constraints of the standard budgetary system. They would give Regions the opportunity to innovate without the risk of failure impacting their core budgets. These Funds would be financed by income sources other than member contributions, remain the property of the Union and be reported in the Union's financial statements.

Finally, the CEC has proposed changes to the Rules governing Regional Member Auditors and audits in order to provide greater clarity and to ensure alignment with statutory requirements. Introducing into Rule a formal review process and reappointment requirement would prevent our Statutory Auditors and Assurers from remaining in office by default, requiring members to take active steps to confirm their reappointment.

Full document and the rule amendments proposed can be accessed:

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

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Stay at the rostrum, do not move. We will now take the Financial Proposals and Annual Accounts. It is Gary to speak.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Sometimes you just get the feeling you are going to lose a vote. *(Laughter)*

I am very, very proud to be moving the Financial Statements for the year end 31st December 2024. No questions have been submitted on the Financial Statements, so I will move their adoption. On behalf of the CEC, it also falls to me to move rule amendments contained within the CEC Special Report on the Financial Proposals. These are CEC Rule Amendments 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30. Colleagues, just to confirm about CEC Rule Amendment 26 – a good challenge. For retired life members who historically paid a one-off fee, we are not looking for them to make any additional contributions. The finance team will work that through but we have to be fair and reasonable about this. So, we are not going to take more money off people who made that one-off fee historically. (*Applause*).

I want to thank Alison Turtle and Michael Moran, our Head and Deputy Head of Finance. It is a new team that we put together on finance in the last couple of years. You voted to change the auditors two years ago. There has been a huge programme of work going on with the finance team and they have just been fantastic and so diligent. And thank you so much for holding the fringe meeting on the finances on Sunday as well, where you dealt with a lot of the questions on the Statement.

The union has enjoyed another year of high activity. There is lots going on, as you are hearing this week. There is so much energy going on in the union and we are achieving so much together and it is fantastic. The changes that you have supported in the past period are making all that activity and all that support for members possible. We are back, as I said in my speech yesterday, in workplaces, listening to members, building

industrial campaigns and growing the union, and that is what is delivering a better, stronger GMB, and with it stronger finances for the union as well.

It is pretty staggering to think that in 2024 an average of 7,500 people joined GMB every month. (*Applause*) And that led to our Grade 1 membership growing by 4,000 new members and Grade 2 growing by over 5,000 members. That is a fantastic result. It builds on 2023 and much of that is down to you in this hall, your hard work and the teams of people in the regions and across the national union. It is fantastic. There is a clear pattern of success that we are building, we are getting consistent results and that is extraordinary.

I mentioned this in my speech on Sunday. We are also very focused on retention and retrieval. It is not just about organising new members; it is also about keeping people in the union. That is about communicating with members, that is about providing great support when members need it and it is also about retrieving members and getting them back into financial membership when they stop paying their subs. That has been piloted in London and it has been rolled out across the union and it has been hugely successful.

The money in the union, the finances of the union are actually pretty simple: members' contributions account for about 96% of the union's income, and our income grew by £1.5 million last year. That tells us we are growing the membership; we are building stronger finances: we are on the right path. At the same time, and I commend the work of the team at National Office, the finance team, and in the regions, the regional secretaries, we have also put better controls in place around how we manage the money in the union. So, despite all the activity which we have got to finance, despite all the

energy that is going on in the union - and campaigning does cost us money - we posted a healthy surplus of £414,000 last year, so thank you for that.

That surplus comes at a time when we balloted 24,000 members in 270 industrial action ballots last year. That is phenomenal and we spent £4.3 million supporting our members in struggle. I should acknowledge within that the role of branches, because your branches contributed about £1.4 million to regional strike funds, that money going back to support members on the front line, on picket lines. Thank you so much for that.

What the rules also try to do, and I gave you a commitment when I stood as General Secretary, I got very frustrated when I was the Scottish Secretary watching so much focus getting put into party politics and Westminster. What I said we needed to do is build a genuinely federal union with rights and responsibilities for the regions and nations of the union. What we never want to have is over-control, too much control or dictatorship at the centre of the union. That is not the way GMB operates. There need to be checks and balances on power, and with the financial proposals what we are trying to do is ensure there are greater resources in regions. That is about checks and balances, but it is also about making sure that we have money and resources closer to where the action happens. And invariably, the action happens in our regions and nations.

In terms of equal pay, you have heard about the fantastic stuff that we are doing. I am absolutely delighted with the work that we are doing. It was a red-line issue with us with Labour going through the policy process having an enforcement body on equal pay. We are building campaigns on equal pay across the country, and it does cost money. We have spent about £750,000 prosecuting those equal pay campaigns, but

that will be paid back in spades because we are talking about hundreds of millions of pounds getting returned to working-class women. (Applause) Thank you. With the systems we have now put in place for equal pay, we understand how this works, and if you get it wrong it can be hugely expensive. The cheap way to run equal pay is build campaigns, build industrial action, build protests, but of course there will be legal bills. We have reduced the costs of running equal pay claims by about 95%. Have a look at the systems that we have got in place. Speak to the Women's Campaign Unit team. We are fighting more battles and we are doing it in a more cost-effective way.

In UnionLine there has been a huge amount of work going on. Thanks to the regional secretaries and all the team who have been involved with the work around UnionLine. We are starting to get that on a stronger footing. We have had to pay money to sort out historical under-funding for our union, but we are in a decent place with UnionLine going forward and I am delighted we have Manjit. I do not know if she is in the hall. She is right at the back. Manjit who has joined us will be doing a job share in legal and will be really focusing on getting the UnionLine business working more effectively and supporting you as the membership.

In terms of our investments, we made changes a few years ago to pool our investments and it has paid off. We have about £62 million in investments. That is pretty phenomenal. And that is a growth of about £24 million from the original monies that we started with. We have about £21 million in cash reserves, £8.3 million or so which is held within your branches. It is a fantastic news story. At the end 2024, the Union is worth about £116 million. That is down to the changes that you have supported in

the union. It is about good leadership and effective management for the teams across the union as well. And well done to everybody for that. (*Applause*)

I have to declare an interest in this one, the staff pension. Look, our people work hard. You work cheek by jowl with the staff and organisers across the union. I think our people do an often tough job. They are incredibly hard working and committed to this movement. I want them to be paid well and I want people to retire well, too. But the pension scheme, you have had to step in as lay members. We had a big deficit in the pension scheme and you as lay members for a number of years stepped in and helped us sort out the deficit in the scheme. From the bottom of my heart, and I know I speak for all the staff, thank you so much for the commitment, thank you for the support. The scheme is now in really rude health and will be about 128% funded. We are going into a valuation and really that is down to your commitment to us, so thank you. (*Applause*)

We have reduced some of the contributions going into the scheme because we are paying this big buffer, as I put it. That means we can put money back into your pockets, and that is only fair, but we have also for the first time in a generation been able to improve some of the benefits in the scheme for our staff. And again, thank you for everything that you have done in that regard.

Again, when I stood for election I was very conscious about what we had been doing with the subs. There was a fall in financial membership so we would ratchet up the subs every year 5p/10p. We stopped doing that and I am always very conscious about trying to ensure that membership is affordable. We did freeze subs for a number of years and that put £11 million back into the pockets of lay members, and that was very

important to us as a leadership of the union. It was a signal of our intent that we were going to run this union better and that we hear and understand the challenges that our members face, because the leadership in this union across the piece spends more time in workplace listening to members than at any time I can remember in the union's history. In real terms what that means is our subs are below the levels they were in 2020. I promise you as best we can, despite all the cost pressures on the union, we are going to try and keep an eye on affordability.

So, we are making the progress across the union. We are running it more efficiently. We are doing more with less. That is the truth of the matter. And we did wrestle with this coming into Congress what we would do about the subs this year. The performance this year has been phenomenal. The membership has grown, the income is in a really strong place, but we are genuinely worried about an economic slowdown starting to bite. We are seeing factory closures coming and we are seeing the impact of the Trump tariffs and we think it is prudent and right that we do ask for a small financial contribution increase this year so that we do have the reserves there if we run into stickier times, if we do run into those headwinds. We are asking for 7p a week increase on Grade 1, which is about 7%, and for Grade 2 members, a 2p a week increase which is about a 1% increase. We have not got to that position lightly, we really have not, but we think it is the right thing to do is, and again I think it is worth impressing on you in terms of the decisions you have made, the freezing of the subs over the past few years, our subs are 17% less in real terms than they were in 2020.

So, money for a union is important. It is the foundation stone on which we build the organisation. We have done so much together to get the GMB into a strong place, a

place where we are campaigning and fighting day in, day out. Please support the recommendations. Please support the CEC, and please adopt the Financial Statements, and, above all, thank you so much for the hard work that you are doing. You are building a far better and stronger GMB. Thank you, everyone. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Could I have the delegates from each of the Regions and nations down the front. Wales & South West first to speak. Then Southern and GMB Scotland, North West & Irish Region, North East, Yorkshire & Humber, Midlands and London.

ANDY MILLS (Wales & South West): Congress, let's be honest, none of us came into this movement because it was easy. We came because we believe in fairness, in justice and in the power of standing together. And right now, we are being tested by rising costs, by economic uncertainty and by the ever-present threat to jobs and communities that we hold dear.

Our region knows the struggles all too well. We have already seen the impact of factory closures like Ford in Bridgend, the uncertainty in our ports of Bristol and Plymouth, and the daily pressures on our NHS workers, our council staff and carers from Carmarthen to Stroud.

Our members are the backbone of this union and this country. They deserve a union that is strong, resilient and ready for whatever comes next. The CEC Statement is not just a set of numbers on a page. It is a roadmap to keep our union fighting fit. Yes, it asks for a small increase, just 7p a week for Grade 1 and 2p for Grade 2. That is less

than the price of a tea. But what does it buy us? It buys us security. It buys us the ability to keep defending jobs, winning new pay rises and supporting members through the very tough times ahead. I know some will say every penny counts, and they are right. That is why these proposals are a below-inflation increase, keeping membership affordable, making sure that every pound gets spent wisely. Our union is not here to build up bank balances. We are here to build up people, defend livelihoods and to make sure that when our members call, we answer.

I am especially proud of the proposals to strengthen our regional funds. In our region we know that one-size-fits-all solutions do not work. Our communities are unique, our challenges are unique, and our union needs that flexibility to respond. Dedicated funds means we can initiate and support disputes, invest in campaigns that matter to our members without risking the core services that keep us strong.

And let's not forget our retired members. They built this union. A small weekly fee keeps them connected, keeps our numbers honest and ensures that those who want to stay active in the movement can do so with pride.

Colleagues, this is not about money. It is about our values. It is about making sure that a care worker in Cardiff who faces bullying or a refuse worker in Exeter faces redundancy or a hospital cleaner in Swansea needs legal help, GMB is there: solid, united and fighting for every member. *(Applause)*

We are not just managing a budget; we are safeguarding the future of our movement. We are making sure that our children and grandchildren inherit a union that is every bit

as bold, passionate and determined as the one we inherited. Please support this statement, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Southern?

ZEHYRINE BENNETT (Southern): Madam President, General Secretary, Congress, good morning. I am from the Jersey Branch, in the great Southern Region. And congratulations to our re-elected President and newly elected Vice President.

Congress, the Southern Region has now considered the CEC's financial proposal to Congress. We would like to approve the CEC's proposal and have grouped our reasoning into categories: membership fees, retired members, regional funds, and audits including regional audits.

Congress, the first category is on Rule 45, clauses 1 and 2 on membership fees. Our region would like to acknowledge and thank the CEC for their hard work in delivering an operational surplus and GMB workplace organisers for increasing Grades 1 and 2 memberships by 9,000 this year. Well done! (*Applause*) However, we recognise the increasing cost pressures our union is facing. GMB incurred a cost increase of 2% between 2023 and 2024 and needs to consider the current inflation rate. Therefore, we appreciate the CEC's effort in keeping our membership rate affordable by capping the increase at 2%. Our hope is that GMB will continue providing a high level of service to our members, which we are confident the CEC and our union will be able to do.

Congress, the second category is on Rule 47(a) retired members. The Southern Region

also recognises the need to confirm whether retired members would still like to remain as GMB members. This is in line with the CEC's proposals to introduce the 25 pence weekly subs. Congress, the third category is on Rule 28, regional funds, where we noted a change being introduced with the creation of separate regional funds. There is now a clause for each region to create their own annual budget subject to CEC approval. Meanwhile the clause for the regions paying 50% of their income to the central fund has now been removed, similar to another clause of paying 50% of their bank balance each quarter. This change means regions will have more autonomy in realising GMB's aims and objectives which might be limited by the current budgetary process. We agree to this because of the greater autonomy for regions which this change will grant. Furthermore, there are safeguards in place with the funds coming from alternative income sources, not from our member contributions. We believe such safeguards are necessary in ensuring member contributions are available for use to further members' causes.

Last but not least, another change relates to audits including regional audits. We welcome the inclusion of an existing clause highlighting the need for regions to grant regional member auditors access to their accounts and supporting documents. We believe such a move will increase transparency by putting an onus on regions to work hand in hand with auditors.

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

ZEHYRINE BENNETT: In conclusion, Congress, we support the changes which will increase accountability, transparency and autonomy, and investing into our union while

keeping in mind affordability and financial sustainability. Congress, we support.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. GMB Scotland?

ELSIE SNEDDON (GMB Scotland): President, Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am speaking in support of the CEC Statement on Financial Proposals. Congress, as the report outlines, our union is going from strength to strength. An increase in membership is no easy feat, least of all as the cost-of-living crisis still dampens living standards and the world enters a period of instability, but is a reflection on the hard-working members, reps and staff and, more importantly, the fact that GMB is the campaigning union. We are the union who not just listens to our members, we are the union that takes action to make work better.

But we are not immune from the effects of inflation. Campaigning costs money. It pays for leaflets, placards, offices, equipment, officers and support staff. If we want to continue being on the front foot against rogue employers, fighting for higher pay, better terms and conditions, then we need the finances to match. It can be a difficult decision to increase fees, but it is a necessary one to ensure our union is in the best possible position. We are the union of workers on the shop floor, not the executive in the board room. Any increase to membership fees must be mindful of and reflect that. Even with these proposals, GMB will still be the union with the lowest membership fees so we are still affordable to the lowest paid.

However, whilst there is a need for increased membership fees, GMB Scotland is concerned that there is a widening gap between full-time and part-time rates. We would ask the CEC is mindful of these concerns in any future proposals to increase fees and ensure they are fair. This is also true of retired members. A small but affordable fee will ensure that all of those who make the conscious and active choice to be a retired member become a retired member and can access the associated benefits that come with it. This will ensure that the activities of the RMA are sustainable now and into the future.

The proposals before us are both reasonable and manageable and will ensure our union as a whole, and our regions and nations remain strong, and our finances sustainable. Congress, support the statement. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Elsie, thank you. Delegate from North West & Irish Region?

PAUL RICHARDS (North West & Irish): Speaking in support of the CEC Financial Proposals. President, Congress, while it is a difficult decision to increase contributions for our GMB members, who face rising costs in every aspect of their lives, an increase of 7p and 2p per week is an increase below inflation.

We discussed and debated the proposals as a region and we agreed that these increases are necessary. We need to ensure our union has the right level of funding that ensures we continue to deliver high-quality support and service for our members. We also debated the introduction of a subscription for the retired life members. For many, they

have been proud to be GMB members throughout their working lives and in retirement want to keep their membership alive. Introducing a small charge of 25p per week will enable us to keep their records up to date and ensure retired members are able to keep an active interest in their union. Congress, I urge you to support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. North East, Yorkshire & Humber?

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, President, General Secretary and Alison, I am Farzana Jumma from the naughty troublesome North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. (*Applause*)

Congress, we are supportive of the report. It is really great to see the investment we make as a union into equal pay. We have 5,000 claims in our region across seven campaigns. Our union has done more than any other union. We are literally leading the way. We are incredibly proud of our core values and we support the fair changes for retired members. This shows how our union does listen to us and we can make changes whilst we are here. I support the report from the General Secretary, and only that, in this case. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzana. Midlands?

IAN BURKETT (Midlands): President, Congress, speaking on the CEC Financial Proposals. Gary, they would not let me into Eastbourne so I had to come here instead! While I am at the rostrum, can I have a little moan - because I do not want to disappoint Gary. The CEC Special Reports to Congress are very important documents and they

need to be produced so that we can read, absorb and debate. To do this they need to be issued in a timely manner. They need to be available for our pre-Congress delegate meetings in April at the latest, not the week before the Congress. Moan over!

(Applause)

Midlands Region are supporting the CEC Financial Proposals as outlined in the papers. It is important that the union has the financial stability to deliver and fight the causes that this Congress demands of us. The reintroduction of a requirement to pay a small contribution is regrettable for pensioners. No one who was here at the time will ever forget Billy Hughes's passionate speech, but it was not necessary to manage and keep track of all retired members and maintain an active register of them. So, in summary, we believe the proposals are the right thing to do to ensure that we can deliver. We support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. And London Region?

JAN SMITH (London): Morning colleagues, President General Secretary Gary. And at the end of this speech I will learn whether I am being exported to Eastbourne as I have already been threatened!

Colleagues, the changes to the funding arrangements of the union and its region are long overdue. Five years ago, we changed the formula and allocations of funds made between the regions and National Office so we welcome the rulebook being updated. Regions have moved surplus money from regional accounts to the Trade Union Investment Fund which is managed through the TUFM. These investments, colleagues,

have provided healthy returns for members' money in the last few years. Regional committees are provided with quarterly performances. And each region owns their own investments and can also access the money whenever it is necessary. With these changes, regions will now be able to set up dedicated legal and dispute funds, held in regional accounts, giving regions more responsibility and autonomy to generate and build these funds themselves. We understand that increasing contributions is never popular with our members, but the union is also impacted by the rising economic costs so we support the minimum increases of 7p and 2p.

Congress, lastly on the 25p a week proposal for retired members' contributions, colleagues, I still disagree on any form of contributions from our retired members, and I hear a lot of you holding your breath, so before you breathe out, hold on. The General Secretary is aware that introducing charges for retired members will not go down well, but we have many retired members in our region who are not engaged with the union. Sadly, the only time we hear from them is when they contact us about funeral benefit. So having a financial transaction between retired members as proposed would ensure we keep touch with our members and that £1 a month would go towards paying for the funeral benefit. But colleagues, I would ask if this is to go through that this is guaranteed that is what it will be used for.

In coming to these proposals for retired members, the RMA would have appreciated having been consulted on draft proposals as promised when Gary was elected. It appears we need some communication training - and I say to that after saying to you Gary, lessons need to be learned at our meeting we held in January.

THE PRESIDENT: Jan, I am going to have to ask you to come to the ---

JAN SMITH: I am now coming to the end. I would like some reassurance from the General Secretary that our retired members are considered for more engagement relating to issues that affect us especially now Congress has voted that we have a voice. Hence colleagues, you can now breathe out because, reluctantly, I support the 25p increase, as if you can't beat them join them! (*Applause*) Our retired members have a wealth of experience, a lifetime in the trade union movement and I would like that to be recognised and not forgotten or sidestepped in the future. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jan thank you. I can now put that CEC Special Report on Financial Proposals and Annual Accounts to the vote. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

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

THE PRESIDENT: I will be going back to the motions you heard previously before that, but I will ask for movers and seconders of Motions 162, 163, 164 and 171 to come down the front to be ready.

I am going to have to ask this and I might know the answer before I ask it: does North East, Yorkshire and Humber agree to refer Motion 34. (*Not agreed*) Does Southern agree to refer Motion 35? That is not very loud, is it yes or no? (*Agreed*) Do the regions agree to refer Composite 2. That was North East, Yorkshire & Humber, Southern and

Midlands. *(Agreed)* Does GMB Scotland agree to refer Motion 41? *(Agreed)* Thank you, so the only one I need to take a vote on is Motion 34. Can I remind you that you are voting on the motion. The CEC stance is to oppose but you are voting on the motion. All those in favour of Motion 34, please show. All those against? That is carried. *(Applause)*

*Motion 34 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 35 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 41 was **REFERRED**.*

*Composite 2 was **REFERRED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: He is still laughing. No, he is crying. It is all right you have bribed him, haven't you, with sweets!

Industrial & Economic Policy: Public Section

THE PRESIDENT: We move on to Industrial & Economic Policy: Public Section, so can I have the mover of Motion 162, please?

THE CO-CHAIR: 162 to the rostrum. please.

SUFFICIENT CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICES

MOTION 162

162. SUFFICIENT CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICES

This Congress notes the need for sufficient capital funding for public services with particular reference to the NHS, the fire service, infrastructure, and education. The GMB recognises that public sector workers require the proper facilities in order to carry out their vital work.

Congress resolves to: -

- Conduct research and liaise with similar organisations as to what constitutes sufficient capital investment in public services and publish these findings
- Lobby the Labour Party for a commitment to long term sustained capital investment
- Declare that GMB shall only support the election campaigns of politicians that back sufficient capital investment in public services

B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

JONATHAN COLES (London): I am here! Actually, I was promised a chair so when my emergency motion comes up, can you make sure the reasonable adjustment is available. This is only a short speech. President, Congress, London moving 162 on Sufficient Capital Investment in Public Services. We are all aware of the strain on our public services. Years of underfunding has led to staff shortages, poor morale and ever-worsening service. Staff in public services, some of who are in the hall, are doing fantastic work despite the lack of funding. We see the lack of funding in our staff and the underfunding of our pay awards and national insurance and pension contributions has had an impact on services, and the money has to be found to fund them. We know of course these pay awards have been effectively pay cuts over the years. Capital funding, especially in our public services, has not kept pace with the developments in technology and infrastructure needed. In the motion we particularly mention the NHS,

fire services, education and the general infrastructure that we need. Of course, the lack of sufficient capital funding affects all areas of public services. Funding now could save a lot of money in the future and save lives. Workers deserve to have the right tools and equipment, and so does everyone who uses our public services. It is vital to ensure that our public services are funded properly and to recognise that there does need to be some planning ahead and some research done. It is vital that we know the level of funding required so the expectations are clear and the funding can be secured. And on that note, we await to hear the spending review announcement in a few hours' time.

The motion calls for lobbying of the Labour Party to a commitment for long-term capital investment - and again we may see some of that later. This is vital if the current Government is to ensure the commitment to public services. And we understand fully the qualification with this motion and trust that our MPs will be made aware of our policy, including hopefully this one. There is a long list should you agree, which of course you will. On that note I beg you to show your support and I move this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

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

BRENDAN DUFFIELD (London): President, Congress, seconding Motion 162, Enough Money for Public Services. Our public services are struggling and we all see it. You can wait months for a doctor's appointment; your child's school might have leaking roofs and old computers. Your local library might have shut or it might not have up-to-date books. This is not about policy, it is about the people who serve us every day. Nurses work extra shifts because there are not enough staff. Teachers are

buying supplies with their own money. Police officers are using outdated systems that waste valuable time. For years we have asked our public services workers to do more with less, which we all know is true. That is not fair and it is not working. We need proper investment; not just enough money to get by, but enough money to build the future. We need modern hospitals with the latest technology, schools with the tools our children deserve, emergency services which can respond quickly when we need them. This investment will save money in the long run. It will save lives and it will give our hard-working public services workers the respect they deserve. The motion before you today calls for real ongoing investment in our public services, because when we invest in public services we invest in ourselves, we invest in our communities, we invest in our future. I urge you to support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

INEQUALITY OF HOLIDAY PRICES FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

MOTION 163

163. INEQUALITY OF HOLIDAY PRICES FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

This Congress agrees to campaign for our schools support staff members and their Families, many of whom are also currently penalised for either having school aged children or family members working in the Schools and Education environment. Currently, our support staff members are amongst the lowest paid workers in our economy. They must endure the unfairness of term time only contracts whilst employed in their roles but will also have these contracts negatively impact their pensions when they finally retire. These contracts require staff to access their holidays in line with the school holidays too. This creates a situation where our valuable support staff, who are already significantly underpaid and undervalued having to contend with the extortionate holiday prices during term time if they also have a family and want to have a holiday with their children. There is little which is currently available to these low paid working

families to ease this situation and if their children are absent during the school curriculum to have a holiday when the prices are much lower, sometimes by more than 100% cheaper, their family is then fined by the school. The current system needs to change.

Congress therefore calls on the Union to campaign with the Labour Government to regulate the travel industry and prevent low paid working families from being punished in this way.

B10 BARKING BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Referred)

MOHINDER KATARIA (London): First-time delegate, third-time speaker. *(Applause)* Proud to move this Motion 163 on Inequality of Holiday Prices for School Support Staff. Congress, do you have young children? Do you know anyone who has young children? I have three children but they are all grown up now and things were different then and flexible. Let me begin with this: our school support staff are the unsung heroes of the education system. *(Applause)* They are teaching assistants, administrators, lunchtime supervisors, caretakers and many others: the backbone of our school. Yet they remain some of the lowest paid workers in the public sector, working under term-time only contracts, which affects not just their take home pay but their pensions and long-term financial security too. Let's add insult to injury. Because they are tied on term-time contracts they must take holidays during peak school breaks. That is when prices soar, not slightly but in some cases double, or even more. The price difference is extreme and the impact is real. For the support staff with children of their own this becomes a punishment for simply wanting a family break. If you go during term time you face school fines, if you go during holidays, you also face financial strain. Either way, our members lose.

Congress, this is not just a matter of economics. It is a matter of fairness. We ask how can we talk about valuing our education if we continue to undervalue those who support it daily? We know that holiday pricing is influenced by market forces, but it is also influenced by regulation, or the lack of it. Airlines, travel companies and hotel chains make enormous profits off the backs of families locked into fixed school contracts. Those worst hit are low-paid workers, including the very people educating and nurturing our children. That is why this motion calls on GMB to campaign alongside the Labour Government to explore fairer practices in the travel industry and to advocate for policies that ease this burden, whether that is through pricing regulation, subsidies, or creative solutions that make holidays more affordable for working families tied to school timetables.

Congress, we are also mindful of CEC's request to refer this motion and we understand the need for proper consultation across sectors including aviation before launching a campaign. We agree. We are not asking for rushed action but for serious joined-up consideration. So, we accept the referral on the condition that it leads to real engagement, real analysis and a real commitment to tackling this problem for our members. Support staff should not have to choose between rest and rent. They should not be priced out of precious time with their families just because of the nature of their contracts. Let's take this motion forward with care, with unity across sectors, and with the determination to stand up for some of the most undervalued workers in our society. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Mohinder. Secunder?

LISA LOVELL (London): President, Congress, I am proud to second this important motion Inequality of Holiday Prices for School Support Staff. Congress, let's speak plainly, our school support staff are overworked, underpaid and tied to term-time contracts that limit when they can go on holidays. Then when they do try to take a break with their families, they are hit with sky-high travel prices, while private companies profit from their lack of choice. These are workers who hold our schools together yet they are financially punished for doing so. If they try to book a cheaper break during term time, their children are fined for being absent from school. It is a trap and it is unfair. We fully acknowledge the CEC's comments. We also accept the referral, but we do so with a strong anticipation that this issue will be looked at seriously across the sectors including aviation, because fairness for working families should not come at the cost of someone else's job. But something must change. Let's take this issue forward and find a solution that honours the people who support our children every day. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Lisa, thank you. Mover of Motion 164, please?

GMB IS THE UNION FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

MOTION 164

164. GMB IS THE UNION FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

This Congress understands that GMB, Unite and Unison are the three signatories to the NJC bargaining agreement covering School Support staff negotiations. In recent times, we have sadly had to refer complaints of poaching members by the NEU to the TUC. Despite the TUC already finding in our favour and issuing fines to the NEU, their activity and campaigning to be included

as a NJC signatory for support staff negotiations has not abated. Further talks have been held with the TUC and the three signatory Unions however; we are growing concerned that the TUC may be starting to be sympathetic to the NEU. If this were to be the case, we would be allowing another Union to run roughshod over other Union agreements and in effect, union busting tactics being deployed.

If the TUC concede to the NEU on this matter, then this Congress agrees to seriously review our financial affiliation to the TUC, as they would not be acting in our best interests or those of our members.

B10 BARKING BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

SHAISTA NAZIR (London): Moving Motion 164. GMB is proud to be a recognised union for London support staff. Many of you here today work in a school and support our members in schools every day. GMB has been instrumental in the re-establishment of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body and is working to address issues that matter most to our members such as ending term-time only contracts and recognising the impact of the increased numbers of pupils with SEN as well as negotiating around pay.

In recent times the NEU has been actively recruiting school support staff despite a 2017 agreement not to. The TUC has fined the NEU for this but, none the less, NEU recruitment and organising has continued, and even increased in some areas. NEU's General Secretary recently publicly stated that NEU would continue to recruit support

staff and said, “We have doubled our support staff membership, since the formation of the NEU. I want double it again and then double that and again double that.”

Congress, this blatant disregard of the TUC-brokered agreement to only recruit teachers and lack of respect for the recognised union cannot be ignored. *(Applause)* Many of the support staff they are recruiting are unaware that the NEU is a teachers’ union and cannot negotiate and bargain on their behalf and feel they have been misled when they find out. The TUC must take the actions and words of the NEU seriously and ensure that integrity of agreements are upheld. The TUC cannot stand by and allow the NEU to act in this way, and if it does not deal with the NEU effectively then we must consider reviewing our financial affiliation to the TUC as it may not be acting in the best interests of our members to maintain it. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, delegate. Secunder of Motion 164, please?

FUNMI NWAGAGBO (London): President, Congress, I am here to support Motion 164. First-time delegate, second-time speaker. *(Applause)* School support staff are the backbone of our schools, doing valuable work with some of our most vulnerable children. GMB is made up of tens of thousands of support staff up and down the country and GMB is the voice of the issues that matter to them. Every day we are campaigning for their skills and profession to be valued and recognised, for their workplaces to be respectful and safe. Importantly, GMB negotiates their pay and terms and conditions and has played an important role in the re-establishment of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body. Our members in schools deserve their voice to be heard and for their issues to be paramount. When we go into schools we are finding

out that NEU has recruited support staff despite not being recognised to negotiate and bargain for them and despite the TUC agreement not to. NEU's actions are not acceptable. They show a lack of regard for support staff who they cannot properly represent, and for trade union solidarity. The trade union must ensure that agreements signed are respected and that unions conduct themselves properly. The NEU was fined in excess of £100,000 for breaching the agreement just a couple of years ago. That was its members' money. The fine was clearly not enough to stop the NEU recruiting and attempting to organise support staff, so now the TUC must take proper and decisive action. If not, GMB should consider whether affiliation is in our members' best interests. Congress, I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Mover of Motion 171, please.

RECOGNISING AND VALUING EARLY YEARS SUPPORT STAFF

MOTION 171

171. RECOGNISING AND VALUING EARLY YEARS SUPPORT STAFF

This Congress is asked to support a national campaign to address the growing inequalities faced by early years support staff, whose vital contributions remain undervalued and underpaid. Support staff in early years settings are under immense pressure due to increasing admissions high levels of undiagnosed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities [SEND] and expanding responsibilities. These include safeguarding, implementing speech and language therapy [SALT] plans, teaching core skills to mixed-ability groups, and managing personal care needs such as potty training. In addition, the lack of parental engagement is exacerbating these challenges. Many parents fail to attend offered classes on behaviour management or follow through on interventions like SALT leaving staff to re-refer cases and manage additional workloads. Parental

responsibility must be prioritised, with clear policies to ensure they play an active role in their child's development.

This motion calls for Congress to:

1. Back a national campaign to work with trade unions and advocacy groups to highlight the essential work of early years support staff
2. Advocate for an independent and fair job evaluation and pay structure, alongside increased Government funding, to ensure staff are fairly compensated and supported with proper training and career development opportunities.
3. Call for policies to promote greater parental responsibility, including compulsory participation in key development programs, to ensure children receive consistent support both at home and in early years settings.

Early years education is the foundation of lifelong success. It is time for the Government to recognise the invaluable contributions of support staff, ensure they are compensated, and hold parents accountable for their role in their children's development. It is time to remove the stigma that we are "glorified babysitters."

L10 BRANCH

NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

(Carried)

HAYLEY DOYLE (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good morning, President, Congress, Leeds School Support Staff, branch member of the NEYH Region.

First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am moving Motion

171 - Recognising and Valuing Early Years Support Staff. Congress, when I joined EYFS 11 years ago, I joined because I felt I could make a difference and wanted to give something back. However, over the years in EYFS I have seen many changes to

workload and the expectations that have been placed upon us. We are supporting vulnerable SEN children, teaching phonics, providing our own speech and language therapy and are the first line of defence in keeping all children safe. Yet despite this work, despite our qualifications we are still unfairly underpaid. (*Applause*) It is hardly a surprise that the wages are so poor in a female-dominated profession, and no wonder we are struggling to recruit and retain staff when you can go and work at Aldi for more money, and with none of the responsibility.

Congress, it is time for our profession to be treated with the respect we deserve. Too many parents and policymakers treat us like glorified babysitters. The parental responsibility needs to be addressed as this makes our job harder because we are teaching toothbrushing and potty training, and this is not just for SEN children. We need parents to be seriously engaged in their children's care and development plans and not dropping them off and saying, "He's your problem now." We don't want any more false promises. Deliver now or there will be no one to deliver your sugar-coated ideas. Give us a voice. We need change. We have had enough. Stand with us. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Hayley. Secunder?

SALLY RYAN (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good morning, President, Congress, I am from the great big wonderful North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region (*Applause*) seconding Motion 171. Like my colleague Hayley, I know the value of good quality early years provision. As a former specialist nursery nurse and then a family support and payment officer, I spent my days fighting for the rights of children

and their families, because every penny we spend supporting the next generation is a penny spent building a better future, not just for the child but for the wider community. Because that is what early years provision is truly about. Staff working in early years children's services are delivering more than education. They are crucial to family and community cohesion. Early years education is a foundation of lifelong success. It is time for the Government to recognise the invaluable contributions of support staff and ensure they are compensated. It is time to remove the stigma that they are glorified babysitters. These staff are educators, teachers and safeguarders of the children they support. It is time that they are valued, and they should be. Congress, let us now take action. Just remember, we take care of our own wherever the flag is flown. I second.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sally. Are there any delegates who wish to speak in opposition? No, then can I ask Donna Spicer for the CEC to reply

DONNA SPICER (CEC): Speaking on behalf of the CEC and responding to Motions 162, 163, 164 and 171. Excuse my voice but I done a lot of cheering for my comrade there yesterday! *(Applause)*

The CEC supports with qualification Motion 162. GMB welcomes the spirit of the motion ensuring our reps stand up for our policies. We also agree our relationships with politicians must be paid back in turn. However, we do not seek to bind the hands of regions for setting local criteria, political nominations and endorsements. Congress must also be aware of electoral law concerning trade union sponsorship of elected representatives. While Congress is the supreme policy-making body of the union and

establishes important principles that we should uphold, the motion goes beyond that with a singular criteria on backing political candidates which may mean in practice a lack of full consideration of context.

On Motion 163, the CEC ask the region to refer. While we are sympathetic to the issue raised in the motion, the wording is factually incorrect, specifically, “more than 100% cheaper”. Additionally, we would need to work with colleagues in other GMB sectors, such as aviation to assess any impact before commencing any campaigns.

On Motion 164 the CEC supports with qualification. The NEU actions continue to be contrary to the TUC/NJC unions agreement of 2017, and, despite long negotiations, a new agreement has not yet been reached. Our qualification is that affiliations and disaffiliations must be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

I am just going to come out of my role as CEC for a moment and I am going to speak to you as National Schools Committee Chair on behalf of the almost 100,000 GMB support staff members and I am going to aim this at you, Paul, as the TUC General Secretary. NEU are taking our members and they are lying to them. They are telling them that they can support them. (*Applause*) They are telling them that they can support them when, actually, all they are doing is taking their money and then when our members need support the do not get that. You are very aware they have no recognition on collective bargaining. So, we really need to make sure that we are getting reps in schools to fight back. When we go in and we are meeting with support staff, we need to make it very, very clear that “NEU is not for you, GMB is the one for me”. We are the support staff union, not the NEU. (*Applause and a standing ovation*) Thank you. I

am just going to finish on this one. They are a charlatan union for support staff so we need to ensure they must not keep recruiting, so please, Mr Nowak, go and put your foot down on them and sort them out.

Right, back with my CEC hat on now. Finally on Motion 171, the CEC also supports with qualification. Points 1 and 2 of the motion will be addressed within the School Support Staff Negotiating body. Hayley is actually sitting on that and she has a voice at the SSSNB meetings, so again, GMB are the only union at those negotiations who are giving our members a voice, so again GMB is the one for me. Where was I? As early years support staff are part of a negotiating body where we will be discussing those points.

Our qualification is in relation to point 3. We can make representations to the DfE via the Improving Education Together partnership, but we require more information as to what a national policy would contain and what the key development programmes are referred to in this motion. So, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Donna. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 162? (*Agreed*) I did hear you say it in your speech but I will just have it confirmed, you agree to refer on Motion 163? (*Agreed*) Do you accept the qualification on Motion 164? (*Agreed*) and North East, Yorkshire, do you accept the qualification on Motion 171? (*Agreed*) Thank you. I will put those to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 162, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 164, please show. Any against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 171, please show. Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 162 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 163 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 164 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 172 was **CARRIED**.*

Guest Speaker: Paul Nowak

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, it gives me great pleasure to introduce our next guest speaker Paul Nowak, General Secretary of the TUC. He has obviously been here listening and Donna has just spoken to him. He did come to the CEC to talk when he was newly elected, so we are very pleased that he has come to Congress to speak to us. Paul.

PAUL NOWAK (General Secretary of the TUC): President, delegates, it is a huge honour to address GMB Congress for the first time as TUC General Secretary.

Thirty-six years ago I joined this union aged 17 when I started working for Asda. A few months later with the support of my shop steward, a woman called Marion Clements who has now sadly passed away, I became a health and safety rep. And I was incredibly proud to be a member of the union my dad joined as a young welder, proud to be a GMB rep. And today three and a half decades later, I am still proud of the work that every GMB rep and activist does, that is every union rep and activist does winning and fighting for working people.

So, my first message to you today is this: ignore the commentators in the right-wing press. Ignore the Tory politicians who attacked the right to strike. Ignore the cheerleaders for austerity in the right-wing think-tanks. Instead, be proud of your members, proud of your union and proud of the difference you make every single day for working people in this country. Thank you, Congress, for everything you do. *(Applause)*

On the subject of thanks, let me say this before I go any further. Thank you, Donna, for the words of advice before. Just to say we do not deal with inter-union issues at events like this but the point is taken. I want to thank though the GMB's representatives on our General Council. Farzana Jumma, who leads our Race Relations Committee so passionately and so effectively. Barbara Plant, your President, who has led this union with integrity through difficult times and who has been at the forefront of our international work in solidarity with workers from Gaza to Kiev. *(Applause)* And to Gary Smith, your General Secretary. I will be honest, I have known Gary for a few years, and one thing I would say is he is never shy in giving me advice, whether I have asked for it or not. But I do know this, whether it is oil and gas workers in the North Sea fighting for decent jobs and a genuine just transition, or manufacturing workers standing up for Britain's industrial base, or tens of thousands of GMB members working in security, in care homes, in schools or in Asda, they have a proper fighter in their corner in Gary Smith, so thank you Gary for everything you do. *(Applause)*

My intention, Congress, is to focus my remarks today on what is happening here in the UK, but before I do let me just say a few words about Palestine. In April, I was in the West Bank speaking at the Conference of our sister union the PGFTU. I also met Israeli

trade unionists and peace campaigners, Palestinian workers, politicians and human rights defenders, and I saw first-hand the appalling situation facing the Palestinian people in the West Bank suffering under an illegal occupation. And of course, in Gaza, and we see it every day on our TV screens and in the papers, thousands of people killed in the latest Israeli onslaught, supplies of aid, of medicine, of food deliberately cut off. Aid workers, health workers, and starving civilians targeted and killed by the IDF. So today just let me reiterate the TUC's longstanding calls. A new immediate and permanent ceasefire. The release of all the hostages and Palestinian political prisoners. And respect for international law, including an end to all licences for arms traded with Israel. I applaud our Government for suspending trade talks with Israel and sanctioning extremists in Netanyahu's Government, but it must go further and immediately recognise the State of Palestine. *(Applause)* That is how you begin to go down a road towards a genuine two-state solution, a safe and secure Israel yes, but a safe, secure and free Palestine as well. *(Applause)*

Congress, in Gaza, in Ukraine, in Sudan and here at home, there has never been more need for our values of solidarity, compassion and justice. And we stand in solidarity with those who take action in defence of those values. Today I want to send my support to GMB members who are taking action or have recently taken action in defence of those values. Workers at Briggs fighting for fair pay. Members at Devon County Council who saw off fire and re-fire. School support staff in Tower Hamlets standing up for decent staffing levels and all the others. That includes the workers at Bideford fighting against derecognition, union rights arbitrarily robbed off them by company bosses. Solidarity, comrades, to each and every one of you because when you win, we all win. Solidarity! *(Applause)*

Now last year was a momentous year. Labour elected with a massive majority, an Employment Rights Bill delivered within its first 100 days into Parliament and the Minimum Service Level legislation, those anti-strike laws introduced by the Tories that we fought so hard to get rid of, defeated before those laws were ever used. It was thanks to the power of solidarity. (*Applause*)

But if 2024 was a year of change, 2025 has to be a year of delivery, a year when the Government makes good its promises to working people. The TUC has three key priorities for the next 12 months. Our first priority is making sure the Government delivers the manifesto commitments which won it that huge majority last year. We have made some progress. You heard from the Chancellor yesterday. Re-setting our relationship with the European Union, NHS waiting lists finally coming down. Our railways coming back where they belong, in public ownership. State support for British Steel, one of our most important foundation industries, and, as you heard yesterday directly from the Chancellor, support for Sizewell and the future of nuclear in this country. That is all progress.

But I think it is fair to say they haven't got everything right though in the first year of this Labour Government. I am glad the Government have listened on the Winter Fuel Allowance and I want Ministers to also think about their current plans to reform social security. Let me be clear, I want, and I think it is right that we think about how we support people back into work, but nobody unable to work should be left out of pocket and nobody in work at the moment or looking for work should see their benefits cut to

balance the nation's books. When it comes to social security we cannot and will not accept the most vulnerable being plunged further into poverty. (*Applause*)

At lunchtime the Government will set out its spending review and what happens today will shape what happens for years to come. The TUC has urged the Chancellor to stay the course, to fix the UK's economic foundations, to break the cycle of low growth, low productivity and low wages. That means investing in public services and fair pay for all public sector workers. It means delivering a real industrial strategy, sustaining and creating good unionised jobs in every part of the country. To do that though we need to cut punitive energy costs for UK industry. Congress, jobs are on the line because we pay more for our electricity than our global competitors. How can it be right that a British manufacturer pays four times more than an American manufacturer for energy? Or 50% more than a French manufacturer? That is not sensible economics and it means British companies and British workers are being asked to compete with one arm tied behind their back. It threatens jobs, industry and growth and the cost of inaction is far greater than any cost of support. Without intervention this Congress knows firms will be pushed to the brink and once they are gone they cannot come back. As you know better than me, last month Moorcroft went out of business after more than 100 years of trading and in February Royal Stafford went in liquidation. Famous names and good jobs lost forever.

Today I urge Ministers in our Labour Government: Do the right thing, take action on energy costs and make sure the new industrial strategy gives British industry and British manufacturers the level playing field we deserve. (*Applause*) When energy costs are competitive we can compete. British industry - skilled workers - has huge potential.

Just a few weeks ago I met GMB reps and members at Sellafield helping process and store Europe's largest stockpile of nuclear waste. Good quality jobs, skilled workers, essential to our national security and underpinning our nuclear industry. The next day I went down the coast and met GMB members and reps at BAE Systems in Barrow, building that next generation of nuclear submarines, securing high-quality apprenticeships in marine engineering and showing how manufacturing is fundamental to both our national prosperity and our national security. Sellafield and Barrow are just two examples we can all learn from, examples that prove we can and must build a new type of economy. One where we invest in the industries of the future. One where we measure success by workers' living standards, not just GDP. And one, frankly, Congress, where we expect those at the top to pay their fair share. Congress, it is well overdue. It is time to tax the wealthy and not just working people in this country.

(Applause)

The second priority is ensuring that we get the full-strength Employment Rights Bill that we have been promised, the biggest upgrade to workers' rights in a generation. An end to exploitative zero hours contracts, a ban on fire and rehire, day one employment rights and, crucially, levelling the playing field for trade unions. For the first time in my 30-odd years of trade union activism a Government repealing anti-trade union legislation, the Strikes Act and that 2016 Trade Union Act. Delivering new rights for unions to access the workplace, stamping out union busting, so never again does a Government stand by like the Tories stood by while the likes of Amazon deploy every cynical trick in the book they can to deserved workers getting an independent union voice. And on that point, with new union rights coming on stream, I want to say this; Amazon can run but they cannot hide from this union, or the trade union movement.

(Applause) Last year's recognition vote was not the end, it was just the beginning. And so to every exploitative tax-avoiding union busting employer like Amazon, my message is this: our movement is coming for you, our movement is going to organise you and our movement is going to win. *(Applause)*

One final word about the Employment Rights Bill. That is an incredibly important piece of legislation and laws are important, but, Congress, all the laws in the world mean nothing if we are not organising strong unions to win for workers. We need to make sure we use that legislation to recruit the next generation of members and reps, the build the diverse and inclusive and representative movement we need and to rebuild our collective strength. A stronger GMB, a stronger TUC, a stronger trade union movement that fights and wins for all working people.

The third and final priority from me is simply this. We all have a collective responsibility in this room, and beyond, to play our part in tackling the rise of the far right and populist right, in our workplaces, in our communities, at the ballot box and on the street. Last summer we saw those riots, men being dragged out their cars by a lynch mob, racist thugs attacking mosques, attacking hotels housing asylum seekers, and the leaders of Reform literally kindling the fires with conspiracy theories and inuendo. It is down to our movement, each and every one of us, to show that Reform is no friend of working people. *(Applause)* We need to highlight the hypocrisy of politicians who say they stand up for workers and then vote against women outsourced workers getting sick pay from day one, who say they want to save the NHS and we know would sell the NHS in a heartbeat for a US-style private insurance system, and who say they believe in a strong and sovereign Britain and are basically stooges for

Trump and for Putin. So, today let the message go out loud and clear from this Congress: Reform do not, never have and never will speak for working people. That is our job, Congress. That is our job. *(Applause)*

Tackling the far right, delivering the Employment Rights Bill in full, rebuilding Britain, those are our priorities at the TUC for the year ahead, and I am hopeful, after 14 long years, real change is finally within our grasp. Better jobs and wages, a fairer stronger economy, investment in our public services. Together we can defeat the far right. Together we can build a thriving trade union movement and together we can win for your members but win for workers everywhere. Solidarity Congress, thank you. *(Applause and a standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul, for that speech and attending. All the best. Cheers. Could we have the movers and seconders of Motions 173, 174 and 183 to the front, please?

SUPPORT FOR LEISURE SERVICES

MOTION 173

173. SUPPORT FOR LEISURE SERVICES

As austerity in local government has deepened many LA services have been seriously underfunded. Too often councils see leisure services as ‘a nice to have’ rather than essential community resources, and as a result many leisure services have been outsourced, cut back or closed.

Leisure services provide a vital service, providing far more than just cultural or exercise spaces. They are community services, bringing people together, providing specialist opportunities for a

diverse range of residents, many of whom need tailored activity plans. For many people they are where they find comfort from loneliness.

Yet with service cutbacks the pressures upon staff are ever increasing. The vast majority of leisure workers earn pennies above the minimum wage, yet as well as out terms and conditions being attacked, we are also regularly asked to take on more and more management responsibility without any additional pay or reward.

This is exacerbated as centres are shut, meaning more visitors per site, alongside more and more staff roles being cut.

For those that remain our terms and conditions are under fire. Workers are now expected to take unpaid breaks as normal practice, lose alternative shift bonuses, work longer hours, and face numerous other cost cutting measures. Such changes are not just unreasonable, but as many roles in leisure are safety critical, they are also dangerous.

Resolves

To launch a nationwide campaign, highlighting the role of leisure workers and their contribution to their local communities.

To push Councils to recognise that leisure services are a key part of community infrastructure and campaign for services to be insourced wherever they have been handed to outside management bodies.

As leisure workers urgently need a regrade, to fight for all to earn at least £15 an hour and to reject management responsibilities being handed down to front line workers without any additional pay.

H35 BRANCH

NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

(Carried)

DAVID LOFTUS (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): General Secretary, Congress, I am speaking this morning to move Motion 173, Support for Leisure Services. I am from the big and beautiful region of the North East, Yorkshire & Humber. (*Applause*) I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. I stand in front of Congress to ask for your support and recognition of the role that sport and leisure facilities play in the lives of many people the length and breadth of the country. I speak on behalf of our members of Hull Culture and Leisure, a team that plays a vital role in the health, happiness and well-being of our community. From the front of house, cleaners, catering staff, fitness instructors, receptionists, leisure assistants to team leaders, we are talking about members providing safe spaces for families to enjoy, places where young people can grow in confidence and opportunities for individuals of all ages to improve their health, build friendships, or simply to feel part of something. All of our members bring energy and professionalism and are keen to welcome everyone while supporting those who may be in need of extra help.

At a time when health and well-being have never been more important, leisure services are not a luxury, they are essential. Unfortunately, this is also a time when pay and terms and conditions in local authorities are under attack. As many of you will be aware, the pay offer for local government workers this year is a derisory 3.2%, which does not address the relative decline in wages over recent years. In addition to this, our senior management team are attempting to effectively extend our working week by two and a half hours by removing paid lunch breaks from our staff while at the same time some managerial staff are still not required to follow suit. On behalf of our members, our team of GMB reps are strongly resisting this as this is clearly discriminating against

the lowest-paid staff. We have campaigned strongly against this. Our members have been mobilised and joined us to lobby our local councillors, and in a recent ballot Hull came out unanimously in favour of further action if our next step is not resolved.

Politically, those are worrying times in our region. Although not yet a presence on Hull City Council, Hull and East Yorkshire have voted in a Reform candidate as our Regional Mayor, and should they gain a further foothold in our area then it is clear we will have many battles to come. Despite that, we are optimistic that if we continue to stand shoulder to shoulder and fight for what we believe in as a union then we can achieve the things our members deserve. Please support our leisure services and support this motion. Congress, I move Motion 173. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Dave. Seconder please?

NEIL PAYNE (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): President General Secretary, Congress, speaking this morning to second Motion 173. I am also a first-time delegate, first-time speaker (*Applause*). Like my colleague moving this motion, I am employed by an arm's length company wholly owned by my local council in my home city of Kingston-upon Hull which runs our sports and leisure facilities. The fall-out of years of austerity politics has resulted in ever-tighter budgets and increased the pressure on our ability to deliver affordable leisure services. This financial pressure has led to the charges for our sessions increasing by 9% this year, putting further strain on the finances of our customers at a time when concerns about people's physical and mental health mean that we should be aiming to increase accessibility to well-funded high-quality leisure facilities. At the same time the pay and working conditions of staff

have been steadily eroded, to the point where we are becoming ever closer to being caught up by the minimum wage. We therefore strongly support our local government pay negotiating team in their efforts to secure a plan to work towards a minimum hourly rate of £15. So, for the benefit of both the public using our services and the staff working in this sector, we believe it is time to support our leisure facilities, to keep our prices affordable, to continue to be accessible to our users, and crucially, to ensure that all our staff and our GMB members in the workplace are treated with respect and paid appropriately for the work that they are doing. Congress, I second this motion.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Neil. Mover of Motion 174?

FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS TO BE FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF ALL CHILDREN

MOTION 174

174. FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS TO BE FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF ALL CHILDREN

For too long government has underfunded schools and particularly SEND provision. This has now reached the stage that schools are so seriously impacted that it's having a majorly detrimental impact to both children and school staff.

The government has just left schools to 'get on with it' and support SEND children with little or no funding, which leads to frustration of employees in schools who know only too well that their goodwill is being used to their disadvantage.

Parents/carers, children and support staff deserve for their voice to be heard, for children to attend a well-funded and staffed school, and be fully supported, enabling them to flourish and develop.

Funding for schools needs to be high on the new Government's agenda to rebuild the battered and broken education system left by 14 years of Tory cuts.

Many mainstream schools now have a majority of SEND children, due to the lack of SEN schools and places. In mainstream schools, support staff are struggling to cope with demands of the job, as they are being pulled pillar to post, covering work outside their job description.

More and more support staff are not just 1:1 with a SEND child, providing personalised support, but increasingly 1:3. – All children have different level of needs and require different levels of support. This doesn't work for children, parents or staff.

Alongside coping with supporting educationally, more and more support staff are now being forced to deliver intimate care – with children attending school in nappies.

There is little or no thought to the support staff that are doing their best to support SEND children, employees often receiving a lower pay for their work. At one time all support staff were well paid, now they are pennies above minimum wage.

Many schools are now cutting support staff as they are trying to balance their finances. The staff left behind are backfilling unfilled roles as well as supporting children with additional needs

All of these issues mean support staff are leaving education. Our children and staff deserve so much better.

GMB Resolves

- To launch a national campaign to highlight the stories of support staff workers, including highlighting their stories on a dedicated online page, with written testimonials and videos.
- To lobby the Secretary of State for Education (a GMB member) to urgently review the SEND budget so that it provides the personalised support necessary for children and a decent working

B03 BRANCH

NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE HUMBER REGION

(Carried)

HAYLEY DOYLE: (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good morning, President, Congress, Motion 174, Funding for Skills to be Fully Supportive of All Children. In Leeds GMB we are incredibly proud of the campaign we have been running on SEN funding, staff development and child-centred provision. We are still continuing to fight on these issues and we do not want to be back here next year with the same motion. But we will keep coming back if that is what it takes. We will not be silent. Because despite the empty words from politicians, of every party, the reality on the ground is grim. We are overworked, overstretched and dropping like flies. Too often the funding that is tied to meet the needs of an individual child is instead being spent on the general school pot. The parents need financial transparency so they know where their child's money is going to be spent, because it needs to be spent on them. We have seen cases of children being allocated the highest level of funding yet receiving no one-to-one support and no focused resources. All they receive is a pair of ear defenders to block out background noise and a fidget toy. How is this meeting their needs? This is a complete disgrace. Stop failing our children. The appalling levels of funding for SEN provision is letting down children, families, staff and the country. Too many times, local authorities and politicians provide lukewarm words about how vital SEN provision is and then turn the other way when it comes to putting their money where their mouth is. In Leeds we are not going to back down. In an already underpaid role, support staff are being further fobbed off by being expected to work at a level that is not reflected in their pay or job description.

We are in a cost-of-living crisis for goodness sake. It is not acceptable. Rachel Reeves proudly stated that disabled people want to work, but they also want educating. We need the correct pay, correct training and the correct financial support for schools and nurseries. To enable this to happen we need to ensure that each child has a funded package that works for them, and every family is supported. Congress, this is a justice issue. I hope you will support the motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Hayley. Secunder?

SALLY RYAN (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Back again. Good morning, President, Congress, from the great big and wonderful North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region, seconding Motion 174.

There is so much I could say about SEN provision and the fundamental changes that are needed to deliver for those young people but as I have only got two minutes rather than two weeks, I have had to focus it down. First, we must demand that SEN funding is ring-fenced to child it has been allocated to. We must end the disgrace of funding being used to top up the general school funding pot. What leads straight to the core issue is how can it be that schools are having to use money that is supposed to be spent on making sure children can access the education they deserve is instead being spent on toilet rolls and sugar. When schools need to make cuts, what goes first? The support staff the staff that support our SEN children. Those staff left have to sometimes support two or three SEN children who actually have one-to-one funding. This has to stop. Last year we heard a lot from politicians about change. I voted for that change and now

I want to actually see it. This Labour Government must back our schools. They must put the money into our broken education system, a system that has had 14 years of Tory cuts and then they must fund SEN provision properly. A child's funding needs to go to their education and we must not back down until they do. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sally, thank you. Mover of Motion 183, please?

FAT CAT ACADEMY HEAD TEACHERS FAT CAT SALARIES SHOULD BE CAPPED

MOTION 183

183. FAT CAT ACADEMY HEAD TEACHERS FAT CAT SALARY SHOULD BE CAPPED

Congress, it is absolutely appalling that Head teachers, Executive Head teachers and CEO's of Academy Trusts are usually over paid and on the highest salary, in their Academy trust yet it is the school support staff who are the backbone of the children's academic lives.

Congress notes that most CEO's have never set foot inside their school, nor do they know the pupil's that go to school there. Yet when there are cuts as the school budget needs tightening it is the lowest paid workers who are dismissed.

Congress, we believe that Heads of Academies and CEOs should not be able to pay themselves an extortionate amount of money, while school budgets are cut and struggling. Their pay could go towards another SEN support staff member or more resources. Not in the pocket of a Fat Cat Boss!

L16 LB GREENWICH BRANCH

SOUTHERN REGION

(*Carried*)

HELENA PILCHER (Southern): Good morning, Madam President, I am from the super Southern Region. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am promoting Motion 183, Fat Cat Academy Head Teachers Fat Cat Salaries Should be Capped.

Congress, I rise today with a heavy heart but fire in my voice. Across our schools the very people who form the backbone of our children's education, the support staff, are being treated as disposable. These are the individuals who nurture, guide and support our children every single day. Yet they are the lowest paid and the first to be made redundant when budgets are tight. This is absolutely appalling.

Let me tell you a case that I have been made aware of. Let's call her Sarah. Sarah was a teaching assistant at a local primary school. She worked with children with special educational needs. She often stayed late to prepare materials. She comforted anxious pupils and helped them find their voice in a system that only too often overlooks them. She was not in this for the money because there was not much. She was in it for the children. When the school faced budget cuts, Sarah was let go not because she wasn't doing her job properly, she was indeed exceptional, but because she was the easiest to cut. Meanwhile the CEO of the academy trust who had never once visited the school continued to take home their six-figure salary. That CEO did not know the names of the children Sarah worked, did not see the tears she wiped away, did not see the laughter she helped create or the efforts above and beyond her job description which she carried out every day. Congress, this is unjust, unfair and it is a disgrace. When school budgets are slashed it should not be the teaching assistants, the caretakers, the admin staff or the

SEN support workers who pay the price. These are the people who make learning possible. Without them our education system would collapse. These are the staff working at the coalface in education, working with the more challenging behaviour, with the children who have highly complex needs, more mental health needs and the much higher SEN numbers.

We believe that no CEO should be allowed to line their pockets while children go without resources, while classrooms go without support and while staff like Sarah get shown the door. Their bloated salaries could fund additional SEN support, more classroom assistants or vital mental health services for our pupils. Instead it goes into the pockets of the fat cat bosses.

Congress, we must demand transparency, we must demand accountability and we must demand that people who do the real work in our schools are paid fairly and protected from the axe when times get tough. Support staff feel exploited. The physical and emotional work they invest in their students is certainly not reflected in their salaries and, unfortunately, all their efforts, dedication, goodwill and loyalty do not pay the bills. They must be paid their worth. They need recognition in their pay packets for the essential and valuable work that they do. It should not be in the pockets of fat cats who are running our schools and academies. I move this motion. (*Applause*)

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

LYNN POLLARD (Southern): President, Congress, I rise to second this Motion 183, Fat Cat Academy Head Teachers Fat Cat Salaries Should be Capped. I am a first-time

delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* And I am also severely dyslexic. So, there is hope for all you dyslexics out there, if I can do this.

My colleague has so eloquently said that it is time that fat cat salaries and head teacher salaries were capped. I am a school convenor and I am seeing redundancies in TAs on the rise as school budgets are squeezed. This is a shocking turn of events. TAs and support staff are the lifeblood of our schools but the lowest paid. They have often to deal with being sworn at, spat at and threatened with violence. Those in their ivory towers on their fat cat wages do not see the challenging behaviours that are dealt with and we have to let the cat out of the bag. The only fat cat I want to see is this one. *(Holds up toy cat)* Let's not just make work better, let's make work fairer for all. Please support Motion 183. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Lynn. Well done. Anyone wish to speak in opposition to any of those motions? Can I ask CEC speaker Tracey Ashton to respond, please.

TRACEY ASHTON (CEC): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC and responding to Motion 174. The CEC supports this motion with a qualification. On point 1 we now have a National Schools website. However, we do require support from regions and activists to provide content. On point 2, this is existing policy. We have current life funding campaign and have written to the Secretary of State for Education and the SoS for Local Government and both responses are on the Schools Notice board. Congress, please support Motion 174 with the qualifications set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tracey. Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) I will put those to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 173, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. Motion 174, all those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. Motion 183, all those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 173 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 174 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 184 was **CARRIED**.*

STOP CHANGES TO PIP

EMERGENCY MOTION 4

EM4 - STOP CHANGES TO PIP

Our members and our self-organised disability group (ABILITY) are furious and anxious about the proposed changes to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) eligibility and payments announced in the March Spring Statement by this Government.

The removal of PIP from disabled people is discriminatory as it breaches Section 15 of the Equality Act 2010.

PIP is a vital lifeline, ensuring financial security and independence for those with disabilities and long-term health conditions. Daily lives for disabled people is difficult enough and different for each person making the criteria for them to get support harder to access a total disgrace.

These changes will affect over 3 million households and restricting access would push vulnerable individuals further into poverty, undermining their dignity and wellbeing.

London Region has written to all our MPs, and we have asked other Regions to do the same.

Congress notes that there are many people with disabilities or families with relatives that voted for the present Government and that these underline the social values they thought they were voting for.

We call on GMB to use all our power and voice to oppose these policies that place financial strain on disabled individuals

This congress calls upon the union at all levels to campaign against the changes and stand up to the rights of those who cannot work, or work is restricted to no fault of their own.

We call on the Government to abandon these reforms. While some reform may be necessary, any future reforms should be developed through fair, transparent and meaningful consultation and be evidence based.

REGION: London

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: We now move to two emergency motions, Emergency Motion 4: Stop Changes to PIP, which I will take first, and then Emergency Motion 7 if you could be ready to come down as well. The mover and seconder of Emergency Motion 4, please.

JONATHAN COLES (London): Congress, I am not being awkward. I have got severe eczema and it has got to my feet, especially having to walk miles to the lift in this venue. Secretary of London Ability self-organised group moving this very important emergency motion on stopping the PIP changes.

Last September. I attended TUC Congress here in this very hall where I spoke in the debate on the motion on PIP. I explained the faults with the assessment process which

really needs to be overhauled. In March, many of you I am sure were shocked to hear the Spring Statement announce significant changes to the eligibility criteria. The changes are disproportionate to whatever aim the Government had, legitimate or not. It will result in thousands losing this vital benefit. This is discriminatory and a breach of the Equality Act. People with disabilities are being targeted by an agenda of obsession but successive Governments with getting people into work. People with disabilities face a lot of barriers to getting to work if their bodies and minds allow them to do so, and you can still get PIP and work.

For those of you who do not know, PIP has two parts, care which is called daily living now, and mobility. You need to score eight points for the standard rate and 12 for the enhanced rate for both. It comes from scoring points in a number of sections. In daily living there are 10 and you get a score from nought to a maximum of between six and 12 for each section, whether you can do something unaided to being completely unable to do something. There are two sections for mobility, moving around and planning a journey. A journey for mobility you need to be able to walk less than 50 metres or 20 metres for the highest rate. If you cannot prove that you cannot plan a journey, that is difficult to score. Most people will score two points from a number of sections because they may not be able to undertake an activity because of physical or mental health. Some of the sections go together like washing and cooking, dressing and undressing and even toileting. For instance, you may not be able to bend or stretch or cut or lift. You may be so depressed that need prompting to do things like cook or dress or wash, or have problems communicating and managing budgets. Quite often you will be scored two points for a number of sections as you need to use aids, it takes a lot longer or you need someone's help. You can get four points for usually needing someone to

supervise you or help you do something like wash or cook for you. The Government is proposing to change the criteria so you have to score at least four points in one section. That will not make much difference for the mobility but for daily living it will have a massive impact. In reality, if you qualify for four points for a section, you are more likely to score 12 points in total. What it does do is make it difficult for people who have a lot of needs but manage with a small amount of help, who will lose this vital £73.90 (at the moment) a week for the daily standard living rate. The Government is also proposing to reduce the extra money for people currently unable to work or who have limited capacity to work. This will renege on a promise, and indeed a court decision, that people will not be worse off when they are transferred from other benefits to Universal Credit.

Now some facts. The estimated effect is 3.2 million families losing an average of £3,000 a year. Some 370,000 claimants will lose out once the changes take effect at the next review. Some 430,000 future claimants will lose out on the £4,500 a year which they would have been receiving now had they been claiming now. Some 2.4 million people will lose their top-up for universal credit and 730,000 will be £3,000 worse off than people who are currently claiming. These figures are from the Department for Work and Pensions, which also states that other changes will give 3.8 million £420 a year. A huge difference in those gaining and those losing. Well, that's alright then, if you have a disability and make a claim in the future, it's really worth losing £3,000 so those who are not disabled can gain an extra £420. I am sure you would all agree that these changes are discriminatory and are targeting the most in need. You can imagine the anger of those potentially affected and the anxiety and potential damage to their health. The extra work for the Department for Work and Pensions handling appeals. For

organisations who help those who work in welfare benefits for local authorities such as I do, or charities like the CAB. Our region has already written to our MPs and voiced our anger. I trust now that other regions have followed suit or are in the process of doing so. But we need to campaign at all levels against these cuts. I trust you will support and join the campaign. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jonathan. Secunder?

ANN WEEKES (London): Seconding this emergency motion. I am the Chair of the London Region disability self-organised group, so I coming and talking directly to and I am talking directly to this table here. The first thing that I need to say to you is, and I am not going to go through all the statistics, 80% of people have acquired disabilities. So, if you don't have one now, it is coming. Temporarily or permanently, you will at some point in your life get a disability. PIP affects everyone. Some in here are already on it, and you may be in a vulnerable position because you may lose it because you will no longer meet the criteria. It is not a fight for our members. So let's stop talking outwardly and start talking inwardly. It is a fight for yourselves and it is also a fight for everyone. PIP is paid by taxpayers' money - our money - so why are allowing the Government to dictate what our taxes are spent on? The regions, please, you need to support your SOC's, you need to support your disability groups. Help us in our campaigning and our organising. Also encourage the branches to participate in any of the activities that we put on or that we do so that we work together as a collective.

Now I speak to the CEC very quickly and very directly. I love you all and I am respectful, but I am talking to the President, I am talking to the outgoing and I am

talking to the incoming Vice Chair. Disability has no hierarchy. Even the King of England has a disability, he has cancer, so, Congress, you need to step up on your reasonable adjustments in this Congress room. Right now, we have people out there who have cancer, who have back problems, who have issues and you are sitting comfortably on very comfortable chairs right now while there are people out there who are sitting on hard chairs. We need to address this. *(Applause)*

There is also no need for you to be dragging people with disabilities up to the front. We need to change this to roaming mics. We can find a way, we can get them up on to the screen but you can still hear what they have to say. Give them a roaming mic so they don't have to keep coming up here all the time. *(Applause)* Furthermore, when you are dealing with how you communicate and the information that is put out, recognise that there are dyslexic people in here, there are people who have learning difficulties, people who cannot read and understand the information that you are sharing. Most of all we need to see more representatives on the CEC who are disabled. Do not have them up there as a tick-box exercise. If you ask them to be a part of the CEC and to be up there, be there to support them and to help them to fully be informed. This is not a tick-box exercise. If you want disabled people and equality in the CEC, ensure the people you have there are being fully supported to participate, to be informed, to be involved, and to be able to give a voice to disabled members across the whole of GMB. Thank you. *(Applause and cheers)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ann I have made a point of all the points you have made but also, people, please put it on your feedback form. That is the way we will learn what people's requirements are. All the points are well made. Anyone want to

speak in opposition? I do not imagine there would be. The CEC are supporting this emergency motion, so all those in favour of Emergency Motion 4, please show. Anyone against? That is unanimously carried.

*Emergency Motion 4 was **CARRIED**.*

ACCESS TO FREE PERIOD PRODUCTS AT ALL GMB EVENTS

EMERGENCY MOTION 7

EM7: Emergency Motion: Access To Free Period Products at All GMB Events

Congress notes that from the beginning of this Congress on 8th June, there has been no free period product provision at the venue; believes that access to period products is a basic human necessity to maintain human dignity; but notes that for many, period products are unaffordable. Congress also notes that for many people, they cannot predict their menstrual cycles which makes it difficult to prepare, and that those people will have a need for emergency access to period products; and recognises that period products cost a premium when purchased from bathroom vending machines compared to supermarkets, thereby preventing people from accessing them.

Congress welcomes that in Scotland, free period products have been provided for free by law in all public buildings since 2022; and believes that this approach should be adopted across the rest of the UK and organisations should review their own policies with an aim to widen access. Congress notes that the current Congress venue does not provide free period products or even a vending machine; and believes that as a modern and progressive union, GMB should take proportionate steps to widen free access to our members where possible.

Congress therefore calls on the CEC to put forward a policy that aims to ensure the provision of free period products in bathrooms at all future GMB Congress venues used for GMB events and at the very least provision of vending machines.

Region: GMB Scotland

(Carried)

GJLLIAN McFARLANE (GMB Scotland): Moving Emergency Motion 7 - Access to Free Period Products at All GMB Events)

Congress, how many of us here this week have noticed that there have about no provision of free period products in the bathrooms at this venue or even a vending machine. This is a basic human necessity which helps us to maintain dignity and provides access to these products for those who simply find them unaffordable. There are people who unfortunately struggle to know their full menstrual cycle and cannot prepare in advance. This can be for numerous reasons including women's health conditions, meaning that it might be an emergency in which a product is needed. I found myself in this situation where when I much younger and felt so self-conscious as I could not just go and find any products. If there are machines in venues, these are normally more expensive than in supermarkets and as we do not always have cash nowadays due to being in cashless venues, it means that those in need cannot access them quickly enough. Although yes, it is possible to ask fellow delegates to spare a product, or to go to an information desk, there is still a stigma in having to admit that one has been caught out. It can be extremely embarrassing for women who have to look for help and how to access it when it occurs.

Scotland became the first country in the world to make period products free for all by providing free period products by law via local authorities and education providers since 2022 after the passing of the Period Products (Free Provision) Act. In the Kingdom of Fife all council buildings have free period products in every staff bathroom, so whoever needs them can get access. We feel that this free provision should be the case across all of the UK and every organisation has a responsibility to look at how they can give access for those in need. We ask the CEC to bring forward a policy which would aim to provide free period products in all future GMB Congress venue bathrooms and strive to provide provisions in any building holding a GMB event where possible, or at least the provision of vending machines where this is priced affordably. Congress, please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: That you, Jillian, and seconder please.

ELIZABETH AIRNS (GMB Scotland): Seconding Emergency Motion No. 7. Congress, this is a very important issue and we need GMB, our great union, to support and change policy. Are we saying in 2025 we stay in the dark ages where toilet tissue is the only option available in venues for our female members caught short without my period products? I think not. Although we acknowledge that the products are now available, it is not acceptable that they have to another part of the building. Please, please support this motion. I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Elizabeth. Anyone want to speak in opposition? I will ask Linda Carr-Pollock to speak on behalf of the CEC, please.

LINDA CARR-POLLOCK: President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Emergency Motion 7, Access to Free Period Products at All GMB Events. The CEC is supporting this motion which is a logical extension to our existing policy calling for the provision of free period products in workplaces and educational establishments. We also wish to note with thanks to GMB Scotland that upon raising with the Standing Orders Committee that the venue for this Congress did not have free period product provision, we immediately arranged for some to be available. A small qualification to the motion is that while GMB can work with our future Congress venue providers to ensure appropriate provision of free period products, the motions call for all GMB events to have this provision may be impractical in some cases. This is for example GMB branch meetings which are held for a short amount of time within the working day or evening and held locally to the members who are in the branch, GMB events in a local authority run venue in Scotland will benefit from public bodies already being required by law to provide free period products, which the CEC agrees should be adopted across the rest of the UK. Therefore, the CEC is asking Congress to support Emergency Motion 7 with the small qualification set out. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Linda. Does GMB Scotland agree to the qualification? *(Agreed)* I will put that to the vote. All those in favour of Emergency Motion 7, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Emergency Motion 7 was **CARRIED**.*

Rule Amendments

THE PRESIDENT: We will now take rule amendments as one block all from Southern Region. Could the movers and seconders for Rule Amendments 315, 316, 317 to come to the front, please? We understand that Rule Amendments 298, 299, and 323 have been withdrawn and the SEC have been notified. Could I have the mover of 315, please?

CHARLES ADJE (Southern): President, Congress, I am Regional President for Southern Region and I am speaking on Rule Amendments 315, 316 and 317. Following discussions with the General Secretary, he has given assurances that we will be involved in the review of all the appointment processes in relation to our rule amendments so with this assurance by the General Secretary, the region will gladly withdraw Rule amendments 315, 316 and 317. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause)*

Retired Life Members Report

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Charles. Can I invite Jan Smith to the rostrum to address Congress with the Report of the RMA for 2024-2025. It is been a year of great activity for the RMA, as I am sure we are all about to hear. Thank you, Jan.

JAN SMITH (National RMA Secretary): It is nearly afternoon, colleagues, and I am pleased to say that I haven't been sent to Eastbourne, and I am glad to be here with you. Before I start, I would like, if he has not already come up here, Steve Short to work his way towards the front please because I will need him.

THE PRESIDENT: I am not sure if he is the room, Jan, because he works behind the scenes now.

JAN SMITH: He was told to be here for the end of the morning session.

THE PRESIDENT: It might be because we are running early.

JAN SMITH: Anyhow, President, Congress, friends, colleagues, Jan Smith, National Retired Members Secretary. Colleagues, it gives me great pleasure to give you our report, but just where do I start? So much has happened since last year. Well here goes. On behalf of Margi Clarke, Leila Cassim(?) and myself, we give our sincere thanks for our national RMA banner being part of the opening ceremony. Colleagues, we made history where for the very, very first time we did not have to apply or appeal to take part. We are truly grateful and long may it continue.

Last year I mentioned we would be seeking a meeting due to problems that we had within the national RMA, with our General Secretary Gary, on finding ways forward on how we go forward. We did have that meeting and it took place in January, hence the motions that were overwhelmingly carried on Sunday. Another history today for us, after many years of trying and being given one excuse after another. Now, colleagues, we have that voice we need to make sure it takes place as our fight continues for the recognition that we truly deserve.

Colleagues, some of our committee members have now retired and we give thanks to Derrick Baker MBE, for the many years as our President. (*Applause*) Thanks also go

to Brian Adams who is our Treasury, to Roger Balsdon, Vice-President, and helped on the Congress stall each year. He has retired through ill-health. I ask you all with me to wish them very good wishes for the future. (*Applause*) Thanking them for their valued input over the years. We have welcomed Vaughan West as our new National Co-ordinator. I can tell you Vaughan had a very rough ride in the beginning but we are now working comfortably with him, so thank you, Vaughan, for what you are doing on our behalf.

In October last year we held a successful Conference. I can tell you there will another Conference this year on October 21st, at Mary Turner House. But regions please note, and to your regional co-ordinators, motions, names of delegates and visitors need to be sent to myself or Pat Gannon, National Officer, no later than 1st August. Anything after that date will be disallowed.

Colleagues, I convey sincere thanks to Pat Gannon, who is a star, and nothing is too tiring for her in her help. To John Stevenson(?) and Leila Cassim, who are running our stall this year, thank you for all that you are doing down there. So far this morning I was told we have made just over £700. (*Applause*) However, there is still one brown envelope, I understand, to be handed back. If it can go back to the stall, I would appreciate it because that region's money is valuable to us. I would like to give thanks to my own region, being Warren, Anita, Edith, Penny and all my London Region friends and colleagues. Many, many thanks to you all. Your help and support is very much appreciated.

This is where I asked Steve if he could be present but as he is not here, I will come back

to that part. Finally, colleagues, sadly, I have to report our Honorary President Monica Smith has passed away. She was called to heaven on April 24th, aged 94 years. Monica was a stalwart not only of the GMB, she helped found the RMA and, Monica, you are sadly missed. May you, with our heavily colleagues, rest in peace. God bless your souls. (*Applause*)

Going back to Steve, I was going to present to him, which I am sure Gary will pass on to him, and if you will accept it on Steve's behalf please. (*Presentation*) We give our thanks to you for over the years the help and support and also seeking that we got our RMA banner. Also, thanks to you, Barbara, in doing so and your continued support. We fully appreciate that and we wish you a very happy healthy retirement, Steve. (*Applause*)

Colleagues, it has given me great pleasure in giving you this report. I sincerely thank you for listening. I will not go into the detail of the pros and cons and the heartache and the fights that we have had over the year because it is not necessary. We are working together. We continue hoping to work together with the GMB. We have got our voice and, as I have said, we need now to fight together for the recognition we deserve.

So, colleagues, thank you for listening, safe journeys home tomorrow as I commend this report to you. (*Applause*) Gary has just asked me if I know my way to Eastbourne, so I am now off!

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Jan, for that report and we will make sure Steve gets that from you.

Solidarity Video - Ivanna Khrapko, Youth Council Chair for the FPU trade union in Ukraine

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now watch a Solidarity video for the end of today's business from Yvanna Khrapko, Youth Council Chair for the FPU trade union in Ukraine. We warmly welcomed our trade union sister Yvanna when she addressed Congress 2023 when we were last in Brighton. *(Video shown) (Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Solidarity is my favourite word. I think all these videos we have seen this week from international trade unions just go to show how important it is, as I said before. It is a verb really, solidarity. It is about what we do and how we come together and act together to support and take action. I am looking forward to the International Day tomorrow at Congress.

Congress, this is the end of the morning's business, so we have finished early and you have an extra-long lunch hour. This afternoon though we will come back at 2 o'clock for an Equal Pay demonstration both inside and outside of the hall. We will start at 2 o'clock with a pre-rally back in the hall. You have lots of time to go to all the stalls, go to a fringe and enjoy your lunch time, thank you.

Adjourned for Lunch

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

Conference reassembled at 2 pm

Call to Order

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call Congress to order, please. We are not here for very long. Congress, I hope you have enjoyed your long lunch and made sure that you got to go round all the exhibits. If you are staying for the workshop, obviously you will get another opportunity to speak to them all.

Announcements

THE PRESIDENT: I have two announcements before we get into the main part of the agenda. From the RMA, the raffle has now been drawn so please go to stall, not now, you have got until 11.30 in the morning, to see if you have won a prize. That is any time between now and 11.30.

And also, an announcement from the York Disabled Co-operative Workers: “We would like to thank Congress for their kind generosity and support raising £774. (*Applause*) It has been a very difficult year with the sudden passing of Phil Davies. The board and the small group of disabled workers decided in honour of Phil to keep the business going. This could not have been achieved without the help of GMB North West & Irish and Wigan 87 Branch.” (*Applause*)

Congress, I am proud that we will be spending the afternoon supporting our members' Equal Pay campaign in this very city. Before some of us head out to the planned demo and march, we will have a short presentation about our wider equal pay work. Once the presentation is complete, I would ask delegates who are joining the march to collect their belongings and follow our Equal Pay campaigners out of the hall downstairs and follow instructions from the stewards in hi-vis jackets. On that note can the volunteer stewards please meet outside the hall to get your briefings and the aforementioned hi-vis jackets from Southern Region staff. Those who are unable to join the march, please remain in the hall for the planned Equal Pay workshop.

Just a note on the march, if you have orange smoke, I know we had it in the march last year, please can you make sure you are on the outside of the march because for people who have asthma it does not help them at all. I am not saying you cannot use it but please just be aware of where you are, not right in the centre of the demo. We are just going to the video now, please. *(Video shown) (Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I would like to welcome Rhea Wolfson to the rostrum from our Women's Campaign Unit.

RHEA WOLFSON (National Office): Thank you, President. "Two hot meals a day", "Filling the fridge without having to worry about the bill", "A holiday for the first time in years", "Paying off my debts", "Freedom to leave an unsafe home". If anyone ever asks why GMB does equal pay, tell them what our members say. Tell them about the

money stolen and that we are getting it back. Tell them about the lives that are being transformed.

In 2015, I was a branch secretary in Glasgow schools. Every day I heard the same. Every day felt like the same. GMB members working three or four jobs for the same employer managing multigenerational care - childcare, caring for elderly relatives, caring for grandchildren, too. I would meet members in absence management - two, three, four a day. Women being hurt in kitchens but being given absolutely no credit for working in a dangerous environment. Women off long-term sick because of the NHS delays and women for whom the strain of it had all become too much. What was the union's ambition for those members? At the time it was not high enough, until the fight for equal pay. Fast forward four years and those same members achieved the first wave of settlement. Finally, cleaners, school kitchen workers, carers, classroom assistants had a sense that their work was being valued and started to receive the wages that had been stolen from them. You heard what that meant to some of the women of Glasgow. Six years later GMB is supporting 27 large equal pay claims and campaigns, tens of thousands of women.

I had one of the best moments of my year just last week. In a meeting with one of our reps, who has an equal pay claim in Blaeneu Gwent Council, with our equal pay legal officer Lauren, we were discussing the merits of a settlement: an offer from the employer in response to our equal pay claims there. And it wasn't good enough. We agreed our red lines. The reps told us what they needed in order to feel valued and we told the council it was not good enough. GMB rep Catherine told us how in the last round of equal pay claims she had been with another union and she felt she did not have

the support. She was told to accept a couple of thousand pounds just before Christmas (as it always is) because that was the best she was going to get.

Well, in 2025 that is not how we do things in the GMB. (*Applause*) Our members are given the best advice and support for them to achieve real pay justice and reject cheap and convenient buy-offs from their employers, like in Birmingham where over 4,000 GMB workers trusted their organiser Michelle McCrossen when she asked women not to be bought out for £1,500 and sign away their right to equal pay. Following their historic strike, now those members are in touching distance of £250 million. (*Applause*) Their money finally being returned to them.

The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970 and came into force in 1975. Fifty years later the reality of equal pay still feels too far away. Our GMB equal pay campaigns build on the legacies and lessons from women's struggles that have come before us. We draw a direct line from the Ford Dagenham workers, the Glasgow women's strike to the Birmingham equal pay strike, to strikes in Falkirk, to campaigns in Asda, Sunderland, Cardiff, Cumbria, Barnet - and here today in Brighton. In our equal pay campaigns, we see the best of workers and the worst of employers. In Swansea the council was trying to kick out a judge because they think she might be a bit too pro equal pay. And in Brighton this Labour Council is trying to force our women members to not only have to sue their employer (which they are) but sue their union, too. If the council's anti-union antics are successful, their legacy will be to destroy any working women's ability to bring an equal pay claim. Imagine, Labour in government pledging to make the right to equal pay finally accessible: Labour in Brighton threatening to destroy that right completely. (*Cries of "Boo!"*)

Yesterday the Chancellor was here and she heard loud and clear from our Kim what GMB members expect and demand on equal pay. And you heard her say as the first woman Chancellor that this is an issue close to her heart. I know that the 45,000 GMB members currently fighting for equal pay will ensure that this Government makes good on their promises. *(Applause)*

Our Equal Pay campaigns touch every corner of our union. Now and ever since an Equal Pay campaign that I learned about just today from North West & Irish that I think started in 1976. Let's see in this room how many of us are fighting for equal pay? I am going to ask you to join me. Please come and join me, equal pay campaigners from Wales & South West. *(Applause)* From North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. *(Applause)* From GMB Scotland. *(Applause)* From London Region. *(Applause)* From Southern Region. *(Applause)* From Midlands. *(Applause)* From North West & Irish. *(Applause)* Our campaigners here represent over 45,000 equal pay campaigners, GMB women who over the past couple of years have stepped up, said, "We will take on our employers and we will fight for equal pay."

MAYLINDA PERLESI (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Can I get everyone to stand up so I know you are ready. Because I don't see anybody getting ready for this march. Join Congress to go and support our Brighton sisters with their struggle and put an end to this. Are we ready, guys? *(Cries of "Yes!")* *(Applause)* Colleagues, let's lead them out.

THE PRESIDENT: Anybody for the workshop please stay in the hall.

Congress adjourned.