

CONGRESS 2026

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

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Held in:

**The Winter Gardens,
Blackpool**

on:

**Sunday, 7th June 2026
Monday, 8th June 2026
Tuesday, 9th June 2026
Wednesday, 10th June 2026
-and-
Thursday, 11th June 2026**

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PROCEEDINGS

**DAY FIVE
(Thursday, 11th June 2026)**

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**(Transcript prepared by:
Marten Walsh Cheerer Limited,
2nd Floor, Quality House, 6-9 Quality Court,
Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1HP.
Telephone: 020 7067 2900.
email: info@martenwalshcherer.com)**

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FIFTH DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 11TH JUNE 2026

MORNING SESSION

(Conference assembled at 9 a.m.)

Call to Order

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call Congress to order, please. We are nearly there so let's get going. Thank you so much for everybody that could make the demo yesterday. What a brilliant, brilliant demo that was. *(Applause)* I do hope you had a lovely final evening last night.

Raffle Announcement

THE PRESIDENT: Everyone, this is about the raffle announcement. If you bought raffle tickets, please check this morning to see if you have won a prize. I don't know where you are going to check that but if you have won go to the RMA stand in the exhibition area. I now call on Karen Dudley to move SOC Report No. 9.

Standing Orders Committee Report No. 9

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): Moving SOC Report No. 9.

Withdrawn Motions

Congress, please note the following motions from GMB Scotland have been withdrawn:

Motion 127: Protecting Workers From Artificial Intelligence

Motion 163: Save Our Local Authorities.

Motion 165: AI And Automation in Local Government.

Motion 208: Use of AI in NHS.

Motion 210: Interface Nursing: Is the Future to be Virtual?

From Southern Region:

Motion 310: Veto the Veto at the United Nations

Emergency Motions

There have been no further emergency motions.

Bucket collections

Congress, I am pleased to announce that GMB Scotland raised £436.05 cash and £146 online, so the grand total was £585.05 for Drumchapel LIFE, a worthy cause. Well done. (*Applause*)

The raffle for North West & Irish raised over £2,500, wonderful news. Please check with North West & Irish delegation to see if you are a winner.

Finally, the SOC would like to wish all the delegates and Congress a safe journey home. It has been a pleasure to work with you. (*Applause*) President, Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 9. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Can I thank SOC on behalf of Congress for all the work you have done this week. Thank you. (*Applause*) Does anybody wish to oppose SOC 9? (*No response*) I will put that to the vote. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Standing Orders Committee Report No. 9 was **ADOPTED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: On the bucket collections, well done. Regions will be notified so Regional Committees can decide how much they want to add to those collections. We now move on to our final group of regional success videos.

Regional Success Videos

North West & Irish Region

(Video shown)

Wales & South West Region

(Video shown)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, North West & Irish Region and Wales & South West Region. Two more inspiring videos to start the day and end the week.

We move on to debate Composite 17 followed by Composite 18. Could I have the movers and seconders of those two composites. Composite 17 incorporates Emergency Motions 12 and 13. Composite 18 incorporates Emergency Motions 14 and 15. Could I have the mover from Scotland for Composite 17, please. Have I got it the wrong way round? Sorry, North West & Irish, you are moving, that is fine. Do you want to move and GMB Scotland will second.

COMPOSITE 17

C17: STOP REFORM COUNCILS ABANDONING OUR PRIDE

We note with deep concern the statement on the 10th June, issued by the leader of St Helens Borough Council announcing the withdrawal of all council support for and engagement with Pride events in the borough.

Branding it with “left-wing politics” and transgender identity “harmful ideology”, is a deliberate attack on LGBTQ+ people by a Reform administration that knows exactly what it is doing. Claims rejected by the NHS, the BMA and the WHO, are being weaponised by elected officials to stigmatise our members and their families, while hate crime against LGBTQ+ people rises nationally.

We believe that:

- Every resident of St Helens, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, deserves to feel valued, visible, and supported by their local council.
- Pride events affirm the dignity and worth of LGBTQ+ people, many of whom face ongoing discrimination, isolation and harm.
- Characterising Pride as a “left-wing political” event is a misrepresentation that seeks to delegitimise the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ people.
- The claim that transgender identity constitutes “harm ideology” is not supported by the medical consensus of bodies including NHS, the British Medical Association, or the World Health Organisation, and repeating such claims causes direct harm to transgender people and their families.

- A council's duty of care to young people includes protecting them from discrimination and ensuring they grow up in a borough where they are accepted – not one where their identities are publicly stigmatised by elected leaders.

- Withdrawing institutional support sends a message of exclusion to LGBTQ+ residents, staff, and communicates at a time when hate crime against LGBTQ+ people is rising nationally.

We call on GMB to:

1. Reaffirm its commitment to equality, dignity and inclusion for all LGBTQ+ members and communities.
2. Condemn the dangerous framing of LGBTQ+ identities as harmful or politically objectionable.
3. Call on GMB to speak out against these increasingly prevailing decisions by Reform towards our LGBTQ+ members.
4. Call out Reform councils for what they are - a growing threat to the rights and dignity we have fought for and will not surrender.

Moving Region: GMB Scotland

Seconding Region: North West & Irish

(Carried)

DAVID HOPE (North West & Irish): President, Vice-President, Congress, in this year's local elections St Helens, which has been Labour controlled for nearly 50 years fell to Reform. Reform have been in control little over a month -- sorry, I did not expect to be up this early! *(Applause)* I've got it. For those of you who don't know, St Helens is in the top 10% of the most deprived council areas in the country. Almost a quarter of the communities are considered highly deprived. So what did Reform choose to do with their new-found power? Have they used their power to support residents most in need? No. As one of their first acts in charge, the Council Leader - and remember this name George Woodward - has instructed council officers to cease engaging with St Helens Pride. Congress, make no mistake, this is what Reform is all about. It is not about tackling inequality or tackling real problems in our society. It is about using their political power to stoke culture wars and sow divide. Their decision in branding Pride

as a left-wing policy and harmful trans-gender ideology (or something like that, look it up yourself!) is a deliberate attack on LGBT+ people. Yes, we must condemn St Helens Council's move to pull support for Pride, but I will tell you what else we need do, in St Helens, and in other parts of the country, Reform think they can do this: we need to make Pride bigger and better than ever and we need our allies no get involved.

Congress, I have been doing Pride for 25-plus years and it is all about community, friendship, love. Pride is not just our history, it is our present and our future. Support Pride, support LGBT+ communities in St Helens and support this motion, thank you.

(Applause and cheers)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Secunder.

CIORSTADH REICHLE (GMB Scotland): Seconding Composite 17. Very quickly, Congress, in St Helens borough, the Reform council has cancelled Pride. They refer to Pride as a left-wing political event, which tells me their knowledge is limited. Sorry for stating the obvious. Apparently, Pride is associated with, as David said, "harmful ideology" so this means "radical or extremist beliefs; encouraging and glorifying violence against others". Well, I don't know what Prides they have attended, but in my experience, drag queens are more in favour of being seen than causing a scene, and the most extreme thing you will see is glitter and sequins.

Congress, we need to send a message to Reform now before any more events of culture are refused funding or refused to supply personnel. We thank GMB for the inclusive policies that we have. Now we ask GMB to speak out against these discriminating

decisions that Reform is making and to condemn the statement that LGBT+ identities are harmful. Congress, I second this composite. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ciorstaidh. The CEC is supporting Composite 17, so there are no speakers and I will go straight to the vote. All those in favour, please show. Thank you. Anyone against?

*Composite 17 was **CARRIED**.*

COMPOSITE 18

RIOTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND FASCIST RIOT THREATS

Congress, last night saw a coordinated mobilisation across Britain and the

north of Ireland lead by known fascist and right-wing populist agitators In Belfast, nothing short of a pogrom occurred where HMOs were attacked and set ablaze, neighbourhoods terrorised, and ethnic minorities attacked In Glasgow, blackshirts marched through the city attacking individuals based on the colour of their skin.

The former Red Clydeside, now sees the ugly spawn of Mosley brazenly parading through its streets

The racist violence last night across Northern Ireland, with emergency services dealing with 62 incidents has no place in our streets, and our communities. Glasgow and Southampton were also affected.

Scenes like these occurred throughout Britain and should not come as a surprise. The growth of fascism comes as a result of decades of capitalism's slow decay and frequent economic crises.

As trade unionists we strive daily to make life and work better and to live and work in peace despite the Far Rights attempts to divide us. The labour movement has failed to fill the vacuum caused rampant deindustrialisation and austerity. As a result, the regression of our union movement has seen communities isolated. Fascists and right-wing populists have capitalised on this and now play on the fears and precarious situation of many working people's lives.

The fight against fascism requires us to re strengthen the communities our members, and sister union members, live in. Trade Union Councils have played a major role in combatting fascists at a grass roots level.

We say no to racism, we say no to violence incited by those who do not live in or care a one bit for our communities.

Congress we call on the CEC to:

- Publicly condemn the racist attacks on ethnic minorities, workers and much respected members of our communities
- Publicly oppose further attacks on workers, communities and families.
- Publish a public statement across our social media accounts condemning the fascist lead riots and attacks of ethnic minorities
- Oppose further escalations of race-based violence in our streets

Moving Region: GMB Scotland

Seconding Region: North West & Irish

Can I have the mover of Composite 18? I have GMB Scotland and then moving by North West & Irish Region.

NATHAN HENNEBRY (GMB Scotland): Moving Composite 18. Congress, the other night this country in the north of Ireland witnessed pogroms against men, women and children based solely on the colour of their skin, Egged on by fascist scum such as Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, Rupert Lowe and more. Some of the most reactionary forces are now brazenly mobilising throughout our streets. Frequently they attack ethnic minorities, women and girls, disabled people, the LGBTQ community and trade unionists, just to name a few. More and more young people - working-class young people - are now being lulled and coerced into the atmosphere of fascism. This is a deeply concerning yet unsurprising truth. Our Labour Movement has been detached from working-class communities for some time now - for far too long if you ask me, and, more importantly, it has failed to answer the various economic catastrophes and crises that have plagued our class, leading to the rise of fascism. Our response to this must be a strong anti-fascist response rooted in working-class politics that exposes Reform and Restore for the charlatans that they are. But it must also hold the forces of the establishment to account for facilitating the managed decline and destruction of our

nation's social fabric. The hate and violence of fascism knows no limit, which is why it must be met head on.

Trades councils across Britain, especially those in Scotland have played a vital role in this charge. From Erskine to Aberdeen, they have stood in solidarity with asylum seekers. They have stood against those calling for the deportation of non-white British citizens and they have stood with those facing hurt at work. But most importantly, they have had the conversations, the tough conversations with working-class people, agitating and exposing the lies of what Reform and restore really stand for: hate, division, poverty for workers, untold riches for the ruling class. There are no international brigades coming to save our class from fascism. We must be the ones to act. We must be the ones to cry, "No pasarán!" The scenes in Belfast have been especially horrific; a continuation of sectarian violence that we are all too familiar with. Houses suspected of housing those deemed as foreign were set ablaze, stormed and the individuals inside attacked, public transport torched and streets and shops smashed up to pieces: scenes reminiscent of 1969. Glasgow, Liverpool, London and other major cities in Britain were built on immigration. And it has been the banding together of workers of different races, religions and backgrounds who have won so much for so many of us who stand here today. We will never forget their struggle and sacrifices, for we carry their flame, now and always.

Congress I will end on this. A clear message for Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, for Rupert Lowe, for Farage, for Golding and all fascists who continue to prey on the fears of Britain's workers: if you attack one of us, you will get an answer from all of us. Congress, I move. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nathan. North West & Irish to second.

MARGARET GREGG (North West & Irish): President, Vice-President, Congress, seconding the Composite. Congress we must unequivocally condemn the appalling racist violence that has erupted across Northern Ireland, Glasgow and Southampton in recent days. These co-ordinated attacks have left people injured, displaced families from their homes and left people frightened for their lives. Indeed my granddaughter had to take my great granddaughter and flee her home as a bus was burned outside of it. These are not isolated incidents. They are the result of years of neglect and failure by the Northern Ireland Executive to address the root causes of division and despair. (*Applause*) The deepening crisis in poverty, social housing, NHS waiting lists, of which Northern Ireland has the worst record in the UK, unfortunately, and the destruction of community and youth services have created fertile ground for hate, fear and scapegoating, amplified by Farage, Musk and Robinson on social media: people who have a vested interest in bringing hate, fear and division. But our own politicians in Northern Ireland are not blameless. The Executive has failed to deliver on the promises of the Good Friday Belfast Agreement. It has failed to build a shared and inclusive society and, most damningly, it has failed to confront the racism and xenophobia that flourish in communities that are left without support, leadership or hope. Newcomer communities, many of whom are the back bone of our health and social care systems, deserve safety, dignity and respect. They are not to blame for the failures of government. They are part of the very fabric of our society and they must be protected. Many of these good and decent people are our members. We call on the entire trade union movement to stand united against this wave of hate. We must defend our

members, our communities and the values of solidarity, equality and justice.

(Applause)

We urge all unions to mobilise, speak out and demand action. This is a moment for collective resistance, not silence. If the Northern Ireland Government were worth their salt, they would: provide immediate support to the displaced families and affected workers; invest in rebuilding community and youth services; tackle the root causes of division through real action on housing, healthcare and poverty; deliver on the vision of peace, equality and inclusion promised by the Good Friday Belfast Agreement and the Good Jobs Bill. During the Troubles, it was the trade unions that kept it out of the workplaces and through affiliated industries. We ask that the CEC publicly condemn these racist attacks without equivocation on all our social media outlets. Hate has no place in our workplaces, our communities or our society. The trade union movement will not stand idly by. Congress, I second. *(Applause and standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you to all those speakers for raising the recent violence on the streets of Belfast and Glasgow. The CEC is supporting Composite 18. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Composite 18 was **CARRIED**.*

SOCIAL POLICY: JUSTICE

THE PRESIDENT: We are moving on to Social Policy: Justice. Can I ask the movers of 259, 260, 261 and 262 to come to the front, please, and the mover of 259 to come to

the rostrum. The mover of 259 is Wales & South West. (*Formally moved from the floor*) Are you seconding formally as well? You are on your way. I know it is a long walk. The mover of 259.

REMOVAL OF MP FILTER AND LEGAL AID FOR WINDRUSH CLAIMANTS

MOTION 259

259. REMOVAL OF MP FILTER AND LEGAL AID FOR WINDRUSH CLAIMANTS

This Congress notes:

I rise today on behalf of Justice 4 Windrush to address two urgent issues that continue to deny justice to victims of the Windrush scandal:

- The outdated MP filter, which forces complainants to submit cases to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) via Members of Parliament.
- The absence of legal aid, leaving claimants to navigate a complex compensation scheme alone.

The MP filter, introduced under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, was intended as a temporary measure. Yet nearly six decades later, it remains in place, adding delay, complexity, and distress. The PHSO's September 2024 report revealed systemic failures in the Windrush Compensation Scheme, awarding over £430,000 in extra compensation after uncovering wrongful denials. Victims deserve direct access to this vital redress mechanism just as complainants already have in NHS cases.

Importantly, removing the MP filter would not only benefit those impacted by Windrush. It would open the door for all individuals seeking justice through the Ombudsman, ensuring a fairer, more accessible system for everyone, not one dependent on political gatekeeping.

This is not new. Multiple reviews have called for reform:

- 2000 Colcutt Review “–The MP filter can no longer be sustained.”
- 2007 Regulatory Reform Committee “–Long overdue for reform.”
- 2010 Law Commission – Recommended a dual-track system.
- 2011 PHSO Consultation – Supported direct access.

The human cost is devastating. One Windrush claimant described the process as “Like being tortured slowly, repeating your pain over and over again.”. And then there is the legal aid gap. The government claimed legal advice was unnecessary, yet evidence shows otherwise:

- Self-represented claimants average £11,400.
 - With legal help, awards soar to £83,200, sometimes hundreds of thousands more.
- Victims of the Post Office Horizon and Infected Blood scandals have legal aid. Windrush victims do not. This is a profound inequality.

Therefore, we call on Congress to demand:

- Removal of the MP filter, allowing direct complaints to the PHSO.

- Introduction of legal aid for Windrush claimants, ensuring fair access to justice.

This is not just administrative reform—it is a moral imperative. The Windrush generation gave their labor to build Britain. They should not have to fight for the dignity of a fair process.

**C22 BRANCH
WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION**

(Carried)

MARGARET LEWIS (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 259: Removal of MP Filter And Legal Aid For Windrush Claimants. Congress, I move this motion on behalf of Justice for Windrush because this is not just a question of process, it is a question of justice, dignity and whether we truly learn from our mistakes. The Windrush scandal is one of the gravest injustices of modern Britain. People who helped build this country, who worked, paid taxes, raised families were wrongly detained, deported, denied healthcare and denied housing and left traumatised by a system that failed them and yet after all that, many are still being failed today. They are being failed by an outdated MP filter, a barrier that forces them to go through a Member of Parliament just to have their complaint heard by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

This system is nearly 60 years old. It was meant to be temporary and yet here we are decades later still putting bureaucracy in the path of people seeking justice. The result: delay, confusion, frustration and, for many Windrush victims, retraumatisation. One claimant described the process like being tortured slowly, repeating your pain over and over again. That is the human reality behind the policy. We know the system is not working. The Ombudsman's own findings exposed serious failures: wrongful denials, cases needing to be re-opened and compensation only awarded after intervention. So, why are we making it harder, not easier for people to access that oversight? Removing the MP filter is not radical, it is overdue. It would not only help

Windrush victims, it would create a fairer system for everyone. Justice should not depend on whether you can access an MP, how quickly they respond or whether your case is prioritised. Justice should be direct, accessible and equal. But access is only part of the problem.

The second injustice is just as stark: the absence of legal assistance. We are asking people, many of whom who have already been through profound hardship, to navigate a complex compensation scheme alone. The evidence is clear. Those without legal support receive, on average, a fraction of what those with representation receive. We are talking about life-changing differences, tens of thousands of pounds. That is not a level playing field. That is inequality built into the system. And let us not forget, legal assistance has been provided in other major scandals - the Post Office Horizon scandal, the infected blood scandal. In those cases, government recognised the need for support so why not here? Why are Windrush victims, who have already suffered so much, being treated differently?

Congress, this is not just about policy reform. It is about righting a wrong that is still ongoing. It is about ensuring that the promise of justice is not hollow. The Windrush Generation gave their labour, their energy and their lives to this country. They deserve more than apologies: they deserve a system that works; they deserve fairness, they deserve dignity.

This motion offers two simple, practical and necessary steps. Remove the barrier of the MP filter, provide legal assistance so claims are not left to fight alone. These are not extreme demands. They are the minimum required to ensure justice is real, not

theoretical. Congress, if you believe in fairness, if you believe in equality before the law, then we must support this motion, I ask you to stand with Windrush victims, to stand for justice and support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Margaret, perfectly timed. Secunder.

JACQUI SHORTE: Good morning, Congress. It's the last day! Let me see if I can get this right. Vice President, Present, General Secretary, top table, good morning, everybody. Seconding Motion 259. Congress, I second this motion as for many Windrush victims justice is still being denied. We have heard clearly why the MP filter must go. It is outdated, unnecessary and acts as a barrier at the very moment when people need direct access to fairness and accountability. No one seeking justice should have to navigate extra layers of bureaucracy or rely on political gatekeeping just to have their case heard. Removing this filter is about restoring something fundamental: equal access to justice. But access alone is not enough. We must also address the stark injustice at the heart of the compensation system: the lack of legal assistance. The evidence speaks for itself. Those who have legal support receive vastly higher settlements than those forced to go it alone. That is not because their suffering is greater, it is because the system is too complex for individuals to navigate without help, and that cannot be right.

We have recognised the need for legal assistance in other scandals. We cannot now turn our backs on Windrush victims and say they must fend for themselves. If we truly believe in fairness, then the support must be consistent, especially for those who have already endured so much. This motion is not radical. It is reasonable, practicable and

long overdue. It removes barriers, it promotes fairness and it sends a clear message out that we are serious about delivering justice, not just talking about it.

Congress, the Windrush generation deserves dignity, respect and a system that works for them, not against them. I urge you to support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jacqui. Perfect timing. Can I have the mover of Motion 260, please?

JUSTICE FOR THE CHINESE SEAFARERS

MOTION 260

260. JUSTICE FOR THE CHINESE SEAFARERS

This Congress notes that thousands of Chinese seafarers had played an important and often overlooked role in the UK's maritime force during World War II. Many worked on the British merchant ships transporting essential food, fuel and wartime supplies. They had risked their lives through dangerous Atlantic routes with many killed along the way. Despite this, their salary was less than their British counterparts with worse terms and conditions.

We further note hundreds of Chinese seafarers were secretly earmarked post-WWII by the Home Office and shipping firms for removal. They were removed for demanding fair pay and equal treatments. The deportations happened in 1946 and 1947 without warning, fair process and the chance to let their partners or children know.

It was not a 'strike' as we know it - the men refused to sign on again once they completed their contract.

In May 1942, they almost had equal pay as they received an increase. They were also banned from looking for work onshore. By 1943, they had equality of pay. At the end of the war, most finished their contracts and wanted to go home - some of whom had been away from their families for 6 years.

It was mostly the Shanghai men who were unionised and considered troublemakers by Blue Funnel Line in particular. In 1946, Home Office staff, working alongside Liverpool Police and the shipping companies, arrested and deported them on a one way ticket.

The deportations had been kept as a secret, partially due to the illegality of the operations.

The plan had been to eject the Chinese seafarers and not to tell them they were legally able to stay. According to the law, only those who were dismissed due to criminal convictions could face deportation. There were only a few among the Chinese seafarers who had been charged during their service durations.

We believe these Chinese seafarers should never have been deported. When Britain had depended on their work and sacrifice, they had been abandoned and silenced.

We further believe proper recognition, acknowledgement and accountability are long overdue.

We therefore call on the CEC to:

- Lobby the UK Government to issue a formal, public apology to the families of the deported Chinese seafarers for the deportations
- Call for better access to past immigration and Home Office records to enable living relatives to discover what happened to their loved ones
- Support the current works of families, campaigners and community organisations in uncovering records, finding out the deported seafarers' names, documenting their experiences and sharing the truth of what happened
- Work with the TUC and heritage organisations to promote education and commemoration. Examples include memorials, exhibitions, educational materials and awareness campaigns
- Re-affirm GMB Union's commitment to challenging racism and exploitation in the maritime sector and in all workplaces, past and present

Congress resolves that the GMB Union will play an active role in getting justice, recognition and remembrance for the Chinese seafarers and their families.

K19 SOUTH LONDON GENERAL BRANCH SOUTHERN REGION

(Carried)

A DELEGATE (Southern): Good morning, Madam President, Vice-President, Gary Smith, Congress, this is a motion for justice. It is for the Chinese seafarers. We note thousands of Chinese seafarers have played an important but often overlooked role in the UK's maritime force during World War II. Many worked on British merchant ships transporting essential food, fuel and wartime supplies. They had risked their lives through dangerous Atlantic routes with many killed along the way. Despite this, their salary was less than that of their British counterparts, with worse terms and conditions. We further note hundreds of Chinese seafarer were secretly earmarked post-WW2 by the Home Office and shipping firms for removal. They were removed for demanding fair pay and equal treatment.

The deportations happened in 1946 and 1947, without warning, a fair process or the chance to let their partners or children know. It was not a strike as we know it. The men refused to sign on again once they completed their contract. In May 1942, they almost had equal pay as they received an increase. They were also banned from looking for work on shore. By 1943, they had equality of pay. At the end of the war most finished their contracts and wanted to go home, some of whom had been away from their families for six years. It was mostly the Shanghai men who were unionised and considered troublemakers by Blue Funnel Line, in particular.

In 1946, Home Office staff, working alongside Liverpool Police and the shipping companies, arrested and deported them on a one-way ticket. The deportations have been kept as a secret, partially due to the illegality of the operations. The plan had been to eject the Chinese seafarers and not to tell them they were legally able to stay according to the law and only those who were dismissed due to criminal convictions could face deportation. There were only a few among the Chinese seafarers who have been charged during their service durations.

We believe these Chinese seafarers should never have been deported when Britain had depended on their work and sacrifice: they had been abandoned and silenced. We further believe proper recognition, acknowledgement and accountability are long overdue. We therefore call on the CEC to lobby the UK Government:

- To issue a formal public apology to the families of the deported Chinese seafarers for their deportation,
- To call for better access to past immigration and Home Office records, to enable living relatives to discover what happened to their loved ones

- To support the current work of families, campaigners and community organisations in uncovering records, finding out the deported seafarers' names, documenting their experiences and sharing the truth of what happened.
- Work with the TUC and heritage organisations to promote education and commemoration. Examples include memorials, exhibitions, educational materials and awareness campaigns.
- Reaffirm GMB union's commitment to challenging racism and exploitation in the maritime sector, and in all workplaces past and present.

Congress resolves that the GMB union will play an active role in getting justice, recognition and remembrance for the Chinese seafarers and their families. Thank you, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Secunder. (*Formally seconded*) Mover of Motion 261, please.

CAMPAIGN FOR AMENDMENT TO FOOTBALL OFFENCES ACT 1991.

MOTION 261

261. CAMPAIGN FOR AMENDMENT TO - FOOTBALL OFFENCES ACT 1991

This Congress notes:

1. The Football (Offences) Act 1991 currently makes it an offence to engage in "racist chanting" at a designated football match.
2. While this type of abuse is explicitly covered, the legislation does not explicitly name or define other forms of targeted hate speech, such as homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic abuse.
3. Incidents of anti-LGBT+ abuse, discrimination, or chanting, are persistent problems within football grounds, creating a hostile environment for supporters, players, and stadium workers who identify as LGBT+ or allies.
4. Our union is committed to creating diverse, inclusive, and safe workplaces for all members, and this commitment extends to the venues where our members are employed.
5. Explicitly naming these forms of hate crime in the Act would provide police, prosecutors, and the courts with stronger legal clarity to address and prevent these offences and enable the imposition of Football Banning Orders (FBOs).

Resolution / Background

1. Hate crime, including homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, has no place in football or the workplace.
2. The existing term "racialist" is insufficient.
3. Amending this Section of the Act to explicitly include "in relation to abuse aimed at a person's sexual orientation or gender reassignment " this is a vital step in modernising the legislation to reflect current anti-discrimination standards and the severity of these offences.
4. Having these offences covered, courts can consistently apply the most serious penalties, including Football Banning Orders, thereby improving the working environment for our members responsible for safety and security.

Action needed/ commitment

1. To formally campaign nationally for an amendment to Section of the Football (Offences) Act 1991 to explicitly classify chanting of a "homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic nature" as an offence, alongside "racialist"
2. To write to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Home Secretary
3. To commit to work with Just A Ball Game? and football anti-discrimination organisations to build a broad coalition of support for this statutory change.
4. To ask local branches to lobby all local Members of Parliament (MPs) to raise this issue in Parliament and support Government amendments aimed at achieving this legislative update.

BOLTON COUNCIL B23 BRANCH
NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION
(Carried)

JO PITCHFORD (North West & Irish): President Vice-President, Congress, moving Motion 261: A Campaign for Amendment To Football Offences Act 1991. This motion is about more than football. It is about decency, it is about dignity, it is about whether people can go to work, go to a match or simply live their lives without being abused for who they are. No worker, no supporter, no steward, nor cleaner, no caterer, no security guard should have to stand there and take homophobic or transphobic abuse. No one should be told to "laugh it off", "shrug it off" or accept it as part of the game. It is not banter, it is not tradition; it is hatred plain and simple. And let's be clear, if law names racism but leaves other forms of hate less clearly covered, then the law is not doing its job properly. Justice should not care how loud the chanting is or who the target is. Hate is hate. Abuse is abuse. And as members know, when hate is left unchecked

it spreads: in stadiums, in workplaces and in communities. As trade unionists, we do not stand by while people are demeaned, excluded or driven into silence. We stand together, we fight together and we say that every person has the right to feel safe and respected whether they are at work or just in the stands. So let's commit together to work with Just a Ball Game? and other football anti-discrimination organisations to form a broad coalition of support for statutory change. So let this Congress send a message. We cannot be ignored. Enough is enough. We want the law strengthened. We want proper protection, we want action and we want it now. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jo. Secunder.

LINDA MERCER (North West Irish): President, Congress, I second this motion. The beautiful game, football, we all like to watch football. It is brilliant. We all feel excited when our team wins. But what about the staff that work there, what about footballers themselves, what about the abuse that is going on within football? We need something doing and we need it right now. Brothers and sisters, please, please, help to pass this motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Linda. Mover of Motion 262.

IMPRISONMENT FOR PUBLIC PROTECTION.

MOTION 262

262. IMPRISONMENT FOR PUBLIC PROTECTION

Imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentences were introduced in 2005 and abolished in 2012. The application of this law was not backdated, so thousands are still behind bars

indefinitely. Those released live with the threat of a return to indefinite incarceration for misdemeanour offences or more concerning if a relapse in their mental health proves a perceived risk to the public.

Without adequate access to rehabilitation and in the latter case denial of care provision in the most appropriate place (hospital than prison), The European Court of human rights ruled in 2012 that this practice violated of human rights under Article 5. It is time this practice decried by the United Nations as “inhumane” was ended.

We call upon the Government to:

1. Prioritise the review, and re-sentencing of all prisoners currently under an IPP, noting that around 70% have served 10 years more than the sentencing tariff.
2. Take all reasonable steps to ensure that prisoners under an IPP have access to adequate support and appropriate healthcare provision to reduce their risk to the public allowing safe release.
3. Allow urgent re-sentencing and risk assessment of those for whom the continuation of the IPP sentence has been deemed by a medical professional to be a specific barrier to the delivery of effective health care provision and recovery.

X58 LONDON CENTRAL GENERAL BRANCH
LONDON REGION
(Carried)

DAVE LEVY (London): President, Congress, moving Motion 262: Imprisonment for Public Protection. Imprisonment for public protection is basically an indefinite sentence. The principle at the heart of our justice system is that punishment should be proportionate, transparent and subject to the rule of law, yet the imprisonment for public protection sentence has created a situation where thousands of people have been trapped in a system which fails all three tests. IPP sentences were abolished in 2012 because Parliament recognised they were fundamentally flawed, yet abolition was not applied retrospectively. As a result, people continue to serve sentences that no longer exist, with many having spent years, and, in some cases, more than a decade beyond the original tariff. We must ask ourselves a simple question: if a sentence was considered unjust enough to be abolished, how can it be just to continue to impose its consequences on those already caught within it.

This is not merely a legal issue, it is a deeply human one too. The uncertainty of not knowing when or if release will come takes a profound toll on mental health. Even for those who are released, the shadow of recall remains. A minor breach of licence conditions or a deterioration in mental health that is perceived as increasing risk can result in a return to custody. People living indefinitely under the threat of losing their liberty once again having already served a sentence.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that the failure to provide adequate rehabilitation opportunities to IPP prisoners breaches Article 5, the right to liberty. The United Nations have described the ongoing use of these sentences as inhumane. These are not criticisms that any society that aspires to decency should dismiss lightly. This motion does not ask us to ignore public safety either. On the contrary, it recognises that public safety is best served when people receive the support, rehabilitation and healthcare they need to reduce risk and rebuild their lives. And that is why we call for a review and resentencing of those who are still serving IPP sentences, for proper access to rehabilitation and healthcare and for urgent reassessment where the sentence itself has become a barrier to effective treatment and recovery.

Justice requires accountability but it also requires fairness, humanity and hope. Fourteen years after IPP sentences were abolished, it is time to finish the job. It is time to replace indefinite punishment with a system that protects the public while respecting human dignity and the rule of law. I move Motion 262. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Secunder.

THOMAS GODPOWER IGBINAZAKA (London): President, Vice President, Congress, first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Seconding Motion 262: Imprisonment For Public Protection. This motion is about fairness, dignity and hope. No one should be left in limbo indefinitely without a realistic opportunity to move forward with their lives. A justice system should protect the public while supporting rehabilitation and recovery. For this reason, I am pleased to second this motion. Congress, please support this motion, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thomas, well done. It is not easy to have to wait the whole week to deliver your first speech, so well done. (*Applause*) Does anybody want to speak in opposition to any of those motions? (*No response*) Can I ask Gary Harris from the CEC to respond, please?

GARY HARRIS (CEC): President, Vice President, General Secretary, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 259, 262 and 263. On Motion 259, the CEC is supporting with a qualification. We recognise the profound injustice suffered by the Windrush generation. The scandal represents a serious failure of the state and the GMB has consistently supported calls for justice, fair compensation and equal treatment. We agree with the principles that victims must have fair, accessible and properly resourced routes to redress concerns around the MP filter and the disparities faced by claimants without legal representation. All are valid and important.

Our qualifications are as follows. First, removing the MP filter would represent a significant reform to the Parliament and Health Services Ombudsman, affecting all

complainants. This is a matter that requires detailed legal and parliamentary consideration beyond the scope of this motion.

Secondly, extending legal aid is a question of national public spending. While we support access to justice, the full policy and cost implications would need to be carefully assessed. Subject to these qualifications, the CEC supports the principle that Windrush claimants must have equal access to justice, that compensation schemes must be fair and transparent and that barriers with disadvantaged victims should be reviewed and reformed. The CEC will continue to support efforts to secure justice for the Windrush generation.

On Motion 262, the CEC is seeking to refer the motion. This motion raises an important issue of justice that merits consideration. However, it is not currently a central area of GMB's work and we do not have resources in place to campaign on the issue effectively at this time. Referral will allow the union to undertake further research and consider how and to what extent we may be able to engage constructively on this issue in the future. For these reasons, the CEC is asking Congress to refer Motion 262.

On Motion 263, the CEC is seeking withdrawal. GMB's policy on direct action is balanced and considered, taking a case-by-case approach. This motion cuts across the established position. The union has already made clear its concerns in this space, including raising opposition at TUC Congress 2025, to the proscription of certain direct access groups. The call to revoke all arms licences from defence manufacturers conflicts with existing GMB policy to support our members working in that sector. In addition, the motion contains contradictions in its legal framing. While it refers to

non-violent direct action not intended to harm human life, it does not account for the fact that some forms of such action may still be illegal and potentially dangerous regardless of intent. For these reasons the CEC believes that the motion is not an appropriate basis for union policy. Therefore, Congress, the CEC is seeking withdrawal of Motion 263.

President, in conclusion, the CEC is supporting Motion 259 with qualifications, asking that Motion 262 is referred and that Motion 263 withdrawn. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Just for clarity, can I thank Southern because they did withdraw 263. Thank you. Before I move on to the vote, can I ask the movers and seconders of 264, Composite 12 and 267 to come down to the front, please.? Does Wales & South West accept the qualification on 259? (*Accepted*) Does London agree to refer 262? (*Agreed*) I will take the vote on 259, 260 and 261. 259, 260 and 261 are being supported by the CEC. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? They are all carried.

*Motion 259 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 260 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 261 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 262 was **REFERRED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: We are still on Social Policy: Justice. Could I have the mover of Motion 264, please?

RIGHT TO PROTEST

MOTION 264

264. RIGHT TO PROTEST

This Congress notes the right to protest and to express political views is a fundamental democratic freedom and an essential part of trade unionism.

Many workers do not take part in demonstrations or community organising due to fear of disciplinary action by their employer. This culture of fear around lawful political activity undermines participation, diversity of views and workers' confidence to speak up about injustice.

We also acknowledge that some forms of political activity are discriminatory, hate based or incite violence, and which are therefore fundamentally at odds with equality, dignity and respect at work.

Employers must strike a clear balance between allowing lawful political expression and protest and upholding robust standards against harassment, discrimination, and hate.

We call on the GMB to lobby employers to create policies clarifying that rights of employees to participate in political activity and to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion policies explicitly cover conduct linked to political expression – including on social media – where it amounts to bullying, harassment or discrimination against colleagues or service users.

B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH LONDON REGION

(Carried)

MOHAMMAD ALI (London): First-time delegate, fourth-time speaker, I think. I am going to stop doing that now as I have got a lot more to go. My branch puts in a lot of motions so a shout out for the BMA/BMJ Branch.

President, Congress, the right to protest, to express our views freely without fear of reprisal or violence is not to be taken for granted. It is not a right that was handed to us. It is a right that has been won, thanks to hundreds of years of struggle, and thanks to the thousands of men and women who stood up against intimidation, oppression and division. It is a sobering reality that billions of our brothers and sisters around the world do not have these rights, and that it is far easier for our freedoms to be eroded than to

be gained. The right to free speech and protest does go both ways. It can be used to stand up against war, fight for workers' rights and show unity in the face of division, but as we have seen recently from the United Kingdom marches to far-right fascist political discourse becoming mainstream, these rights are sadly increasingly used by people to spread hate, incite violence and spread racism.

I am grateful for the CEC's qualification on this motion. I am proud that the GMB has so much existing policy in this area, specifically, condemning the draconian anti-protest laws brought in by the Tories which still haven't been repealed. But this motion is intended to add to that body of policy by focusing on the role of employers in this matter, namely calling on them to clarify the rights of employees to express themselves, while still upholding their duty to ensure a workplace free from harassment, discrimination and hatred. Specifically, we want employers to clarify their policies and processes regarding employees' social media activity, because none of us should have to be worried about being hauled before HR for sharing political posts, supporting the Labour Party, encouraging people to join a union, or standing in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Palestine. However, if your co-worker is an ardent supporter of a far-right party, publicly displaying support for racist and violent policies such as remigration then this is likely to make colleagues and service users feel unsafe.

In this case you will hope this is something your employer might take steps to address, and that is why we are calling for employers to clarify their policies and procedures in this area. We need employers to commit to upholding our right to freedom of expression, without handing immunity to people who openly share hateful, far right talking points whether in person or online. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Mohammad, you are an old hand now with four speeches. Secunder please. (*Formally seconded*) Thank you, London. The mover of Composite 12, which is London and then seconded by Wales & South West, I believe.

RIGHT TO TRIAL BY JURY

COMPOSITE 12

C12. RIGHT TO TRIAL BY JURY

This Congress notes the recent announcement by the Justice Secretary that criminal cases carrying an expected sentence of three years or less will no longer be eligible for trial by jury.

This Congress notes that the right to jury trial is a legal principle that underpins our democratic rights and must be defended at all costs.

Congress believes that this proposal poses a significant threat to the fairness, transparency, and integrity of the justice system in England and Wales. Trial by jury is a long-established safeguard against the concentration of judicial power, and it forms a core principle of a system that has been widely emulated across democratic nations.

We further believe that transferring sole responsibility for determining guilt or innocence to a single judge increases the risk of miscarriages of justice and undermines public confidence in due process.

GMB will oppose any and all proposals to remove this fundamental right. This Congress therefore calls on the Labour Party to oppose and seek to reverse this decision, and to uphold the fundamental right to trial by jury wherever possible.

Moving Region: London

Seconding Region: Wales & South West

(*Carried*)

MOHAMMAD ALI (London): President, Vice-President, Congress. I am not doing that again. Composite 12: Right To Trial By Jury. Congress, this is one of the most significant roll backs of our legal rights in history. The right to be judged by your peers has its roots in the Magna Carta in 1215. The Government says the only way to cut the unacceptable waiting times by those in the justice system is to curtail the right to a trial

by a jury of your peers. Congress, this is a lie. People getting a fair trial is not the reason for the delays in our justice system. These delays are a direct result of decades of Tory underfunding, which have hollowed out our courts, reduced the hours that judges sit and limited access to legal aid, all of which means our courts are seeing fewer cases per day than pre-pandemic. This is not just my opinion - over 3,000 top barristers, judges and the former Director of Public Prosecutions have signed a letter expressing their horror at these proposals. They just won't work. The genius idea behind this policy is to push cases down the ladder, essentially from the Crown Court, where you get a judge and a jury, to the Magistrate's Courts, increasing magistrates' workloads by 10 to 15% with no extra resourcing.

Just so you know, Congress, magistrates are volunteers with no legal qualifications and their courts are already facing a rapidly growing backlog, thanks to under-staffing and a lack of investment. I want to leave you with some words from the man in charge of this car crash of a policy, the Justice Secretary David Lammy himself in 2017. He was commissioned by David Cameron to do a landmark review where he said that, "Juries are the essential filter for prejudice in our legal system" and he highlighted that magistrates are more likely to convict those from ethnic minority backgrounds than white people. We cannot allow this Government to strip us of our rights and undermine the fairness of our justice system simply because they can't be bothered to put their hand in their pocket and properly fund it. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Mohammad. Seconder from Wales & South West (*Formally seconded*) Thank you, Wales & South West. Mover of Motion 267, please.

PRECEDENT

MOTION 267

267. PRECEDENT

This Congress asks GMB to file a claim to the High Courts of Justice to rule on when interpreting for court hearings needs to be provided face-to-face and cannot be executed remotely.

IT1 GMB INTERPRETERS & TRANSLATORS BRANCH LONDON REGION

(Carried)

JAMIE WALKER (London, Unite M23 Branch): I will give Mohammad a chance to catch his breath for this one. President, top table, Congress, moving Motion 267 from our new GMB Interpreters Branch. This is a justice section but it affects all of us as well. On Monday, we heard a lot about AI in the CEC Special Report on Organising a Changing Economy and in justice they face a specific situation. All jobs are being affected by the AI arrival. It is like the Industrial Revolution. We can't stop it and we should not try to, but we have to oppose its unregulated implementation, dictated solely by costs savings and ruining professions. We have found a way in this branch to make this change happen adequately and preserve not one profession but many. So, as I mentioned, this is a motion from our new GMB Interpreters Branch. Our members there interpret in police and court rooms, and they do not want to share the fate of their colleagues, the written translators, who are already replaced by AI. The Ministry of Justice has already tested AI for interpreting in prisons and it did not work. That is non-stop simultaneous interpreting of highly legal terminology from lawyers to detainees in custody who are usually in a state of stress.

One of the last barriers before greedy corporations and governments implementing AI in the most barbaric way, the Ministry of Justice set out an AI Working Group without the participation of our profession and our union. This group has not even yet segregated when face-to-face interpreters must be used in court and in police matters. The Ministry pushes the courts to accept interpreters appearing remotely, even for legal consultations, not just before defendants have to plead guilty or not guilty. This obviously hinders the basic right to a fair trial. People are refused bail and wait behind bars because an interpreter was not provided and the hearing was adjourned. So often judges refuse that, but then they have to adjourn the case, this way building further the backlog in court cases. Now someone has to wait for a trial for a year or two and the prisons are full. One monopolistic agency provides the service via freelance interpreters. Despite not being paid less by the Ministry, the agency drastically reduced the travel fee, so it is cheaper not to pay any travel and then assign interpreters to appear remotely using AI tools. The agency lies to the court staff that there are no interpreters available or that they are too expensive while the interpreters are on the phone asking to be assigned in person, with less and less money. The agency does not care, knowing very well the adjournments will only lead to a new booking for the same matter again with them. The Ministry is then led to believe there are not enough interpreters, so it began to bring more AI projects into the field. All that uncertainty now begins to cause many interpreters to combine jobs and even look for different professions, losing even more skills. Interpreters cannot effectively complain. One can complain from the agency but only to the agency. Escalations to the Ministry are only done via the agency, and that is even if they decide to answer. There is absolutely no way to complain from the court staff.

Another point to be made about AI use in these situations is AI cannot interpret. It can translate, but it doesn't understand body language, it doesn't understand nuance, and it doesn't understand the impact on people. GMB Interpreters is a small new branch packed with highly qualified professionals and the branch has decided to turn to the only authority that can rule over the matter: the court itself. However, the court is also being taunted by this issue. Judges can't take the initiative from the government unless they are called on by a legal route by an affected party. The GMB interpreters are fighting a claim in the High Court taking on the Ministry of Justice as a defendant for a declaration to be issued on which cases require live human interpreters. Today case law needs to be created so that interpreters can appear remotely, but tomorrow, this set precedent would eliminate AI, and not only in this profession but all professions, when human intervention and human understanding needs to play a part in the fate of the people. We are asking for GMB to help us file this claim for the benefit of all. Please help Congress to support this for the sake of humanity, all our professions, and act before it is too late. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jamie. Secunder.

ALASTAIR BLUNDELL (London): Madam President, Vice-President, all those on the right table and the left table, let's not forget that they are doing a grand job as well. (*Applause*) I am going to have to speak very fast here and with my Scottish accent, you probably won't be able to understand some of it. I am proud to second Motion 267. The claim is filed as soon as possible because the new framework is coming in in October. The court can hear this matter urgently because the Ministry of Justice will be the defendant and the Bigword agency can also appear as co-defendants, being

forced in this way to give evidence and also answer questions on their malpractices. We are going to invite logistics institutes to participate in drawing up the policy for the Ministry to provide expert witnesses and statements on the matter. It is arguable whether they will have map pay(?) as the complex which is standard but the Ministry have pointed out that they are not the ones to decide, the courts are, meaning on every single occasion will be effectively for the justice system to decide the suitable professional implementing in this field. This gives the union branches enough ground to file the claim. Once case law precedent is created for interpreting, this will preserve some territory from the AI, serving also other GMB branches and national unions in a more suitable complaint. The legal interpreters, with their unique capabilities, are likely to be taken over by AI, segregated between work done face-to-face and by video, still both by live humans, but once AI is incorporated on a big scale, even the later knowledge, the mistakes could be going back, people would be gone for good ---

THE PRESIDENT: Ally, can you wrap up, please.

ALASTAIR BLUNDELL: I second this motion and I ask Congress to vote "Yes".

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ally. Does anybody want to speak in opposition to any of those motions? *(No response)* Can I ask Elaine Daley from the CEC to respond, please. And could I have the movers of 269, 270, 271 and 272 to be ready down the front, please?

ELAINE DALEY (CEC): President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Motion 264: Right to Protest. The CEC is supporting this motion with a qualification. GMB has a clear and established policy opposing the curtailment of the right to protest, including restrictions introduced under the last Conservative Government. We have consistently defended the right of individuals and workers to express their views and stand up for their beliefs. We also agree with the motion's principle that workers should not be punished by their employer for expressing those beliefs. This is an important protection and one that is reflected in existing legal frameworks, including the Equality Act 2010. The union has already taken practical steps to support members engaging in protest. For example, the Anti-Racism and Combatting Hate special report includes guidance on staying safe at demonstrations, particularly where protests may involve confrontation with far-right groups.

This motion is helpful in highlighting an emerging issue, specifically the monitoring of social media by employers, which is not explicitly covered by existing Congress policy. Our qualification is a practical one. While we support the principle set out, any issues relating to member representation and conduct must be considered on a case-by-case basis. The union must ensure that support is provided in line with both our policies and the standards expected of members under the aims and objectives set out in the GMB Rule Book. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 264. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Elaine. Does London accept the qualification for 264? (*Accepted*) The CEC are supporting Composite 12 and Motion 267 so I will take those all in one block. All those in favour, please show. Thank you. Anyone against? They are all carried

*Motion 264 was **CARRIED**.*

*Composite 12 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 267 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Before we move on to the next set of motions on equality and inclusion, we will go back to the issues that were raised in Composite 17 and 18. We will hear from one of our GRASP cohort, Rattan Bhorjee. Colleagues, just to make you aware, Rattan will make reference to violence and sexual violence. Thank you, Rattan.

RATTAN BHORJEE (Midlands, GRASP Cohort): President, Vice-President, delegates, Congress, Rattan Bhorjee, a first-time speaker. (*Applause and cheers*) Let's see if you are all still clapping at the end! I am a proud member of the GMB Race Achievement Scholarship Programme. (*Applause*) I am speaking to you today during a very difficult time for the British Sikh community and global majority heritage communities in the UK. First, however, I want to send deepest condolences to the family of Henry Nowak. (*Applause*) No parent should have to face the pain of burying their child, especially not in such distressing and egregious circumstances. I am sure everyone here today was horrified at Henry's murder and his inhuman treatment in his final moments.

The murderer, Vickrum Digwa, was a weapons-obsessed violent thug, who tried to claim Henry racially assaulted him. This allegation was a lie, as is the allegation Digwa used a Sikh religious dagger symbolising a Sikh's duty to come to the defence of those in peril known as a kirpan to murder Henry. However, this misinformation has been

left to fester unchallenged. And because Digwa and his family are visible Sikhs, there has been an overwhelming wave of abuse, both verbal and physical, directed towards the British Sikh community. In the last 12 months we have witnessed multiple racially aggravated rapes against Sikh women, assaults of Sikh families and pensioners and death threats to Sikh MPs including the GMB's own Warinder Juss. This is the worst atmosphere for Sikhs I can remember in my lifetime.

As a proud practising Sikh, I now feel it necessary to go out with a personal alarm because I know that from moment I step out of my front door, I could be subject to verbal or physical abuse simply because of the way I look. (*Applause*) Abuse from far-right agitators, egged on by the likes of Nigel Farage who has called for pure cold rage towards my community. Those words are having real consequences now, not only on the streets of Southampton and Belfast, where in the last week we have witnessed racist and xenophobic riots instigated by far right and fascist thugs, but also across the rest of the UK too. In the particular case of Belfast, I would like to send my full solidarity to Kellie O'Dowd and the whole team at the Northern Ireland Branch during what must have been a horrific few days. (*Applause*)

Sikhs are no strangers to fighting fascism. A quarter of a million Sikhs fought in the British Indian Army during the Second World War for an undivided India and against fascism, with 83,000 making the ultimate sacrifice. Sikhs have marched side by side with allies in campaigns ranging from the Bristol bus boycotts to the fight for union recognition from Amazon. I continue this legacy with my vociferous support for the No Place For Racism campaign and my participation in GRASP, both of which are led by the indefatigable Tyehimba Nosakhare, who is at the back I believe. (*Applause*) I

also continue this legacy through the practising my Sikhism openly, without fear and without hatred. My late grandfather Bastif(?) Singh Bhambra, who was patron of the Wolverhampton Interfaith Group, taught me to respect people's faiths and beliefs as my own. I believe this simple but powerful message is needed more than ever. The hard-fought cohesion that was built up by my parents and grandparents' generation is now dangling by a thread. It is up to all of us to safeguard and proudly fly the flag for a tolerant, cohesive and progressive Britain.

Congress, your solidarity can take the form of small acts of kindness with Sikh comrades and other marginalised communities, all the way up to campaigning for the Labour Government and great institutions such as our GMB to actively stand up and fight for a progressive country, a country where we are not afraid for the way we look, the way we pray and the way we love. An injury to one is an injury to all, Congress, because if our movement is not fighting for the most vulnerable in our society, what are we truly here for? Thank you, Congress. *(Cheers and applause and standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Rattan, for that really powerful and personal speech.

SOCIAL POLICY: EQUALITY & INCLUSION

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to motions on Equality and Inclusion. Can I have the mover of 269, please. *(Formally moved from the floor)* Thank you. Is that seconded formally? *(Formally seconded)*

AFFILIATION AND COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT THE WHITE RIBBON

MOTION 269

269. AFFILIATION AND COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT THE WHITE RIBBON

This Congress

This Congress we request for GMB to commit to working with and have and accreditation to White Ribbon UK.

White Ribbon UK is the leading charity engaging men and boys to prevent violence against women and girls.

Ultimately, they want all women and girls to live free from the fear of violence, their approach is to focus on the primary prevention of violence and is key to ending violence against women.

Y28 YORKSHIRE AMBULANCE SERVICE BRANCH NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION

(Referred)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you North East, Yorkshire & Humber. Mover of 270, please.

MONEY ISN'T OLD FASHIONED

MOTION 270

270. MONEY ISN'T OLD FASHIONED

This Congress notes that Cash Machines (ATM's) are not accessible to all. Access to cash machines is a legal right in the UK under the Equality's Act 2010. Time and Time again wheelchair users find it almost impossible to access ATM's. Disabled people are very reluctant to use cash machines, knowing they have no privacy. Many disabled people find cash machines daunting; some avoid using them at all without help or rely on a trusted family member or friend. We have many GMB members Nationally and their families and friends find this a frustrating task. We need to ensure that this barrier needs to be user-friendly for ALL.

K17 KINGS LYNN BRANCH LONDON REGION

(Carried)

GARY BRANHAM (London): President, Congress, I am moving Motion 270. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I have been an active member

for many years and if it wasn't for Alan Law I wouldn't be present today. He has been there for me. Apologies for my slow speaking but I suffer with Motor Neurone Disease, for those that don't know and I have difficulty breathing. I am a new-to-wheelchair user and I don't care about that at all for me, but what really annoyed me happened the other month. I was seeing my grandchildren and I wanted to get some money out of the ATM machine, but when I got to my nearest one I couldn't access it because I couldn't read the keypad and the screen. So I had to get someone to return my card and I felt embarrassed. I went into town and tried six more machines and they were all the same. I went to my bank. They have all been renewed and I couldn't access one of them. The bank person said go to the cash desk. I don't want to do that. I want to go to an ATM machine. That is what I thought was easier for me. But there we are. I came home very upset and frustrated.

Access to an ATM machine is a legal right under the Equality Act 2010. This requires bank providers to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled users. The GMB needs to tackle the government to make sure banks do this and make it easier for not just me but everyone in wheelchairs. I know that will take years and I probably won't see the end of that, but as a union, I do it for everyone, not just for me. The other thing I just want to say is I am so pleased for everyone here that we raised over £700 on the bucket collection, organised by the London Region. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you so much. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

BEVERLEY TAVERNIER (London): President, Vice President, Congress, first-time speaker, seconding Motion 270. (*Applause*) I am asking Congress to support this

motion by calling on the Government to ensure that local councils, large companies and institutions provide easily accessible ATMs in safe spaces. We have lost over 7,000 ATMs on the high street since 2021. We need to have these losses reversed, especially those in rural areas. It should not be the case that people with disabilities, especially those in wheelchairs, should have to travel long distances to access cash. Let us ensure that access to cash machines for everyone is free of charge. As someone with no disability issues, I understand how frustrating it is not to be able to access an ATM. Congress, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Beverley, thank you. Apparently there is an issue with names going on the screen. T5 are sorting that out. Please be patient. Can I have the mover of 271, please?

FIGHT CASTE OPPRESSION AND DISCRIMINATION

MOTION 271

271. FIGHT CASTE OPPRESSION AND DISCRIMINATION

This Congress notes:

- 1) That sections of the UK's South Asian communities are subjected to caste-based discrimination in employment, service provision and education.
- 2) That following campaigning by affected communities, the Labour government in April 2010, inserted a ministerial 'power' (Section 9 (5)(a)) in the Equality Act 2010 to make caste a protected characteristic under its section on race but ministers did not act on this provision, despite pressure from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- 3) That the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reiterated again in 2024 that the UK should outlaw caste discrimination.
- 4) That a number of jurisdictions in the US and Canada have recently outlawed caste discrimination, and the Australian Human Rights Commission is developing a national anti-racism framework that includes caste discrimination.
- 5) That this principal has been adopted at other unions hence precedent has been set and the GMB should follow suit.

Congress resolves to:

- i) Use appropriate opportunities to campaign for the Equality Act to be amended so caste becomes a protected characteristic.
- ii) Raise the issue with the Labour Party.
- iii) Work with the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance (ACDA) to develop educational/training courses and materials for GMB activists that would increase understanding of caste oppression and discrimination.

B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH
LONDON REGION
(Carried)

MOHAMMAD ALI (London): President, Vice-President, Congress, it is me again! I am moving Motion 271: Fight Caste Oppression and Discrimination. This motion addresses a deeply engrained injustice that remains overlooked in the anti-racism work of most organisations, that of discrimination on the basis of caste. In this context, caste refers to the idea of a fixed social group into which someone is born, which then has implications on their perceived status and societal worth. This concept is most well-known for existing in some South Asian communities but is an issue that has roots across all of Asia and some African societies as well. The United Nations has been clear this is a global human rights crisis affecting over 215 million people. It is a system which strips away dignity by branding human beings as inferior based solely on the circumstance of their birth, driving them into poverty and social exclusion.

Congress, it is with deep regret I can tell you that within our own South Asian communities here in the UK, there have been instances of workers being targeted by caste-based prejudice within their jobs, their schools and while accessing vital services. I thank our brothers and sisters at other trade unions who have recently adopted similar motions highlighting this issue. In 2010, we were promised a path to justice when Gordon Brown's Government passed the Equality Act and then gave government the power to protect citizens from class discrimination but, shamefully, the Tories spent

over a decade kicking the can down road, choosing not to implement this power, and even ignoring pressure from the UN Human Rights Commissioner. Even after Vince Cable and the Coalition pledged to implement this in 2013, the Tories dragged their heels, and, shamefully, U-turned five years later, choosing to abandon clear legislation and leaving the burden to our courts. By the time they left office in 2024, they had failed to provide the statutory protection required leaving victims with woefully limited legal protection and failing our international commitments.

We are falling behind. Nations across South Asia, from India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh, have already banned caste-based discrimination in the constitutions, and even the US, Canada and Australia have passed legislation to outlaw caste-based discrimination. It is time for the UK to catch up.

Congress, I ask you to support this motion so that we may campaign for an amendment to the Equality Act that finally enshrines caste as a protected characteristic, and finally, to partner with the Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance, to build the training and education our activists need to dismantle caste oppression wherever it rears its head. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mohammad. Secunder.

STELLA IKANIK (London): Madam President, Vice-President, seconding Motion 271: Fight Caste Oppression and Discrimination. Congress, discrimination does not become less painful because it is hidden. Oppression does not become less real because some people do not understand it. Caste-based discrimination is real. It affects people

in employment, in education, in services and in everyday life. It can determine how a person is treated, whether they are respected, whether they are included, whether they are promoted, or whether they are bullied, excluded, humiliated and silenced. Congress, no worker should be made to feel inferior because of their ancestry, family background, community, name or perceived caste. The Equality Act 2010 already contains a power to make caste a protected characteristic under race, but that power has not been acted upon.

Affected communities have campaigned, human rights bodies have spoken and other jurisdictions have moved forward, but here in the UK, many workers are still waiting for clear legal protection. That is why this motion matters, as GMB we fight all forms of discrimination. We have never stood only against injustices that are easy to see. We stand against injustices that damage lives, destroy confidence and deny dignity. Congress, we cannot fight what we refuse to name. We cannot protect workers from oppression if we leave them invisible.

Congress, caste discrimination has no place in our workplaces, no place in our communities and no place in a society built on equality, dignity and justice. And, Congress, discrimination is discrimination. Period. Thank you, I move. (*Applause*)

DISPLAYING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

MOTION 272

272. DISPLAYING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998 IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) incorporates fundamental rights and freedoms into UK law, ensuring protections such as freedom from discrimination, freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, and the right to privacy.

This Congress notes that public awareness of these rights remains limited, despite their central role in safeguarding individuals against abuse of power. Workers and the public should have easy access to clear information about their rights under the HRA.

Displaying the full list of HRA articles in public buildings would promote transparency and strengthen civic understanding. Many public buildings already display statutory information (e.g., health and safety notices), demonstrating the feasibility of mandated public information displays.

This Congress resolves to:

1. Call on the UK Government, devolved administrations, local authorities, and all public bodies to display a poster outlining all Articles of the Human Rights Act 1998 in publicly accessible areas of their buildings.
2. Produce a clear, accessible, and GMB branded poster summarising the Articles of the HRA for distribution across public sector workplaces.
3. Campaign publicly for greater awareness of the Human Rights Act, including through social media, workplace organising, and collaboration with civil society organisations.
5. To ensure all GMB offices display the poster as a model of good practice.

**M20 MILTON KEYNES CITY BRANCH
LONDON REGION**

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Mover of Motion 272, please.

CHARLIE SABBATINI (London): Good morning, Madam President, Vice-President, Congress, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Moving Motion 272 on displaying the Human Rights Act 1998 in public buildings.

Congress, the Human Rights Act is an integral part of the UK's uncodified constitution, outlining the fundamental rights and freedoms that every person in this country is equally entitled to. For example, the right to life, the right to a fair trial, freedom of assembly and association or even freedom from torture. Taking effect in the year 2000, it incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into UK domestic law. The European Convention on Human Rights, having been created by the European Council in 1950 to prevent a reoccurrence of the atrocities and human rights abuses committed

during World War II, emphasises the importance of the Human Rights Act, as it is the product of a landmark international treaty designed to safeguard individuals against an abuse of power and also uphold the democratic which underpin modern society. However, given that the Human Rights Act is such a crucial piece of legislation, it is unfortunate to think that so many of the rights and freedoms protected by the Act lack public awareness.

Congress, this is why Motion 272 calls on the GMB to publicly campaign for greater awareness of the Human Rights Act and lobby central Government, devolved assemblies, local authorities and other public services to display poster in all public buildings across the country, such as libraries, civic offices, job centres, GP surgeries and hospitals, listing the 16 Articles and Protocols of the Act, which state the rights and freedoms protected by it.

I imagine most people in in this hall have seen the Health and Safety Executive's health and safety wall poster displayed in most workplaces and public buildings, which explains the responsibilities of both employers and employees in guaranteeing workplace safety. The primary objective of this motion is to see a poster on the Human Rights Act as ever present as the health and safety wall poster, in the light of people accessing public buildings, as a way to increase general awareness of the Act.

Furthermore, we request that the GMB produces a clear and accessible poster, featuring GMB branding which also names the 16 Articles and Protocols included in the Human Rights Act. This poster would hopefully be distributed across all public sector

workplaces where the GMB is present and also be displayed in GMB offices as a model of good practice.

Congress, the Human Rights Act protects both our members and the wider public, which is why we must work to ensure that as many people as possible are made aware of its existence. I urge you to support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Charlie, and well done again for having to wait until the last day. Secunder.

A DELEGATE (London): President, Vice-President, Congress, top table, displaying the Human Rights Act 1998 in our public buildings is not a superficial gesture. It is a powerful visual commitment to the core values of dignity, equality and civil respect. Our public buildings, our libraries and town halls and community spaces belong to the people. They are at the heart of the community and they must reflect our shared ideas.

By passing this motion we achieve three vital objectives. First, we empower our community. It gives every citizen who enters a public building clear daily visibility of fundamental rights, from privacy protections to freedom of belief. It brings the law out of court room and directly to the people. Secondly, we reinforce public accountability. It actively reminds our public services of their legal duties under the Act. It sets a visible zero tolerance tune for discrimination, ensuring equality and fairness are at the forefront of every single service delivered. Thirdly, we build civil trust. It draws a transparency line on how we protect the vulnerable. When people see their rights proudly displayed, they know there are entering a safe, inclusive environment that

values their inherent worth. A public building which openly displays human rights in a building truly serves the people. This simple low-cost action costs very little but it send an unmistakable message about who we are, what we stand for and the inclusive community we are determined to build. Congress, please support this motion. I second.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you. Does anyone want to speak in opposition to any of those motions? *(No response)* Then can I ask Kay Doherty from the CEC to respond, please?

KAY DOHERTY (CEC, North West & Irish): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC and responding to Motions 269 and 272.

On Motion 269, the CEC is seeking to refer this motion. The motion is absolutely right to highlight the vital work of White Ribbon UK, particularly in engaging men and boys and preventing violence against women and girls. Preventing gender-based violence is fully aligned with GMB values and we have consistently supported initiatives that promote safety, equality and respect. However, the motion calls for GMB to formally affiliate with and become accredited by White Ribbon UK. This would constitute a formal relationship with an external organisation, and may involve financial and resource commitments. As Congress will be already aware, any proposal involving affiliation or financial commitment must be considered by the Finance & General Purposes Committee before a decision can be taken. Referral will allow the CEC and the FGPC to:

- Examine the requirements of accreditation, including any fees, staffing implications or compliance obligations.
- Ensure any financial commitments are properly scrutinised and authorised in line with union governance and
- Consider how such an affiliation would align with and complement existing GMB equality, campaigning and safeguarding work.

For these reasons, the CEC is asking Congress to refer Motion 269.

On Motion 272, the CEC is supporting with a qualification. We support the principle behind this motion. The Human Rights Act provides essential protections for our members and the wider public. And raising awareness of those rights is consistent with GMB's longstanding commitment to civil liberties and equal treatment. The intent of the motion is positive and reflects the union's ongoing work to defend and promote human rights.

Our qualification is a practical one. The motion calls for a requirement on governments and public bodies to mandate the display of Human Rights Act material across public buildings. While we support the ambition, GMB does not have the authority to enforce such measures. However, we can play a meaningful role. We can campaign for greater awareness, encourage employers to adopt such practices and lead by example within our own workplaces and union structures. It will be for regions, branches and workplaces to determine how best to prioritise and deliver this work in line with their capacity and campaigns. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 272.

President, in conclusion, the CEC is asking that Motion 269 is referred and we are supporting Motion 272 with the stated qualifications. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kay. Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber agree to refer on Motion 169? (*Agreed*) Thank you. There is no vote on that. Does London Region accept the qualification on Motion 272? (*Accepted*) Thank you. I shall put all those to the vote, 270, 271 the CEC are supporting and 272, all those in favour, please show. Anyone against? They are all carried.

*Motion 269 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 270 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 271 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 272 was **CARRIED**.*

SOCIAL POLICY: NHS & HEALTH ISSUES

THE PRESIDENT: We move on to Social Policy: NHS & Health issues. Movers and seconders of 273, 274, 275 and 277, please be ready. Can I have the mover of 273 to the rostrum?

NATIONAL PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING FOR AFRO-CARIBBEAN MEN

MOTION 273

273. NATIONAL PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING FOR AFRO-CARIBBEAN MEN

This Congress calls on the GMB for National screening for black men.

Racial disparities in prostate cancer (black vs white). Higher risk for black men: black men are twice as likely to develop and die from prostate cancer compared to white men.

There is screening now for both black and white men who carry the BRCA12 mutation. We would wish for all black men to be added to this

Z63 NOTTINGHAM TEC BRANCH
MIDLANDS REGION
(Carried)

CHRIS COORE (Midlands): I am third-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

I would like to ask Phil Soper, Martin Allen and Keith Parkes, to stand up for a second, please. On behalf of FAB Friends and Bredrins, which is a support group for males with prostate cancer, which recently received the King's Award for Voluntary Service, a big thank you for what you have done in helping get along the way. *(Applause)*

I back this motion because I have a personal involvement. My dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer a few years ago and is now in full recovery. *(Applause)* But he caught it early. When he was first diagnosed, he used to call me every day, "Have you been checked yet? Have you been checked yet?" He did this with every other family member and his friends. As a result, three other family members were diagnosed with prostate cancer but, as the saying goes, it was caught early and they survived. On the flipside, I have lost four friends to this deadly disease. Why? Because they refused to go and get checked. And why? Because of the stigma of how you got checked. I am here today to inform you that you can now get check through a blood test. Yes, a blood test. That is it. I repeat, a blood test, which is called a PSA test, which you can get done at your GP. There is no shame in getting a blood test, is there? There is nothing intrusive in that, is there? I do not want to turn this into a colour thing, although Afro-Caribbean males are twice more at risk to getting this deadly disease. I want to make it a man thing. This disease will kill you if not detected early. Remember - this

disease will kill you. This disease doesn't only affect the man, it affects your spouse, your partner, your children, your family, your friends. Because of what? You didn't want to get checked because of the stigma.

Come on guys, I know we are ignorant in going to the doctors for any ailments, but I repeat: early detection is vital to survive. I repeat: early detection is vital. I also repeat: all it takes is a simple blood test called the PSA test. What's it called? (*All repeat - "PSA test"*) Where do you get it? (*All say, "Your GP"*) Remember, this will kill you if it is not detected early.

I want all the males now to stand up and turn to the guy next to you and repeat after me, "I will get checked". (*All repeat: "I will get checked"*) Say it again, "I will get checked". (*All repeat, "I will get checked"*) (*Applause*)

Here are a few symptoms and signs to watch out for. I want to be specific but this does not mean you have prostate cancer. Frequent visits to the toilet during the night, pain during urinating. This is a big one here guys, erectile dysfunction. I beg you guys get checked. One love, peace up. (*Applause and standing ovation*) Also I want to say thoughts and prayers to Northern Ireland. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Christopher, a really powerful first speech and I think you got all the men in the room. (*Applause*) Secunder.

ASHTON GREEN (Midlands): President, Congress, seconding Motion 273. First, Chris, thank you for the emotional moving of that motion. Congress, since this motion

was submitted, we have had an important development. The Government has announced that all eligible black men aged 45 to 74 will be invited to take part in the next phase of the Transform prostate cancer screening trial. (*Applause*) Congress, that is welcome. That is recognition that black men face a significantly higher risk of prostate cancer that can no longer be ignored. It is a step forward but, Congress, let's be clear, it is a trial, not a screening programme. A trial is not a guarantee that every black man will be reached. A trial is not the substitute for a healthcare system that recognises risk and acts upon it. So, whilst we welcome the announcement, we must continue to push for a future where black men are not left to rely on chance, awareness campaigns or self-referral. Congress, we must continue to push for a system where those at greatest risk are routinely offered tests that could change their lives, because we know the higher the risk, doing nothing is not neutral, doing nothing is a choice. And Congress, it is time to choose prevention, early detection and equality. Congress, please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ashton. Mover of Motion 274, please.

INCORPORATING ENGLAND'S MEN'S HEALTH STRATEGY INTO GMB POLICY AND PRACTICE

MOTION 274

274. INCORPORATING ENGLAND'S MEN'S HEALTH STRATEGY INTO GMB POLICY AND PRACTICE

Context:

The Department of Health and Social Care has launched Men's Health: A Strategic Vision for England, the first national strategy aimed at improving health outcomes for men and boys. The strategy identifies six key levers for change, including improving access to services, supporting healthier behaviours, and—critically—addressing societal norms that discourage men from seeking help or engaging with health services.

As a union representing workers across diverse sectors, GMB has a unique opportunity to lead by example in embedding this vision into workplace culture, health initiatives, and member support.

This Conference Notes:

- Men in England have a shorter life expectancy and higher rates of preventable illness and suicide compared to women.
- Workplace conditions, cultural expectations, and stigma around help-seeking contribute significantly to these outcomes.
- The strategy calls for action across sectors, including employers and representative bodies, to challenge harmful norms and promote health equity.

This Conference Believes:

- GMB can play a pivotal role in improving men's health by integrating the strategy into its policies, campaigns, and member services.
- Addressing societal norms requires proactive engagement, mentoring, and cultural change within workplaces and union structures.

This Conference Resolves:

- To establish a GMB Men's Health Working Group tasked with:
- Reviewing the national strategy and identifying practical steps for implementation across sectors represented by GMB.
- Developing guidance for branches and reps on promoting men's health and wellbeing in workplaces.
- Liaising with employers to incorporate men's health initiatives into occupational health programs.
- To create a Mentor Programme or Support Function within GMB focused on:
 - o Challenging harmful stereotypes and stigma around health and help-seeking.
 - o Providing peer support and signposting for members facing health-related challenges.
 - o Encouraging positive role models and champions for men's health across the union.
 - o To report back to the next GMB Conference with recommendations and progress updates.
 - o Developing a de-radicalisation component to help members resist harmful online influences, extremist narratives, and toxic ideologies that can impact mental health and workplace harmony.

P17 PLAISTOW BRANCH LONDON REGION

Referred)

JOHN MORRIS (London): First-time delegate, second-time speaker. *(Applause)*

President, Congress, I am speaking on behalf of Plaistow Branch. The Department of Health and Social Care announced last year the country's first ever Men's Health Strategy. The facts of the strategy laid bare were stark - that young men had a shorter life expectancy but had higher levels of preventable illnesses, and, crucially, suicide

was the biggest killer of young men under the age of 50. Congress, looking at these figures I am worried but I am also scared. I am scared because the strategy also laid bare a terrifying reality that, while suicide among young men is devastating on its own, we are also seeing a reality where young men across the world are actively being radicalised, with devastating consequences for our society. Young men are looking to the far right for answers: to Reform, to Nigel Farage, to Andrew Tate, to misogyny.

Congress, this motion does not require GMB to tackle these massive issues on its own. It simply asks the union to look closely at the men's strategy, to acknowledge the issues it highlights, and to find a way of incorporating its findings into our workplaces, to support our members, to mentor them, to provide them with the safe, healthy life while also making them resilient to these toxic influences. So, let's turn this strategy into a real example of solidarity. Please support this motion, thank you. I move this motion.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done John, thank you. Secunder please. *(Formally seconded)* Formally seconded, thank you, I would not want it to fall. Mover of Motion 275, please.

TACKLING THE RISE OF STIs AMIDST PrEP EXPANSION CALL FOR INCLUSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH STRATEGIES

MOTION 275

275. TACKLING THE RISE OF STI'S AMIDST PrEP EXPANSION CALL FOR INCLUSIVE SEXUAL HEALTH STRATEGIES

This Congress notes the increasing use of HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) as a vital tool in reducing HIV transmission, particularly among LGBTQ+ communities, sex workers, and other vulnerable groups.

Congress further notes that while PrEP has been transformative in HIV prevention, recent data from the UK shows a concerning rise in other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including gonorrhoea, chlamydia, and syphilis, particularly among men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans persons who have sex with men (TPSM).

Congress believes that the rise in STIs is linked to behavioural changes associated with PrEP use, such as reduced condom use, and that this trend must be addressed through inclusive, non-judgmental public health strategies.

Congress resolves to campaign for holistic sexual health education that promotes condom use alongside PrEP and challenges stigma around STI testing and treatment. Lobby for increased funding for sexual health services, ensuring accessible and regular STI screening for all PrEP users. Advocate for intersectional outreach that includes LGBTQ+ people, sex workers, migrants, and other marginalised groups in sexual health campaigns. Work with NHS and local authorities to ensure PrEP rollout is accompanied by robust STI prevention strategies, including behavioural support and community-led initiatives and push for data transparency and inclusive research that reflects the lived experiences of diverse communities affected by STI trends.

This Congress reaffirms its commitment to sexual health equality and calls on GMB nationally to support efforts that protect the full spectrum of sexual wellbeing for all workers.

A55 BRANCH
WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION
(Carried)

JEFF SUTTON (Wales & South West): Motion 275 is Tackling the Rise of STIs Amidst PrEP Expansion - Call for Inclusive Sexual Health Strategies. President, Congress, despite requests from the CEC I am proud to propose it with the support of my region, the caring Wales & South West. *(Cheers)* But I must add on a personal note, if it all goes wrong this morning, I will be possibly a last-time delegate and last-time speaker!

When I saw the CEC stance was asking me to withdraw it and then read why, I was shocked. I honestly didn't see how this little ask could cause so much of an issue. When I read the comment "make public arguments on matters that require specialist medical epidemiological behavioural health expertise that the GMB does not possess and cannot reasonably acquire", I was confused. What does all that mean? I did not

see that in my motion. Then I read on: “The motion also rests on an assertive causal link between PrEP use and rising SDI rates. Well, these are facts, not assumptions. Was there something behind this? Was it because this is about sex? Is middle-class morality being offended? I don’t know. Let me try and break it down. I am sure you have all read the motion. It is saying due to the rise in take-up of PrEP, something that the GMB campaigned for and won, there has been a corresponding rise in the spread - and I apologise for saying it - of gonorrhoea, chlamydia and syphilis, and some other diseases. This is not conjecture, it is fact. The spread is all across society as the take-up of PrEP is now led up by heterosexual community. That is all you non-LGBT people. That was confirmed by a colleague, a senior nursing professional, who is not only a GMB member but here today. I am not expecting the union to provide all the services I have listed but to campaign for them and help raise awareness. And it is very simple, whilst taking PrEP and having unprotected sex - sorry to say that again - you are drastically reducing the chance of catching HIV to virtually zero, but here is the important bit, the big message, the chances of catching those other nasties have stayed the same. Full stop, that is it. Now if that is difficult, do we need four professors, three consultants, two senior health professionals and a nurse in a biohazard suit? No, we need to look at our members, at where the knowledge is, shake a few hands in Westminster, washing them afterwards of course! (*Laughter*) We campaigned for it, now let’s complete the job. It is simple - save my neck and despite the CEC stance, support this simple motion. We are the GMB: we make a difference. Do it now. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jeff. Secunder.

MARK BOWLER (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 275. The motion refers principally to a minority group, that is men who have sex with men, but, in essence, the consequences of ignoring our request could have a devastating impact on everyone. The NHS is already concerned with ever more bacterial infections becoming drug resistant and this is more prevalent with sexually transmitted infections. Whether we are sexually promiscuous, celibate or non-sexual, we all should be concerned about the increasing drug resistance in bacterial infections. The essence of the motion is only asking the GMB to do what we are very good at. That is to support our NHS with education, helping to spread the safe sex message in the workplace, and to use our campaigning skills to help protect those services from future underfunding, ensuring that the NHS continues with its work of improving upon our community health.

The CEC is making a mistake by thinking there needs to be specialist medical epidemiological and behavioural expertise to support this motion. It is just asking that we collaborate and augment NHS sexual health campaigns and fight for the future-proofing of services. So please give your support to this motion and let us do our bit in strengthening the NHS to slow down drug-resistant bacterial infections that, if left unchecked, could mutate, build up resistance and affect any one ever us. I am proud to second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mark. Could we have the mover of 277, please and the movers and seconders of 278, 279 and 280 to come down the front, please. Mover of 277 to the rostrum.

NATIONAL MATERNITY AND NEONATAL INVESTIGATION

MOTION 277

277. NATIONAL MATERNITY AND NEONATAL INVESTIGATION

Baroness Amos's interim report on National Maternity and Neonatal Investigation released on the 9 December 2025, raises serious concerns around maternal care afforded to Black & Global Majority women. Baroness Amos shared that "nothing prepared me for the unacceptable maternity care in England".

Congress is concerned that we are once again seeing the racial inequity of maternity and neonatal care disproportionately impacting black and global majority women, who are being failed by embedded systemic racism, cultural incompetence, and lack of accountability.

UK's leading health organisation on Black maternal health: FivexMore conclude that black women are five times likely to die.

There needs to be an end to racial assumptions which are causing harm to Black & Global Majority women accessing maternity and neonatal care.

We call upon Congress to:

1. Continue to campaign for the implementation of robust workplace initiatives & policies that protect Black & Global Majority mothers.
2. Continue to campaign for mandatory anti racism training and cultural responsive and safety in maternal healthcare.
3. Continue to promote workplace policies including enhanced maternity leave and improved access to healthcare resources.

E10 EALING BRANCH

LONDON REGION

(Carried)

BEV GUNNING (London): President, Congress, good morning! Moving Motion 277.

Since I say wrote this report there has been Sky News, BBC and a national newspaper talking about maternity care in crisis, so I can scrap the first paragraph, but this has been a systemic issue for over 40 years. This issue is still a postcode lottery in terms of maternity healthcare for black and global majority mothers who are expecting and the extended family. As a black woman who has had neo-natal children, the racial assumptions not only come from white midwives but from black/global majority heritage midwives as well. They ignored my concerns over my twin daughters who in the end were born three months premature. I got to the stage where I had to use explanatory language in Patois to a midwife to get my message across that they were

distressed. My dad intervened with stern words to get a senior consultant. One of the twins sadly passed away three weeks later and, who knows, all of this could have been avoided if they had listened to me in the first place. I went on to have two more premature babies, but luckily for me, which I mentioned at last year's Congress, thanks to Queen Charlotte's midwifery service, it all ended well. I had so much after care and support for years, I felt empowered enough to help other mothers in the neonatal unit - it is not all about reading a book - to support mothers who went through the same journey not only I did but as a black woman. Also, when a baby decides to come into this world early, there is no discrimination. This needs to be in midwifery training. Midwives follow the rule book and do not take into account the sensitivity of mothers, as seen in last year's episode of *Coronation Street* where a black woman made her issue of severe pain and discomfort known, which was ignored by black and white midwives, resulting in her having her baby under emergency Caesarean, nearly dying and having a hysterectomy.

In the statement of support, the CEC says that work has begun in areas utilising support from the GRASP sisterhood and working in conjunction with LAN (Labour African Network). This approach does not represent mothers who are black Caribbean. My mum was a midwife, my dad read the midwifery books, but they could not represent what was going on in the real world. Midwives need to get their head out their books, listen and represent mothers, and act accordingly. I am happy to discuss this with policy teams or the GRASP network because I feel this motion is close to my heart and needs to be said by someone who has walked a mile in my shoes. Please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Bev. Secunder.

CAROL ELLISON (London): Madam President and Vice-President, I am here to second this motion. Congress, we know the headlines and the heartbreak families face, but we stand in support of a national maternity and neonatal investigation because it stops blaming individuals and exposes a broken system. The report highlights a devastating reality: black and Asian women have higher rates of dying in labour and face poor or stereotypical treatments. Our members see the institutional failures every day. This investigation is a vital tool for racial injustice in the NHS, because this is not just about our clinical outcomes, it is about our members working in crumbling buildings and dangerous unsafe understaffed units. Safety versus staffing is not a debate. The interim report is clear: you cannot have safe births without safe staffing. We support this inquiry because it provides the hard evidence and we need to end the recruitment crisis and stop making empty rotas. For far too long blame has been shifted on to isolated individuals, targeting the workers at the bedside. It is time for a systematic account over convenient scapegoating. This investigation finally shifts the spotlight away from front-lines and shines it right where it belongs: on failed leaderships, outdated IT and a chronic lack of investment. This is also about hospitals' treatment of families when things go wrong. We need a real transparent meaningful apologies and proper bereavement care, not defensive walls. It is scandalous that this is a race issue and postcodes will still dictate safety. So, I call on Congress to fully back this national investigation. We demand some final recommendations. Let's build a maternity service that is safe for every mother, every baby, and every GMB member. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Carol. Anybody want to speak in opposition? (*No response*) Can I ask Paul Turner from the CEC to respond, please?

PAUL TURNER (CEC, North West & Irish): Good morning, Congress. President, Vice-President, Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, into Motions 27 and 275. And while I was sat there, it is good to note that they have changed some of the words.

On Motion 274, the CEC is asking for this motion to be referred. We recognise the importance of improving health outcomes for men and boys. The inequalities identified are real, affect many of our members, and addressing them in the workplace is consistent with GMB policy and values. However, the motion poses a substantial programme of organisational development. This includes establishing men's working health groups, developing cross-section guidance, structured engagement with employers and creating mentoring and support frameworks. This represents a significant and complex body of work with a wide range of implications for resourcing, staffing, governance and specialist expertise. Before committing to such a programme, the union must carefully consider the level of organisational capacity required and how this work aligns with existing policies on health and safety and organisational priorities, and whether it is deliverable under the current structures.

Referral will allow detailed consideration as it will ensure any work complexities and existing activities include our engagement with the Labour Group for Men and Boys rather than creating parallel structures without co-ordination. For those reasons, the CEC is asking for Motion 274 to be referred.

On Motion 275, the CEC is seeking withdrawal. We recognise the importance of sexual health and the transformative role of PrEP in reducing HIV, and the need for inclusive, stigma-free public approaches. These are important issues for many of our members. However, the motion asks for the union to take a position on campaigning on matters requiring specialist medical and behavioural health expertise. This is not an area the GMB are professional in or are competent to lead. For these reasons, while we respect the intent of the motion, the CEC believes it is not appropriate for the GMB to adopt this policy. Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking to withdraw 275 as we are not medical professionals.

President, in conclusion the CEC is asking for 274 to be referred and 275 to be withdrawn. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Does London Region agree to refer Motion 274? (*Agreed*) That is the easy one. Does Wales & South West, and I think I might know the answer before I ask this, agree to withdraw 275? (*Shouts of "No" from the floor*) 273 and 277, the CEC are supporting, so I will take those as one vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against. They are carried. Because Wales & South West are not agreeing to withdraw, it does mean the CEC's position changes to oppose. All those in favour of 275, please show and please put your hand up really clearly. All those against. That is carried. (*Applause*)

*Motion 273 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 274 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 275 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 277 was **CARRIED**.*

The Vice-President took the Chair.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Could the mover of Motion 278 come forward.

NHS WAITING LISTS AND WORKFORCE IMPACT

MOTION 278

278. NHS WAITING LISTS AND WORKFORCE IMPACT

This Congress notes excessive NHS waiting times for vital treatments and the direct impact of delayed treatment on workers' health, job security, and financial stability, alongside the increased sickness absence costs to public services.

Congress believes that long waiting lists place workers' livelihoods at unnecessary risk and weaken the public sector workforce.

Congress resolves that GMB will campaign for urgent action to reduce NHS waiting lists, lobby for increased NHS funding and capacity, and defend members whose employment is adversely affected by delays beyond their control.

N15 BRANCH WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION

(Carried)

PHIL TAYLOR (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 278. Colleagues, I stand today to support this motion because it speaks to the real human cost of NHS waiting lists, not just in statistics, not just in headlines, but in the lived experience of our members. When we talk about waiting lists, too often the debate is framed as inconvenience, a delay, an administrative problem, but for working people NHS delays are not an inconvenience, they are a threat to health, to livelihood and to dignity. Right now workers across the public and private sector are waiting months, even years for

surgery diagnostics, cancer care, orthopaedics and mental health treatment. They are waiting in pain, waiting while their condition worsens, waiting while their ability to work is slowly taken away. And while they wait, the clock keeps ticking. Sick pay runs out, absence triggers kick in, jobs are put at risk. Congress, it is deeply wrong that a worker can lose their job, their income or their future because the health system that they rely upon has been stretched beyond breaking point. That is not just a personal failure, that is a systemic failure. Long waiting lists do not just harm patients, they weaken the workforce. They increase sickness absence. They drive experienced workers out of public services. This motion rightly recognises that NHS delays are now an employment issue as much as a health issue. Public sector employers are being forced to absorb rising sickness costs, backfill rotas and manage staff who are desperate to return to work but physically unable to do so. Meanwhile workers face anxiety, financial hardship and the fear of being seen as a problem rather than a person in need of care. That is not how a civilised society should treat its workforce.

Congress, none of this is inevitable. Long waiting lists are the result of political choices: choices about funding, staffing levels and capacity. Years of under-investment have left the NHS struggling to meet demand, and it is working people who are paying the price. This motion is right to demand urgent action to reduce waiting lists, to expand capacity and to properly fund the NHS so that treatment happens when it is needed, not when a worker has already lost their job or their health. But just as importantly, it commits the GMB to stand with members who are suffering the consequences right now, to defend those whose employment is threatened because they are waiting for treatment, to challenge unfair absence management, and to ensure workers are not punished for the delays that they did not create and cannot control.

Congress, access to timely healthcare is not a luxury. It is the foundation of a functioning workforce and a fair economy. When the NHS fails to deliver on time, it is not just patients who suffer; it is families, workplaces and whole communities. By supporting this motion Congress is saying clearly that workers' livelihoods matter, that sickness caused by long NHS delays is not a disciplinary issue, and the GMB will fight for proper funding, for capacity and for every member caught in the crossfire of a broken system. I urge Congress to support this motion. I move. (*Cheers and applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Philip. Can we have the seconder please.

JONATHAN STRACHAN-TAYLOR (Wales & South West): Jonathan Strachan-Taylor from the wonderful Wales & South West Region, seconding Motion 278. There were about 7.1 million people as of March 2026 on NHS waiting lists. That is the unpleasant reality but NHS waiting lists are not just statistics. They are people: our colleagues, our friends, your mum, your dad. It seems obvious that when treatment is delayed for NHS workers and their medical conditions worsen, recovery becomes harder. For NHS workers it means sickness payments withheld, enhancements withheld, time off without pay - the pay that means they can survive. NHS England employs 1.8 million people. The majority of the women are on low pay, on minimum wage. They are the ones who bear the consequences. These staff are often in pain, they are facing disciplinary procedures, capability processes and being managed out of their own jobs because the NHS will not treat them before they can be fired. That is unjust and it is totally preventable. These long waiting times also place enormous strain on our workplaces. Public services are stretched further as sickness absence rates rise,

teams are left short-staffed and the pressures on those still in work increases. This creates a vicious cycle and weakens not only individual wellbeing but the strength of the workforce as a whole.

This motion is a call for urgent action. You need meaningful investment in your NHS that increases pay, increases staffing levels, expands capacity and reduces the backlog. We need a system that works for patients and for workers, to keep our public services running. Critically, we must stand for our members. No one should face punishment or hardship because they are waiting for treatment beyond their control. We call for a change to NHS pay to help the lowest-paid women in the NHS. Our NHS heroes need your help. Congress, invest in our people, invest in our NHS and invest in fair and equal pay. Make work better! Support this motion! *(Cheers and applause)*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can we have the mover for Motion 279, please?

NHS UNDERFUNDING IS THE CAUSE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR TAKING OVER OUR NHS BY STEALTH

MOTION 279

279. NHS UNDER FUNDING IS THE CAUSE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR TAKING OVER OUR NHS BY STEALTH

The Tories over the last decade have underfunded the NHS in order to privatise and sell off our NHS, the Jewell in the crown of our Great Britain.

We call on our Labour government to save our NHS by funding it realistically by 4% per annum and go down in history as the government that saved the NHS

H72 HULL RETAIL AND DISTRIBUTION NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION

(Carried)

JULIE SHAW (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I am from the proud North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region, moving Motion 279: NHS Underfunding is the Cause of the Private Sector Taking Over Our NHS by Stealth. Congress, trying to get a doctor's appointment, dentist's appointment or even operation you are pointed towards the a private sector. We think we still have an NHS but try to get into an NHS dentist, it is near impossible. I had a knee replacement on the NHS but was sent to a private sector hospital. This is privatisation by the back door. Our doctors surgeries are now health centres where you have to book in advance, never seeing the same doctor twice, with clinicians and nurses. Sometimes you are better off never to get to see anyone. This pushes you towards the private sector for answers. You are told the doctor does not treat any more, for example, wart removal, chiropody, mental health. The wait time puts you off. People save so they can jump the queue or borrow money to get treatment. Others wait but die or even take their own lives while waiting.

Congress don't let them steal away our NHS bit by bit. Congress, let's tell our Government to fund our NHS to the full and protect our people's lives. Congress, please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can I have the seconder, please?

JOSH BLACKLOCK (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): President, Congress, in the UK with the preceding two years showing nominal growth ranging between 9.8% and 13.7%, the private acute healthcare market value has reached £13.8 billion. Self-pay admissions show a record-breaking spike of a 38% rise in comparison, from post-pandemic to pre-pandemic. With public health cuts, we have crawled our way to

26% lower in 2024 compared to 2015 in real terms. As we know, the peak of funding for the NHS was during Covid. Funding has fallen by over 10% in the three years that followed. Employer driven and individually purchased private health insurance sees some sectors of private healthcare gaining an annual premium growth of 17.8%. These are not coincidences. These are real-time comparatives that slide in tandem. All while the Government claims waiting list times have dropped. Have they? Mr Starmer, how many of these people who recorded a shorter waiting time for you opted for private healthcare on their initial consultation to then end up on the same consultant's waiting list through the NHS? And what do you say to those who can't afford that initial private consultation and are now subject to care too late or not at all? While the rich get richer and enjoy their short waiting times, the working class get forced to the back of the queue with their longest-ever waiting times. You do not fool us, Prime Minister.

We call upon this Labour Government and (while you are still there) Mr Starmer to fund the NHS realistically. Don't be the party that goes down in history for selling it off. Be the party that goes down in history for saving it. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Josh. Can we have the mover for Motion 280, please?

HOSPICE SERVICES

MOTION 280

280. HOSPICE SERVICES

This Congress are aware that in times of need, hospice services for adults and children are vital, for example: end of life care, palliative care, respite care and a whole lot more services to the public.

This Congress has seen years of cuts to these vital services, like bed closures etc. under the Conservative Government and it is sad to say there is no change under this Labour Government. There are still bed closures throughout the UK. So, what is the solution?

This Congress is asking the GMB to campaign to bring all Hospice Services, both adults and children, to be fully funded and fully integrated into the NHS Services for all.

**B43 BIRMINGHAM CITY GENERAL BRANCH
MIDLANDS REGION**

(Carried)

ANGELA GILRAINE (Midlands): Morning, President, Vice-President, top table, and morning to you all. Can I ask everybody to stand up who has had any form of help from hospices, whether it is respite or anything else. Can you stand up for me, please? Right. Can I also ask a question: does anybody in this room know how much it costs to fund a hospice for a year? Any ideas? Throw me some numbers. It costs £2 million a year to run a hospice across the country. Now just lately you have hospices that have closed because government funding has diminished so much.

The other thing is you have got hospices that are running on half capacity. I know of hospices where there are 30 beds but there are only 15 beds open. Staff are losing their jobs and when the nurses want to give care and they can't, it is just terrible. In Birmingham, the children's hospice, Acorns nearly closed. If it wasn't for a massive, and I mean massive television campaign and call for sponsorship and everything else, that would have been closed by now. My mum passed away at the beginning of the year and the palliative care nurses that came in were absolutely incredible. It didn't matter what time we called them, whether it was 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, they were there within the hour. They are struggling. Hospices are absolutely on their knees in this country and I just wish the Government (I do not care what Government it is) would refund that funding. People are out there with bucket collections and stuff like

that. That is why I am moving this. Also my wife is a palliative care specialist nurse and the work that she does and that of her colleagues is absolutely incredible. That is why I am moving this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Angela. Can we have the seconder, please?

JACQUELINE BURNETT-PITT (Midlands): Morning, President, Vice-President, General Secretary. I have to big up my colleague Gordon from the Midlands Region. I am rising to second Motion 280: Hospice Services. I am sure we all remember Nye Bevan's quote on the NHS "from cradle to grave", yet across the UK, hospices are facing a serious funding crisis and many have already reduced services. What is happening? Around 75% of hospices in England are operating at a deficit according to the data from Hospice UK. Nearly 60% have made or are considering cuts to front-line services, including inpatient beds, community visits and staff posts. About 380 hospice beds are lying unused, not because they are unnecessary, but because hospices cannot afford the nurses and specialist staff needed to run them. Specialist community hospice visits have fallen by around 150,000 a year, despite increasing demand from an ageing population. Why are hospices struggling? Most UK hospices are charities. Although they provide an essential part of end-of-life care, government funding only covers a proportion of their costs and the rest comes from charity shops, funding events, donations and gifts in wills and corporate support. Congress, I am just urging you to support this motion, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Great timing Jacquie, thank you. Does anybody wish to oppose any of these motions? (*No response*) Can I ask Dian Burke to report back on behalf of the CEC, please?

DIAN BURKE (CEC, North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 278 and 279. On Motion 278: NHS Waiting Lists and Workforce Impact, the CEC is supporting this motion with a qualification. GMB has a longstanding commitment to campaigning for proper investment in the NHS. We continue to call for the funding needed to ensure secure, decently paid jobs and high-quality services for patients. Congress has previously recognised that with the right level of investment, waiting lists can be reduced and access to timely care improved. We also recognise the reality facing our members and the public. Waiting times to see doctors and receive hospital treatment have increased, placing significant pressure on both patients and staff. Our qualification is a practical one. The union does not have the direct power to reduce NHS waiting lists. However, we can and will continue to lobby government for increased funding and capacity within the NHS. We will also continue to defend and support our members where their employment is impacted by delays and pressures that are beyond their control. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 278.

On Motion 279 on NHS underfunding and private sector involvement, the CEC is supporting this motion with qualification. The GMB has consistently campaigned for increased funding for the NHS and this remains a central priority for our union. Congress has repeatedly supported calls for greater investment and we have reinforced this through policy and CEC statements over a number of years. We share the concerns

raised in this motion about the pressures facing the NHS and the risks associated with underfunding, including the increasing role of private providers in the delivery of services.

Our qualification relates to the proposal for a specific funding target. we support the principle of securing a fair and sustainable funding settlement for the NHS, committing to a fixed figure such as 4% requires further detailed analysis. We would need to fully understand the funding model and the scale of need and the broader economic context before adopting a specific figure as union policy. Therefore, while we continue to campaign strongly for increased NHS funding, we must ensure that our policy positions are evidence based and deliverable. Subject to that qualification, the CEC supports Motion 279.

President, in conclusion, the CEC is supporting both motions, with the stated qualifications. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dian. Please can I ask for the speaker for Motion 299 to come down to the front. Does Wales & South West accept the qualification on Motion 278? (*Accepted*) And does North East, Yorkshire & Humber accept the qualification on 279? (*Accepted*) Thank you. So we will take all those motions in bulk for the vote, Motions 278 and 279 and 280, all those in favour. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 278 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 279 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 280 was **CARRIED**.*

SOCIAL POLICY: TRANSPORT

THE PRESIDENT: Can we please ask the speaker on Motion 199 to come to the rostrum.

FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR ALL CARE-EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

MOTION 299

299. FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR ALL CARE-EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

This Congress notes that care-experienced young people face significant and long-term barriers in accessing education, employment, training, social support networks and essential services. Many young people leaving care or transitioning into independence face financial hardship and are often disproportionately affected by transport costs, particularly in rural and economically deprived areas.

Congress further recognises that stable access to public transport is vital not only for securing and maintaining employment, apprenticeships, work placements and further education, but also for staying connected to their communities, families, support services and peer networks. Without free and reliable transportation, many care-experienced young people are placed at a disadvantage through no fault of their own, resulting in greater risk of isolation, unemployment, mental health challenges and homelessness.

Congress believes that as corporate parents, Government and public bodies have a moral, social and legal responsibility to ensure that care-experienced young people have every opportunity to thrive, succeed and remain connected. Providing free public transport is a practical, meaningful and cost-effective intervention that would significantly improve life outcomes and support long-term equality.

Therefore, this Congress calls on GMB to:

1. Campaign for the UK Government, devolved Governments and local authorities to provide universal free public transport for all care-experienced young people up to at least age 25.
2. Lobby policymakers, transport authorities and corporate parenting boards to prioritise this as a statutory entitlement nationally.
3. Work collaboratively with organisations representing care-experienced communities, including charities, youth voice networks and advocacy groups, to amplify lived experience and ensure policy design is equitable.
4. Promote awareness of this issue among GMB members, particularly across public services and education, ensuring that support for this policy becomes part of wider campaigning for social justice and equality of opportunity.

This motion seeks to deliver fair access, reduce inequality and uphold our collective duty to those who have been in care.

**P18 BRANCH
WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION**

(Carried)

JANE HUNT (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 299. Congress, for many young people getting on a bus or a train is a normal part of life. It means getting to college, travelling to work, seeing friends, attending appointments or simply staying connected to the world around them. But for too many care-experienced young people transport is not freedom, it is a barrier. When the state acts as a parent, it takes on a lifelong responsibility, yet we know that many young people leaving care face financial hardship, instability and isolation almost immediately after turning 18. They are expected to navigate adulthood without the safety net many others rely on. A bus fare might seem small to some people but when you are choosing between transport, food, heating or phone credit, it becomes a real obstacle. It can mean missing education, losing employment opportunities and becoming disconnected from support services, or simply feeling cut off from society. And the impact is even worse in rural and deprived communities, where transport is already limited and expensive.

Congress, this motion is not asking for luxury. It is asking for fairness. It is asking us to recognise that equal opportunity means removing barriers, not pretending they do not exist. Free public transport would improve access to education, training, apprenticeships and employment, but it would also do something equally important. It would help young people stay connected to their communities, their support networks and their futures. If government and local authorities want to call themselves a

corporate parent, then they must act like good caring parents. A good parent does not leave their child stranded because they can't afford the bus fare home. This is practical, achievable and it is the right thing to do. Congress, I urge you to support this motion.

I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can we have the seconder, please?

RUDI LEWIS (Wales & South West): Vice-President, General Secretary, Congress, finally! Rudi Lewis from the Welsh Ambulance Service Branch, from the glorious Wales & South West Region, seconding Motion 299. First-time Congress, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, care-experienced young people already face challenges most of us cannot fully imagine: instability, disruption and the pressure of navigating adulthood without the safety net many take for granted. The least we can do as a responsible and compassionate society is to remove the practical barriers that are in their way. One of the biggest of those barriers is transport. Without affordable and reliable public transport opportunities simply disappear, jobs go unfilled, college places are declined and vital support networks become harder and harder to reach for a care-experienced young person. The cost of a bus or a train ticket isn't just an inconvenience. It can be the difference between moving forward or falling backwards.

This motion recognises that reality and offers a clear, practical solution: free public transport for up to at least the age of 25. And let us be clear, this is not a luxury, it not an optional extra, it is an investment: an investment in education, in employment, in mental health and in preventing homelessness. Congress, this is a policy rooted in

equality, dignity and opportunity. It is achievable, it is necessary and it is right. I urge you all to support this Motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rudi. Does anybody wish to oppose this motion? (*No response*) Can I ask Gordon Gibbs on behalf of the CEC to report back, please?

GORDON GIBBS (CEC, Midlands): President, Congress, Gordon Gibbs, Dudley Region in the Midlands, responding on behalf of the CEC to Motion 299: Free Public Transport for all Care-Experienced Young People. The CEC is supporting this motion with a clarification. In principle, we support the intent behind the motion. We recognise the importance of removing practical barriers such as transport costs that prevent care-experienced young people from accessing employment, training and opportunities. These are young people who have often faced significant disruption in their lives and it is right that we consider how best to support them into secure futures.

Our qualification is a practical one. While we support the aims of the motion, the union has limited resources and expertise to directly deliver all the actions set out. However, where appropriate, we will use our political influence and engagement with our policy-makers to raise those issues and advocate for measures that support care-experienced young people. Therefore, Congress, the CEC is supporting with a clarification Motion 299. I was going to give it to you in Dudley but you wouldn't have understood a word I said, would you? (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gordon. Can I please ask for all the speakers for the Ukraine to come forward, please? Does Wales & South West Region accept the qualification on Motion 299? (*Agreed*) Can we then put that to the vote. All in favour of Motion 299, can you please raise your hands. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Motion 299 was **CARRIED**.*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can I call on our National President, Barbara Plant to move the CEC Statement and Dean Gilligan to second on behalf of the CEC.

CEC STATEMENT: UKRAINE

CEC Statement: Ukraine – Four Years of War on Workers

Introduction

1.1 After the 24th February 2022 marked the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, GMB reaffirms our unwavering solidarity with the Ukrainian people and their trade unions in their courageous resistance to this aggression.

1.2 The war has entered its fourth year in bitter military stalemate, dominated by drone warfare, trench raids and the continuing bombing, displacement, and suffering of Ukraine's civilian population. While polls show that a growing majority of Ukrainians are supporting a negotiated peace, Ukrainians are clear that attempts to impose an externally drafted 'peace plan' without popular support cannot form the basis of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine or Europe. On the contrary, they could embolden the rise of fascism and authoritarianism globally, heightening the risk of future wars.

1.3 At this critical moment, it is important that GMB restates our values and takes stock of our priorities for solidarity as a trade union. GMB reiterates our shared desire to see a peaceful end to this war, one that upholds Ukraine's territorial integrity in an agreement supported by Ukrainians themselves, accompanied by a progressive, socially-just reconstruction programme.

1.4 In response to repeated appeals from Ukrainian trade unions, we call on the Labour Government, in coordination with European allies, to recognise that continued occupation is not peace and to support the socially-just reconstruction of Ukraine through empowering its trade unions and strengthening civil society to defend against the rising new European far-right.

1.5 Four years on, GMB pledges to continue our full solidarity with Ukrainian trade unions via the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FTU) and Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU) centres, as well as with the Ukrainian people in their struggle for a free, united, and democratic Ukraine.

The full CEC statement can be accessed here:

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/assets/media/downloads/3834/cec-statement-ukraine-4-years-of-war-on-workers.pdf>

THE PRESIDENT: Vice-President, Congress, Barbara Plant, National President, moving the CEC Statement on Ukraine, four years of war on workers. Last week I received a message from the head teacher of a school in Pavlohrad in Ukraine which has 830 children. Due to frequent shelling and anxiety, they run their classes in an underground shelter. This head teacher told me: “Our school has been hit twice by the aggressive shelling and the children have suffered the most. The fifth year under constant shelling is very difficult. I see and witness how the children have changed. There is almost no laughter. The children have become silent and withdrawn. Many of them have lost interest in studying.”

Congress, we must continue to support Ukraine in the fourth year since Russia’s brutal illegal invasion, because in the words of that head teacher, “All Ukrainians have one dream: they want to live under a peaceful sky.”

We commend the UK Government for giving material aid to Ukraine to defend itself for as long as it takes, to secure that just lasting peace, but we must also commend our members, some of them in this hall today, who have helped Ukraine build the humanitarian assistance it needs to keep people safe and keep going. GMB members have led the way in answering the Ukrainian people’s call for solidarity. We have built direct links with our Ukrainian sister unions and our branches have raised over £6,000 in donations which funded three pick-up trucks of medical aid and winter supplies.

(Applause)

But Congress, we must stand ready to do more. As Putin's war of aggression enters its fourth year, Ukraine's workers continue to face unrelenting violence. Energy workers have restored power under fire and risked capture by Russian forces to keep people safe through harsh winters. There have been more than 15,000 civilian deaths and 41,000 injuries since Russia's war began. Systematic attacks on Ukraine's energy systems have plunged towns and cities into darkness, shut schools and hospitals and placed entire communities at risk. While we can be proud that so many Ukrainian refugees have found a safe haven in the UK, nearly 10,000 were homeless or risked homelessness. We must do more to support Ukrainians to rebuild their lives here. This statement reaffirms our unwavering solidarity with the Ukrainian people, their unions and their right to fight for peace on their terms. It reaffirms our call for Russia's immediate withdrawal from all occupied territories in Ukraine and it helps us to answer the call of Ukrainian unions to keep going just as they are, until we get that just and lasting peace. Ukraine's workers are not defending their country, they are defending the democratic rights and freedoms that underpin our entire movement so, Congress, let's defend them. I move. (*Applause*)

DEAN GILLIGAN (CEC, London): (*Applause*) Morning, excuse the voice! Vice-President, Congress, seconding this statement on behalf of the CEC. This statement makes clear that strong trade unions are needed not just for winning the war in Ukraine but for winning the peace that must follow. Now more than ever we must stand with Ukraine's unions so they can stand up to the restrictions on their ability to organise at work and begin the reconstruction of their nation.

Congress, let's be clear, any just peace in Ukraine is one where Ukraine keeps its territorial integrity in an agreement supported by the Ukrainian people themselves. Not a backroom deal done by Trump, Putin and their oligarchs. If that does not happen, we risk involving the far right across Europe. Ukraine must also have its war debt cancelled and receive the 300 billion it has been promised in funds for reconstruction. Those funds must not have strings attached that sell off Ukraine's natural resources to global corporations or restrict workers' rights. Instead, we must see the restoration of workers' rights and union freedoms in Ukraine and a socially just reconstruction which embeds collective bargaining, not privatisation.

Congress, let's call on our Government to recognise that continued Russian occupation is not peace and, if Labour wants to make work better here in the UK, then it must support the same in Ukraine, because it is vital that workers fighting for their country's freedom return to a country that frees the working-class. Let's not have any Putin apologists. We must stand with the Ukrainian unions in solidarity. Congress, I second.
(Applause)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dean. Can we have the speaker for London Region, please.

ALASTAIR BLUNDELL: (London): Just to give you the back story for why I was asked to do this. At Christmas and New Year last year I was in Ukraine. I visited Lviv, Dniprul and Kiev. *(Applause)* And in my own spare time I work in the orphanage in Kiev, so I have seen some of the things that Barbara was highlighting.

Anyway, let's get to what I have got to say for the region. We welcome the statement on Ukraine because it reflects the key concerns raised by our branches while reaffirming our solidarity with the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian trade union movement. Four years into this devastating war, people continue to pay the highest price, as they do in all wars. Thousands have lost their lives, millions have been displaced. Workers continue to keep the essential services running under the most difficult circumstances we could ever imagine. We support the call for peace and an end to the conflict based on the wishes of the Ukrainian people themselves, alongside just social reconstruction, strengthened workers' right and the trade unions' ability to organise. We also welcome the fact that the CEC's statement highlights concerns on the growth of extremist and anti-democratic forces that can emerge during a period of war and instability. As trade unionists, we must always be diligent in defending democracy, equality and workers' interests wherever they may be and threatened. This statement strikes the right balance. It contains the aggression, supports Ukrainian workers and unions, recognises the need for peace in a commitment from our unions to continue practical solidarity.

In GMB London, we are proud to have taken a delegation to Kiev, received trade unions delegates in London, to have supported the Ukrainian workers with branch donations, fundraisers. We remain bound by our shared beliefs and common humanity. Congress, it is our responsibility to stand with working people, support democratic values, work for lasting peace and deliver security and justice for ordinary people currently surviving in extremely difficult circumstances. For those reasons, we support the CEC's statement and, Congress, we urge you to do the same. I thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ally. Can we have the speaker for Midlands Region, please?

BRADLEY WALL (Midlands): Speaking on behalf of the mighty Midlands Region. (*Cheers*) Just to set the scene, a couple of months before Putin started to amass his war machine on the Ukrainian border for that training exercise that was never going to be an invasion, I was in Kiev with some friends, and I managed, as I normally do, to go out with a bunch of locals, and during that night out in a bar called the Drunken Cherry (if anyone gets to go to Kiev, I recommend it, it is very, very good liquor!) they said how afraid they were that they were going to be invaded. This is before any tanks started to amass and I did not believe them. I just thought there is no way in today's era a full-scale invasion of Europe would happen. And it did. All of these things link together. There is a reason Tommy Robinson is not currently protesting in Belfast and that is because he is currently with Elon Musk's dad in Russia. That is the reason he is not there. He is getting his orders and he is getting his pay cheque. I think our support for Ukraine comes down to two things really. One is what kind of world do we want to live in? Do we want to live in a world and leave a world to the next generation where the strong, the rich, the mighty do what they like while we all just sit back? No, I do not think we do. Do we want a world where the Trumps, the Putins, the Netanyahus carve up countries killing innocent people? No, I don't. But I also think it boils down to the basics of solidarity. We are trade unionists. Solidarity is what we do. We stand with the weak, we stand with the oppressed and we stand up to bullies. So, Conference, please support this motion, and Slava Ukraine! (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Bradley. Can we have the speaker for the North East, Yorkshire & Humber, please?

SARAH YOUNG (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Supporting the Special report on behalf of North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. From In 2022, Zelensky said, “I need ammunition, not a ride.” Those words made me sit up and listen, that one man could stand proud in front of his country and not run in the face of adversity, fully captured my attention. Four years on he still stands strong but the cost to Ukraine is devastating. Hundreds of thousands of lives lost, disappearing people, thousands of child abductions. It is my belief Putin will not be happy until the whole of Ukraine is destroyed. If he can’t have it, no one can. I feel that some of the darkest moments of history are repeating themselves. Like many across my region, I am passionate about standing up for Ukraine and throughout the war I am proud that GMB has maintained its calls to oppose military aggression and stand by our sister trade unions. With their rights under threat from far-right aggressors, it has never been more important that we offer practical solidarity. As Zelensky is bullied by the Tango Man and his Oompa-Loompas, we must come together to fight for better. This matters to us all. My 97 year-old neighbour Anne, escaped Treblinka when she was 14. She tells me regularly she fears it is all starting again. She sees history repeating itself. She sees more and more far-right rhetoric on the TV, in the papers and in the streets. We must keep Ukraine in our minds because if we don’t keep their fight at the top of the news agenda, we will be, in effect, contributing to Putin’s continued putsch. And let’s be honest, he won’t stop at the next border he comes across. No, he will march across Europe in a never-ending push for domination. Congress, international solidarity has

always been at the heart of our movement. In a dangerous world we must ensure it remains so. Please support the report. Slav Ukraine!

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sarah. Can we have the speaker for North West & Irish, please?

JO PITCHFORD (North West & Irish): Speaking in support of the CEC Statement. Congress, this statement on Ukraine after four years of war really, really matters and North West & Irish Region welcomes it. Our region always been a place of safety for people coming into the country and we are proud to have already existing groups of Ukrainian people who have made our region their home for decades. We should be really proud at the way ordinary people can come together during this time and make a difference. In my home town communities backed an appeal for nappies. It is really, really difficult as a new grandmother to think that mothers don't have nappies for their babies, they can't access baby milk, they can't get the things that they need because Putin's war is controlling everything and limiting access.

So, in my home town, the community backed an appeal for nappies and sent over 10,000. It was organised by the local Ukrainian Church and it shows the power of people organising with compassion and exactly the kind of spirit we will need to bring to our commitment to peace in Ukraine and rebuilding when the war ends. Respect also to the branches who contributed to the Ukraine Winter Appeal and continue support for appeals for medical supplies. Because this is about much more than one conflict. It is about standing up for democracy, for workers' rights and against the far

right wherever it appears. It is about showing that our movement is strong enough to offer hope, support and practical solidarity. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jo. Can we have the speaker for Scotland, please?

MICHAEL DAVIDSON (GMB Scotland): Speaking in support of the CEC statement on Ukraine. Congress, GMB Scotland wholeheartedly supports this statement. For us in Scotland this war does not feel so distant. 30,000 people have arrived through Homes for Ukraine with a Scottish-sponsored location. Behind every number is a person: a woman trying to find secure work, a child trying to settle into a new school, a family trying to find a new home, and a worker trying to rebuild their life with dignity.

I am pleased by this statement's recognition that many refugees have found employment, education or training opportunities since they have arrived in the UK, but for too many, they still face barriers to employment and housing, particularly women. Ukrainian refugees are workers and they must know that they have rights. They must know they can join a union. They must know that exploitation, insecurity and poor treatment are not the price of safety. GMB Scotland has been proud to support the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland. We are proud to march with them, alongside other trade unions, at the May Day March in Glasgow this year, standing for workers' unity and internationalism.

That matters because this war is not only a national struggle: it is a working-class struggle against brutal imperialism. Ukrainian workers are keeping their country

running under conditions most of us can barely imagine. Energy workers restore power under fire. Healthcare workers keep services going through bombardment and displacement. Miners, rail workers, teachers and public service workers continue to work while their homes, workplaces and families are under Russian attack. Ukrainian trade unions have said clearly that their members, our brothers and sisters, are fighting for life, for the right to work and for peace. In the first three months of this year alone, Ukrainian unions reported civilians killed and injured in their thousands and workers killed and injured in their workplaces. That should outrage every single trade unionist in this hall. It is why we agree with the continued need for material support to Ukraine for as long as it takes. Our movement didn't abandon Spain in the 1930s. We cannot abandon Ukraine in the 2020s. (*Applause*) Quite right! Ukraine's war effort and reconstruction cannot become an excuse for deregulation, privatisation or attacks on collective bargaining. Workers who have bravely defended their country should not be asked to return to jobs where their rights are weakened and unions are pushed aside. Any peace must defend Ukraine's freedom and territorial integrity. It must support refugees. It must reject the far-right. It must put trade unions and public services at the heart of reconstruction. A just peace must be a workers' peace.

Congress, let me just quickly say to all Ukrainians and ordinary Russians who yearn for peace and freedom: GMB Scotland stands up to be counted. We are with you, we stand with Ukrainian workers, we stand with those falsely imprisoned by Putin's regime and we stand with Ukrainian refugees in our communities in Scotland. Support the CEC statement. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Michael. Can we have the speaker for Southern Region, please. (*Formally supported*) Thank you, Southern. Can I have the speaker for Wales & South West, please?

YVONNE ELY (Wales & South West): Congress, four years ago, on 24 February 2022, Russia launched its full scale invasion of Ukraine. Today as we mark that anniversary, we do so with heavy hearts but also with unwavering resolve. We stand in full solidarity with the Ukraine people and the trade unions, who continue to show extraordinary courage in the face of devastation and hardship. This war has settled into a brutal stalemate, marked by relentless attacks on civilian infrastructure. Millions have been displaced, communities shattered, and yet Ukraine endures. Peace cannot be enforced from the outside. Any lasting settlement must respect Ukraine's sovereignty and be supported by its people. Anything less risks instability, injustice and the further rise of authoritarianism and far-right politics across Europe and beyond.

This report highlights that Ukraine's working class has borne the heaviest burden: energy workers restoring power under bombardment, healthcare and public service workers keeping systems running under unimaginable strain, miners engineers and teachers continuing their work while their country is under siege. Meanwhile in occupied territories, we see the suppression of trade unions, forced labour and serious human rights abuse. These are clearly violations of international law and must continue to be challenged.

Here in the UK, over 200,000 Ukrainians have sought refuge, most of them women and children. Many have rebuilt their lives and contribute to our economy, but serious

challenges remain: barriers to employment, lack of housing and thousands at risk of homelessness. This is a call to action. As trade unionists, we must ensure Ukrainian workers here are supported, organised and given a voice through union membership and solidarity, because solidarity is not a word, it is action. GMB members and branches have raised funds and delivered humanitarian aid, supplied medical equipment, supported energy and mining workers and built partnerships with Ukrainian unions. Through incentives like the Winter Appeal, we have delivered life-saving support where it is needed most. This is trade unionism at its best, practical, international and principled. But solidarity also means honesty. Even as Ukraine fights for survival, there are concerns about labour reforms that weaken protection and bypass collective bargaining. We must be clear that workers defending the country deserve to return to one that respects their rights. No reconstruction can be built on an erosion of labour standards.

Looking ahead, Ukraine faces an enormous challenge, economic strain, heavy debts and pressure on ---

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Sorry, Yvonne can you wrap up, please.

YVONNE ELY: I support. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Yvonne, and thank you to all the regions for their contributions. Can I now take the vote on this statement, please. All those favour. Thank you. Anyone against? That is carried.

*The CEC Statement on Ukraine was **ADOPTED**.*

A SPEAKER: Point of order.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Not on a statement, unfortunately, sorry.

The President took the Chair.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sonya. We now move on to the final motions of Congress. Can I have the movers and seconders of Emergency Motion 3, 300, 302, 301, Composite 4 and 305. While they are getting themselves ready, can I announce that Gavin Dudley from London Region won the North West & Irish raffle. Well done, Gavin. *(Applause)* Can I have the mover of Emergency Motion 3, please.

HANDS OFF CUBA!

EMERGENCY MOTION 3

EM3: Hands Off Cuba – Oppose US Economic Warfare and Escalating Aggression

Congress notes US President Trump's Executive Order of 1 May 2026, which significantly expands US sanctions targeting the island's energy, financial, mining and defence sectors and threatening governments, companies, banks and individuals in other countries with punitive measures if they engage in legitimate economic activity with Cuba.

Congress also notes the Trump Administration's provocative action to indict former Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz on 20 May 2026, in attempt to portray Cuba as a security threat and justify possible military intervention like the US attack on Venezuela in January 2026.

Cuba is not a threat to any country, it is a founding signatory of the declaration made by 33 nations that Latin America is a Zone of Peace and is a guarantor of the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia, alongside Norway.

Congress is particularly concerned by the recent humanitarian consequences of latest US sanctions, including a 148% increase in Cuba's infant mortality rate, power

blackouts and shortages of fuel, food, water, medicines and medical equipment. US sanctions are placing an immense strain on Cuban energy and health workers struggling to maintain services under extremely difficult conditions.

These latest measures by the US amount to collective punishment of a civilian population and a dangerous escalation of its 66-year-old illegal economic blockade against Cuba, repeatedly condemned by the overwhelming majority of countries at the United Nations General Assembly including the UK.

Congress reaffirms longstanding GMB policy supporting Cuba's self-determination against decades of US aggression and to "urge branches to affiliate to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and contribute to material aid appeals to help the Cuban people under the illegal blockade by the United States."

Congress welcomes the Urgent Call for Peace and Sovereignty launched by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign (CSC) and its Cuba Vive appeal to donate food and medical equipment to tackle Cuba's severe shortages and the humanitarian crisis caused by the US blockade.

Congress calls on GMB to take urgent action by:

- Publicly condemning the US executive orders of 29 January and 1 May 2026 and oppose all measures that intensify economic warfare and aggression against Cuba
- Calling on the UK government to defend Cuba's sovereignty and self-determination, oppose any threat of foreign intervention against Cuba, oppose the extraterritorial application of US sanctions, and send humanitarian aid to Cuba as have Japan, Canada and Spain
- Writing to all GMB branches to mobilise practical solidarity with Cuba by urging branches to affiliate to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and donate to the Cuba Vive Appeal
- Encouraging GMB members to sign the Urgent Call for Peace and Sovereignty

Moving Region: North-West & Irish

(Carried)

JO PITCHFORD (North West & Irish): Moving Emergency Motion 3: Hands Off Cuba! The Executive Orders issued in January and May 2026 go far beyond previous measures. They are targeting Cuba's energy, finance and essential industries, while threatening any country or organisation that dares to trade with them. This is not diplomacy. It is economic warfare. And let us be clear, Cuba is not a threat. It is a

nation that has committed itself to peace, a signatory to the Latin American Zone of Peace and a guarantor of the Colombian Peace Agreement, yet it is being treated as an enemy to justify further intervention. The consequences are devastating. We are not talking about abstract policy, we are talking about people. Infant mortality has surged, hospitals are struggling without medicines and equipment, families face black-outs, food shortages and lack of clean water. These sanctions are not hurting the Government. This is a collective punishment of the Cuban people.

For 66 years, this illegal blockade has been condemned by the international community including the UK yet it continues and now it is intensifying. As trade unionists, we cannot stand by. Solidarity is not just a word, it is action, and that is why this motion matters. We must condemn these sanctions. We must call on our Government to defend Cuba's sovereignty and oppose foreign intervention, and we must act, by supporting the Cuban Solidarity Campaign, contributing to the Cuba Viva Appeal and mobilising our members, because when workers anywhere are under attack, workers everywhere have a duty to respond. Hands off Cuba! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jo. Secunder.

GRAHAM FORSHAW (North West & Irish): President, Congress, I am a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, I am proud to second this motion. It speaks to the humanitarian crisis caused by the blockade and the latest Trump sanctions. Sorry, that word Trump sticks in my throat, but let's go on. This is not some abstract policy dispute but a direct assault on ordinary Cuban people's daily lives. We are talking about power blackouts, shortages of fuel, food and water, and medicines and medical equipment

also. At this stage, there is an increase of 148% in infant mortality. We should also be clear that when fuel is cut off, the damage reaches every corner of society, even basic services we all take for granted such as refuse cleaning, with rubbish building up on the streets and creating serious public health risks. This is why, Congress, this motion matters. It is about solidarity, self-determination and rejecting the collective punishment of a civilian population. It is also about building on existing GMB actions and urging the UK Government to stand on the side of humanity and not escalation. I second this motion, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Graham. As I say, it is not easy waiting this long to make your first speech. I make you the seventh first-time speaker this morning. (*Applause*) Does anybody wish to speak in opposition to this emergency motion? (*No response*) Can I ask Dave Flanagan from the CEC, please.

DAVE FLANAGAN (CEC): Good morning, Congress. I thought I felt rough this morning until Dean got up - I am feeling all right. A big thank you to North West & Irish Region and all our guests last night for the do. We had a great night and a big thank you to Paul Richards Jr for DJ-ing last night, who did an amazing job as well. Solidarity was shown in abundance. I should also like to acknowledge that I am currently running on caffeine, regret and the sheer power of democratic commitment. My liver has just filed a formal grievance!

President, Congress, Dave Flanagan, responding on behalf of the CEC to Emergency Motion 3. The CEC is supporting this motion which reiterates our union's longstanding policy of solidarity with Cuba, reaffirmed at Congress last year. Our small qualification

is that GMB has recently taken some of the action this motion calls for. GMB has signed a joint UK Trade Union General Secretaries Statement that opposes Trump's aggression against Cuba and calls on the UK Government to oppose all attempts at foreign intervention against Cuba and demand an end to the US blockade and economic sanctions. We will action the remaining call of this motion so that we continue to stand with Cuba and its trade union movement at this moment of dangerous escalation by the United States. Congress, please support Emergency Motion 3 with the qualification set out. Solidarity Cuba! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Does North West & Irish accept the qualification on Emergency Motion 3? (*Accepted*) Thank you, I will put that to the vote. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

*Emergency Motion 3 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we will now play our final solidarity video message from our sister trade union in Cuba, the National Union of Energy and Mining Workers.

Video shown to Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: A lovely video and message. If you went to the Latin America fringe event, you will know how grim the situation is in Cuba, and it showed on that video that international solidarity is so important.

INTERNATIONAL

THE PRESIDENT: We move on to the motions on International. Can we have the movers and seconders of Motion 300, please.

SOLIDARITY WITH NURSES IN THE USA

MOTION 300

300. SOLIDARITY WITH THE NURSES IN THE USA

This Congress notes that nursing has long been recognised as a professional occupation and remains so in the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, the American government has failed to recognise this and has removed professional status from nursing positions in the United States.

Nurses are highly skilled workers and deserve to be treated with respect, not cast aside for the sake of governmental financial gain.

We ask that the GMB:

To send a message of solidarity to nurses in the United States, as well as to our fellow trade unions, and to encourage them to continue their fight for recognition and fairness.

G95 GLASGOW NURSES BRANCH

GMB SCOTLAND

(Carried)

ELSIE SNEDDON (GMB Scotland): Madam President and all the other lovely people on the top table, Congress, GMB Scotland is moving Motion 300: Solidarity With Nurses In The USA. Nursing is a profession but it is also a vocation. It is skilled work, it is also responsible work and it is work built on training, judgment, compassion, clinical knowledge and public trust, which makes it a privilege. No Government should ever need to be reminded of that, but in the United States, nurses are having to fight a decision that excludes them from the definition of a professional degree programme for federal graduate loan purposes. That may sound technical but the consequences are not technical for the workers affected. It risks making advanced nursing education harder to access, more expensive to fund and less available to a workforce the health service

depends on. Congress, that is an insult to nursing. At a time when the health services across the world are under pressure, when staffing shortages are already damaging patient care, and when nurses are being asked to carry out more and more responsibility, this is exactly the wrong direction. Nurses are not peripheral to healthcare, they are central to it. They assess patients, administer medicines, and manage risk, support families, co-ordinate care, respond to emergencies and hold services together under enormous pressure. In every health system, including our own, nurses are often the people who see the gaps first, carry the strain longest and keep going when the system around them is stretched beyond reason.

And, Congress, this is not only about status; it is about access. If advanced nursing education becomes harder to fund, then fewer people will be able to take that route. That will affect working-class students, students from poorer backgrounds, rural communities and health services, already struggling to recruit and retain the staff they need. It will make it harder to train nurse practitioners, nurse educators, clinical specialists and future leaders in healthcare. That weakens the workforce, that weakens patient care, and it sends the wrong message to nurses who have already given so much. The American Nurses Association has warned that excluding nursing from professional degree classification will restrict access to advanced nursing education. That is why nursing and nursing organisations in the United States are right to fight back.

Congress, as trade unionists, we understand that professional recognition and workplace respect are not luxuries. They affect pay, they affect status and they affect recruitment. They affect whether workers are valued or treated as a cost to be contained. So, when nurses in the United States say this decision devalues their

profession, we should stand with them. This motion asks GMB to send a message of solidarity to nurses in the USA and to the trade unions fighting alongside them. That is the right thing to do because an attack on the status of nursing in one country should concern nurses, health workers and trade unionists everywhere.

Congress, nurses deserve recognition, they deserve respect and wherever they are fighting for fairness, they deserve our solidarity. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Elsie. Secunder. (*Formally seconded*) Thank you. Mover of Motion 302, please.

SOLIDARITY WITH TRADE UNIONISTS IN GREENLAND

MOTION 302

302. SOLIDARITY WITH TRADE UNIONISTS IN GREENLAND

This Congress notes that the GMB and the trade union movement are inherently internationalist in their outlook. We recognise the commonality between the working class across all nations. Furthermore, we recognise that an injury to one is an injury to all.

Greenland is under sustained and unwarranted pressure from one of its neighbours threatening their right to self-determination.

Congress resolves to:-

- Send a message of solidarity and support to the people of Greenland via the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Greenland
- Correspond with the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Greenland to ascertain what further support they may require

**B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH
LONDON REGION**

(*Carried*)

MOHAMMAD ALI (London): This is my last one, I promise! Motion 302: Solidarity With Trade Unionists in Greenland. Congress, I am going to keep this brief. In this

tidal wave of imperialism and war sweeping our planet at the moment, from Ukraine, to Palestine, to Sudan, we have so many causes that we need to express solidarity for, and we might often forget that just a few months ago, the President of the US was openly declaring his intent to take over Greenland by military force.

We need to stand in solidarity with trade unionists from Greenland and with the people of Greenland and ensure that they know that we are behind them, we are backing them and we will not allow our brothers and sisters to be intimidated or become collateral damage in the geopolitical game playing of world leaders. Thank you. I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mohammed. And seconder, please.

DAVE LEVY (London): Seconding Motion 302: Solidarity With Trade Unionists in Greenland. The GMB, like the entire trade union movement, has always stood on the principle that solidarity knows no borders. We are internationalists because we recognise the struggles of workers in one country are the struggles of workers everywhere. It remains true that an injury to one is an injury to all, and today, that principle calls on us to stand with the people of Greenland. It is a nation with a proud history and has a right to determine its own future. It faces sustained and unwarranted pressure from one of its neighbours. I think you know who I am talking about. This is not just an attack on Greenland's sovereignty. It is an attack on the very idea that people should have the right to shape their own destiny. If we allow this to go unchallenged, we set a dangerous precedent for workers and nations everywhere. Congress we must send a clear message: we stand with Greenland, we stand with its people, its workers

and its trade unionists. We will not tolerate bullying or coercion and we will not turn our backs on those who need our help. Please support this motion. I second.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Is anyone wish to speak in opposition to either of those motions? (*No response*) The CEC are supporting both 300 and 302, so I shall put those to the vote. All those in favour, please show. Anyone against. Those are both carried.

*Motion 300 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 302 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover of Motion 301, please.

OPPOSING IMPERIALISM AND STANDING FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

MOTION 301

301. OPPOSING IMPERIALISM AND STANDING FOR INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

This Congress notes:

That powerful countries, including the United States and its allies, continue to interfere in other nations through war, sanctions, economic pressure and regime change.

That these actions are often justified in the name of democracy or security, but in reality cause huge suffering for ordinary working people.

That sanctions and military intervention in countries such as Venezuela, Iraq, Afghanistan and others have damaged public services, worsened poverty and destabilised whole regions.

That the UK Government frequently supports or follows U.S. foreign policy instead of standing up for international law and peaceful solutions.

Congress believes:

- a. Imperialism, in all its forms, is wrong and should be opposed by the trade union movement.
- b. Working people should not be punished through sanctions, war or economic warfare for decisions made by governments.
- c. International solidarity means standing with workers and communities across the world, not with powerful states or military interests.

Congress resolves:

To oppose military intervention, sanctions and regime-change policies wherever they occur.

To call on the UK Government to condemn illegal and aggressive actions by any country, including the United States, and to support diplomacy and peace instead.

To reaffirm GMB's commitment to international solidarity, peace and opposition to imperialism.

To share this position with the wider labour movement and encourage unions to speak out against war and economic injustice globally.

**L26 RICHMOND & WANDSWORTH BRANCH
SOUTHERN REGION**

(Carried)

MARIA CHARLES (Southern): Good morning, again. Madam President, Vice President, Gary, Congress. I am proposing Motion 301: Opposing Imperialism And Standing For International Solidarity. The world is a dangerous and unstable place. There could not be a more important time for us to be debating this this motion. International conflict is destroying the lives of working people in many parts of the world. Military intervention by Western powers consistently makes the lives of citizens worse, not only that but, when the UK engages in this action, it damages public finances and impacts public services. This motion calls for the UK Government to not blindly back international wars for the sake of propping up the USA and others. It calls on the UK Government to condemn illegal and oppressive actions by any country including the USA, and to support diplomacy and peace instead.

International solidarity means standing with workers and communities across the world, not with powerful states or military interests. Congress, I move. (*Applause*) Also, before I step down, we ask for affiliation to Colombia. Let us not forget Colombia as well in our solidarity.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Maria. I was going to say I wonder who gave you that leaflet. Could I have the seconder, please.

JOHN GRAY (Southern): President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Congress, I am seconding Motion 301. Congress, the trade union movement has always been proudly internationalist. The trade union movement has always stood up for the weak against the strong; the bullied against the bullies. We have all seen the news over the last few months. The old international order of things is falling apart. There was a lot that wasn't great about that old order but at least it was relatively predictable. Congress, we are moving into a new global situation of unpredictability, of carelessness and stupidity, and might against right, and it is dangerous and it will impact all of us. Congress, I urge you to re-emphasise our union's commitment to international solidarity. Congress, I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: John thank you. Can I have the of Composite 14. I think that is GMB Scotland to move and then London to second.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA AND DEFENCE OF THEIR SOVEREIGNTY

COMPOSITE 14

C14. SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA AND DEFENCE OF THEIR SOVEREIGNTY

This Congress notes that Venezuela has faced relentless external pressure, including unilateral coercive measures (so-called ‘sanctions’) and an economic blockade led by the United States and supported by the UK government.

These measures are a form of collective punishment, deliberately designed to cripple the Venezuelan economy, cause widespread hardship, and force political change. Independent UN experts have condemned them for violating international law and human rights, exacerbating the country’s economic challenges.

The people of Venezuela have the right, under international law, to self-determination and to choose their own political and economic system free from foreign interference and sabotage.

The GMB has a proud history of international solidarity, opposing blockades and sanctions that hurt ordinary working people, as seen in past campaigns against the blockade of Cuba.

This Congress notes:

That the US government launched an unjust military attack on Venezuela, bombing the capital of Caracas and kidnapping President Nicolas Maduro.

- That the US president has repeatedly stated the US will “run the country” and boasted about using the invasion as an excuse to expand US oil operations in Venezuela.
- That Trump has also repeatedly made threats to the governments of Colombia and Cuba
- That the Maduro government has been a deeply unpopular, de facto military regime, which relies on the suppression of opposition and falsifying elections.

Congress Believes:

- That Venezuela, like all nations, has a right to self-determination, and the US is denying that right by kidnapping the country’s president and enforcing their own rule.
- That sanctions on Venezuela are unjust and harm the Venezuelan working class and should be removed.
- That there are no grounds for Maduro and his wife to be tried in American courts, and they should be released
- That the people of Venezuela should have the right to elect their own leader, free from imperialist intervention.
- That the US plan to force Venezuela to accept its dictated policies is unjust and must be opposed.
- That workers’ movements worldwide are the force we should look to for social change, not authoritarian leaders
- That the current Venezuelan constitution gives undue power to the president, which has been used to crack down on dissident political voices.

We ask congress to:

- Publicly condemn the sanctions, to issue a statement condemning the UK-backed economic blockade on Venezuela and calling for its immediate end.
- Lobby Political Representatives and to write to local our MP and the Foreign Secretary, demanding the UK government lift all sanctions and extra-territorial measures against Venezuela.

- Request that the GMB National International Department to establish or strengthen fraternal relations with Venezuelan trade union.
- Launch a branch collection for medical aid or to support a specific trade union project in Venezuela, channelled through a reputable solidarity organisation with proven links to the Labour movement.
- To call for the US to get out of Venezuela.
- To promote the voices of the independent, anti-Maduro left in Venezuela.

To support calls for:

- The release of all Venezuelan political prisoners
- Free trade unions, freedom of the press and freedom to protest
- Freedom for left parties to operate
- An end to sanctions on Venezuela

Moving Region: GMB Scotland

Seconding Region: London

(Carried)

MARGARET BOYD (GMB Scotland): I am seeking support in solidarity with the people of Venezuela, not because I am here to defend any Government and not because I am here to pick fights on foreign soil. I am here because trade unionism has a simple sacred duty to oppose the collective punishment of working people anywhere. Right now that is exactly what is happening in Venezuela. The United States backed by our own UK Government has imposed a brutal regime of unilateral sanctions and economic blockade. These aren't targeted measures. They are designed to cripple an entire economy, to cause shortage of food, medicine and baby formula. The UN's own expert has called them a violation of international law and human rights. Comrades, ask yourselves if sanctions were imposed in Britain tomorrow and our hospitals couldn't get insulin or children couldn't get milk, would we call that justice, or would we call it war by other means?

Now, some will say, "But what about the Venezuelan Government? Let's be clear you don't have to support a government to oppose starving its people. We did not support

Saddam Hussain but we opposed sanctions on Iraq that killed half a million children. That is who we are. That is the Labour Movement. This motion does not ask us to agree on everything. It asks us to do these three practical things. Comrades, the GMB has stood with Chile, South Africa and Cuba. We did not look away then and we shouldn't look away now. Venezuelan workers are our brothers and sisters. They are oil workers, nurses, teachers, bus drivers, just like us, and right now they are begging the world not for ideology, not for flags but for medicine: for the right to live without foreign punishment. Don't let them beg alone.

And just seeing we are on an international note, I would I would like to wish the England team in America the best of luck, good luck, and to Scotland, well done. No matter what happens, be proud and please support both teams and Composite 14. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margaret. Could I have the seconder, please?

BEV GUNNING (London): Congress, seconder of Composite 14: Venezuela and Illegal USA Intervention. Congress, I rise to speak on Venezuela and on the wider issue of foreign intervention and its impact on working people because, Congress, wherever we stand politically, one principle must guide us as trade unionists. Working people must never be made to pay the price of political conflict, at home or abroad. From a personal perspective I have family in Venezuela, and I don't know if they are dead or alive. The current PM in Trinidad and Tobago, in my opinion, is saying, "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir", to him (President of the USA whose name I cannot say in case I am sick so let's use his initials DT). If you go to the edge of the capital Port

of Spain, instead of seeing the island of Venezuela, there is a USA warship blocking the view. I recently heard of two Trinidad and Tobago fishermen returning by boat to their workplace in Venezuela being blown up and killed. The family of one of the fisherman is suing the USA Administration for unlawful killing. I wonder how many other lawsuits are pending. Venezuelans cannot work in Trinidad and Tobago and those who were working there have been sent home. Venezuela has endured years of deep crisis, economic collapse, political division and widespread poverty. Ordinary people have faced challenges, collapsed wages and breakdown of essential services. Millions have left the country in search of dignity and stability and as always, it is the workers who suffer the hardest.

But Congress, we must recognise the role international pressure has played. The USA Government has for years now stated, “We run the country.” So ,we believe in the call for the US to get out of Venezuela; national sovereignty where people determine their future; releasing political prisoners; and peaceful political solutions, not external pressure or coercion; and respect for trade union rights and democracy. Because for us solidarity is not a slogan, it is a commitment. An injury to one is an injury to all. Thank you, Congress. Thank you, top table. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Bev. Mover of Motion 305, please.

COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW

MOTION 305

305. COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW

This Congress is concerned regarding recent actions of the USA – the kidnapping of a Sovereign Head of State and the seizure of oil tankers in international waters.

The assistance of the Royal Navy in one of these incidents, makes the UK complicit and guilty of a breach of international law.

Congress asks that the CEC demands that the UK complies with UN and international law.

**BLACKBURN B16 BRANCH
NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION**

(Carried)

MELISSA JOHNSON (North West & Irish): Hello, everyone. I am going to keep this brief because we all want to go home so if you can also keep your speech brief, Gary, that will be great! *(Applause)* Having said that, before I do start my speech, I hope you will give me a few seconds to express my admiration for everyone who has spoken over the last few days *(Applause)* but especially to all the first-time speakers because it is not easy to get up here and speak. As part of that, I want to extend a special mention to my seconder who has waited the entirety of Congress all four days before he is literally going to make the last speech of Congress. That is a lot pressure to put on anyone so I want to give him thanks for that. *(Applause)*

So, on to my speech, so we can get on with this and we can all go home. I am here to move a motion on the compliance with international law on the high seas. Now, whilst it is about the high seas, there is no involvement of buried treasure and the only pirates are the ones on the prom. So, what does it mean? It means that we want to support a clear and unshakable principle that the UK Navy and all state forces must comply with international law wherever they operate. Military power must never be deployed where the law does not permit it. That is not a weakness. It is exactly what a lawful, democratic society must do. At its core, this is a fundamental question of rights, accountability and the rule of law. The high seas are not a blank cheque for military overreach or the pursuit of oil.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas, the rules are unambiguous. The default is that ships on the high seas fall strictly under the jurisdiction of their flag state. There are exceptions but boarding a vessel is only permitted under narrow clearly defined circumstances, such as tackling piracy or intercepting state vessels. The ultimate mandate from the UN explicitly states that the high seas are reserved for peaceful purposes. Therefore, whenever the UK Navy stops, boards or seizes a ship, there must be an ironclad legal basis, absolute transparency and strict respect for international law. While Ministers have defended recent UK-backed maritime operations as lawful, legal experts tell us a different story. They warn that the Government's legal positioning is highly debatable and dangerously dependent on a convenient interpretation of the facts. This is precisely why we need restraint, proper scrutiny and a definitive end to military over-reach.

As trade unionists, we all understand a fundamental truth, that power without rules will always lead to abuse. We know first-hand that rights mean absolutely nothing if they are not enforced, supported and respected. The exact same principles apply at sea as on land. The UK cannot demand that other nations respect that international law if it is willing to bend and circumvent these same rules for itself.

Congress, holding our Government to the highest legal standard is not a weakness. It is the very definition of a civilised, fair and democratic society. Therefore, I urge you to support this motion that I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Melissa. And now we do have the last delegate speaker of the day. Welcome. (*Applause and cheers*)

DYLAN MARSHALL (North West& Irish): First-time speaker, last one at Congress. What a week! I am seconding Motion 305. This motion speaks to a point of principle that military power should operate within the law and that accountability matters. As trade unionists, we believe standards and rules must apply equally and consistently so I am pleased to second this motion and urge Congress to support. Thank you. (*Cheers and applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Dylan. A good way to end Congress. Anybody want to speak in opposition? (*No response*) Can I ask CEC speaker Simon Day to respond.

SIMON DAY (CEC, Midlands): President, Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC in response to Motion 301, Composite 14 and Motion 305. Just before I do that, very quickly I want to say, and I have wanted to say it all week, “Let me be clear”, so this gives me an opportunity to do that, doesn’t it? I am proud this morning, and I want to be clear about that because I have heard you guys in the room, these guys at the top table, commit again to international solidarity. Phrases like “an injury to one is an injury to all” across our nations is really important. It makes me really proud to be a trade unionist committed to this union because that is the statement that we make. Thank you very much for confirming that. (*Applause*)

So, the CEC is supporting all of these motions with a qualification, just a tiny qualification. On Motion 301, there may be circumstances in which international

sanctions are appropriate, but sanctions must remain carefully targeted and must not come at the expense or to the detriment of ordinary working people.

On Composite 14, the CEC is supporting with a qualification, as GMB stands in solidarity with people defending their right to determine their own political and economic future, free from any foreign interference. We support the intent of Composite 14 but the actions it calls for will require further consideration based on existing resources. Further work will also be required to identify the political voices in Venezuela that the Motion calls on us to support, and any engagement must be consistent with GMB's values and policy.

The CEC supports Motion 530 with a qualification. We support the central principle of this motion that the UK must comply with international law. However, our qualification is that the seizure of vessels in international waters is not automatically a breach of international law. The case which the motion raises is complex and reports suggest that the vessels may have been classified as stateless, which may not enjoy the full protections afforded under international law. It is important that our policy reflects these legal nuances.

Therefore, Congress, the CEC is supporting with qualifications as outlined Motion 301, Composite 14 and Motion 305. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. I am going to ask these questions with my fingers crossed. Does Southern accept qualification on 301? (*Accepted*) Do Scotland and London accept the qualifications on Composite 14? (*Accepted*) And does North

West & Irish accept the qualification on 305 (*Accepted*) I can put those to the vote, the last one at Congress. All those in favour please show. Anyone against? That is carried. That is the end of the motions. (*Applause and cheers*)

I would now like to invite Kevin Jones from Wales & South West Region to mover the Omnibus Vote of Thanks.

Omnibus Vote of Thanks

KEVIN JONES (Wales & South West): President Vice-President, General Secretary, Congress, Kevan Jones on behalf of Wales & South West Region moving the Omnibus Vote of Thanks. It is a real honour to be nominated by Wales & South West Region to deliver this year's Omnibus Vote of Thanks on behalf of the CEC. I was told it would be a quick speech, which in union times means anything under 20 minutes, so I will do my best to do that.

Now Congress, how good is it to be back in Blackpool? The first time since 2009. We have come back in style to one Blackpool's absolute Crown Jewels, the Winter Gardens. This place has everything - history, character and the kind of atmosphere that makes you stand a little taller the moment you walk in. And then there is the Empress Ballroom. Honestly, this place is incredible. It is like stepping back in time - in a good way. You can almost picture the generations before us dancing, celebrating, possibly making decisions just as passionately as we have this week, although perhaps with slightly better dance moves. And this week we have added our own chapter to history in GMB style. Congress, we have been busy. We have taken decisions that will shape

the future of our union, from AI, to automation, to anti-fascism, to how we run our own union, which, let's be honest, always gets the most enthusiastic debate. We have heard powerful speeches especially from first-time delegates, who I have to say made it look far too easy, and we have seen through our campaign videos that this union is not standing still. We are growing, we are organising and we are taking action. We have updated the Rule Book (always a crowd pleaser) passed special reports and statements and of course heard from some totally inspiring guest speakers, Feargal Sharkey, John Healey MP, Margaret Aspinall, Sue Roberts, just to name a few. Margaret and Sue reminding us what real strength looks like, turning personal grief into a fight for justice that lasts decade. That is not just resilience; that is determination on another level

Congratulations as well to this year's winners Gemma Williamson, Alexander Finlay and the a PPE Fit For All Campaign team and Patrick Timpson, absolutely deserved and a reminder that behind every award there is a lot of hard graft, and probably a few late nights.

Now, before we get into the thank yous, apologies in advance because I may miss somebody, it is not personal, it is just that I have a list longer than some of our debates this week. First of all, thank you to the delegates. You have not just turned up, you have spoken up, you have debated challenged and shaped the decisions of this Congress. That is what union democracy looks like. A huge thank you to our National Office staff, Gavin Sibthorpe and Sangeeta Gilani, for pulling the whole thing together. Pulling this together is no small task. It is part logistics, part diplomacy and part miracle. To Ross Holden, Anna Barnes, Cassie Farmer and the Research and Policy

team, thank you for keeping the top table on track, producing reports that somehow managed to be both detailed and readable - not an easy feat.

To the Congress staff, Pat Gannon, Lauren Tinney and yes, I have heard about the famous building tour, Lacey Smith, Keiran O'Neill, Melanie Bartlett and our first time Congress team, Simone Beaumont, Erin Niven, Billie Irwin, Priya Sahota, Rosemary Maltezos and Rhianna Patel. You have all been brilliant. And a very big thank you and a big shout out to Kevin Panton, 60 years with the GMB, 60 years at this point (*Applause*) and more of a national treasure. The rest of us are still trying to keep up and, frankly, it is not going too well. Steve "Not Too" Short, great to see him back here looking after the exhibitions upstairs, and thank you also to Karen Smith, John Gibson and Sam Marshall.

And also the unseen staff working behind the scenes, not just this week but all year, who keep the union running even if we do not always see them, and we appreciate that. Thank you to Andrew Wiard, the official photographer, Interpreting Matters, Cate and Alison and Joanne, Nippabout, the creche team, Steve Kenny and U2 Events, because without you we would either not understand each other, not hear each other or not even have a chair to sit on. Thank you very much for that.

To the fantastic team here in the Winter Gardens, Anu, Martina, Val, Rosie and the crew, plus Julia Vincent, Rebecca Thompson and the stewards, the security staff, catering, first aid staff, thank you for looking after us all so well this week. A special mention goes to Tushar Singh and Karen Dudley and the Standing Orders Committee, who have spent this week hidden away in some kind of procedural bunker keeping

everything running exactly as it should. Thank you to the regional staff, regional secretaries and regional delegation leads who have kept everything ticking along, and my regional secretary who made sure there are plenty of sweets on the table at the back.

To Barbara, another brilliantly chaired Congress and to Sonya Davis, our Vice-President, a huge success as our Vice-President. (*Applause*) And to the General Secretary Gary, thank you for all you do for the union. Finally, Congress, more importantly, thank you, the members, right across the union for your participation this week, because at the end of the day you are the union, always have been always will be. Your voices, your actions and your determination drive everything we do. Without you, none of that exists, so thank you, travel home safely and keep up the fight. Solidarity to all. Thank you on behalf of Wales & South West Region. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. I would now like to invite the General Secretary to the rostrum to give his short closing address.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thanks for that, Melissa. I have got the names. Everybody who clapped will not be here next year! Enjoy your last Congress! (*Laughter*) Is Ida Clemo here? Ida, could you make your way up front, please?

Colleagues, I have to echo a few of the thanks that Kevin had already read, on behalf of myself and the top team. To all the conference staff here I just want to say thank you so much for your patience in looking after us and making sure we have had access to

the hall. You have absolutely gone above and beyond and been some of the best conference staff I have ever worked with, so thank you so much. (*Applause*)

In terms of accessibility and inclusivity, we have had Steve and Gary from U2 Events Nippabout creche providers, you have been fantastic and been flexible with us as well. Interpreting Matters, thank you to the whole team for all your work. And to Mary, the verbatim shorthand writer. Thank you for everything you have done for us this week. (*Applause*)

And I do need to pay tribute to the Standing Orders team as well. (*Applause*) In terms of the CEC observers to Standing Orders, I just want to tip London Region off that John Colbert is trying to resign and you will need to rope him back in again for next year. That resignation has been declined already, I think. Tushar, I know it is your first Congress, he works with me at National Office, a great part of the team. This year I think you have managed to accept more emergency motions than we have done in the past 10 years but anyway, to you and Karen, a huge, huge thank you. You are a great part of the team.

To the Tellers and General Member Auditors, thank you again to Karen Smith who works for me at the NAU- Karen, always great to have you here. Kevin and Jane as part of the General Members Auditors, I know you have been re-elected but Stephen, you will be standing down this year. It is an important part of the democracy and the running of Congress so you are amongst the many unsung heroes of Congress. Thank you very much and, in particular, Stephen, we are very grateful to you for your efforts and work. (*Applause*)

To some of my favourites, I have got to say my countrymen over there who do the stewarding, they are familiar faces every year. (*Applause*) Ian, Willie, Carl and Sam, I will see you when you get back up the road at the Bull Inn. You can buy me a couple of pints, pal. It is great to have you here. Gary, and all the team, we work with you every year and please pass on our thanks to the whole team who do all set up here at Congress. It is much appreciated. You are so tolerant and patient with us and you always go above and beyond. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

And I do want to say to all the people I work with at National Office, we operate this Congress on a shoestring. I know what other unions do. They have whole armies of people who work the whole year. This is dependent on a small team of people who just make things happen. This Congress finishes, we will have about six weeks off and people will start cranking up for Congress again. You cannot believe the work they do. I do want to pay tribute to Ross, Anna and Cassie, who are here this week. (*Applause*) I know I annoy you with my great ideas and my amendments, but you are so patient. John Callow, who is not here with us - John, we send you all our very best, brother, and we look forward to seeing you soon. Sangeeta and Gavin, another incredibly patient and tolerant couple of people who are somewhere in the room. You are absolutely outstanding and I will see you when we get back to London, but thank you very much for what you do. Apologies, if I miss anybody. We have had a whole number of new face faces from National Office with us this year. What a fantastic team of comrades you have been for us. Pat will be retiring. We are going to miss you so much, Pat. I got the chance to speak to you the other night. To the rest of the team as well - Lauren, Lacey, Simone, Erin - I know it is your first time here - Billie, Priya, Rosemary, Mel,

Dan, Kieran, Rhianna, thank you so very, very much. (*Applause*) Sam and John in IT, I will see you as well when we get back to the NAU, and Kevin Panton who has done 60 years' service with the GMB. Kevin, don't forget my bag. Make sure it gets back it to London for me, mate, will you! I hope I have said a huge thanks to everybody. Finally, my great longstanding friend and colleague, Mark Betteridge and the Comms team, you have worked so hard in the run-up to Congress. I don't know how many press releases Jon Parker-Dean and the Comms team have pumped out. Well done. We have had some incredible coverage. Emma Bean, you are such an important part of the team but thank you as well for the eye drops you gave me this week. They have worked. They are fantastic. Andrew, as well, you been with us forever, mate, and we are always so grateful for what you are doing. It is great to see you. Thank you to Kevin Walker and the Full Spectrum team for delivering all the outputs we have had. We really, really appreciate your efforts. I do want to say and I never say this about him Scott Rogers, I think this is one of the best halls we have had. Scott, I know how much you put into this. Thank you very much, pal, brilliant. (*Applause*) To all those who I forgot to mention I promise you I will buy you a drink when we get back to the ranch by way of apology.

Melissa, I am going to try to keep this short. I mean that. It is a pretty long week and everybody will be feeling a bit tired today, particularly Dean. What a state he got into! He says he looks okay on the outside but inside he is utterly destroyed! I think we are all feeling a wee bit tired. Tomorrow I will boarding a plane to Boston. I feel very blessed to be able to do that, to go and see Scotland win their first World Cup. I will be on my way and amidst the tiredness, and I mean this from the bottom of my heart, I absolutely feel energised. I am energised by everything I have heard this week, your

stories, your campaigns; the fantastic leadership that you are displaying every day in workplaces the length and breadth of this country. What your contributions tell us is that this is a better, stronger union. You have supported difficult changes we have had made in this union over the past number of years, and we have got a long way to go, I know, but those changes have made us better. You have pulled together, you have campaigned together and we have won together to make work better. It is truly, truly inspiring.

Just briefly looking ahead, there is going to be a lot of noise about politics. John Healey has resigned today. Some of you will have seen that. Let me just be clear, and I mean this as we leave here, politics for us is not, and never again will be an obsession for this union. Politics is a means to an end for us and nothing else. (*Applause*) I say this to the Labour Government, I remind Labour politicians that the Employment Rights Act will be delivered including the rights over access and our ability to organise. We are not going to tolerate push back and prevarication in the face of the business lobby. (*Applause*) I want to see procurement supporting jobs here in the UK. You have heard our fantastic defence and manufacturing members today. I want to see thousands more apprentices and I want to see our communities coming back to life, supported by government purchase and procurement.

On equal pay, we have heard so much about it this week. The equal pay enforcement body that we secured commitment to is going to be delivered by this Labour Government and we as a union are going to make sure that it happens. (*Applause*) And to those in politics - and let's be honest about this - who want to see our members put out of jobs with promises of work that does not exist, no thank you. Above all, to those

in politics who want to spread hate and try to divide us, we know who you are, we know what you represent and, no, there will never be a place for the right in this GMB family.

(Applause)

People are hurting, I know that, people are worried; they are worried about how they are going to meet their bills. There is a fear about the future and I get it. But our job is where there is ignorance to bring enlightenment, where there is division to bring unity and where there is despair, our job is always to bring hope. Congress, there are some really tough months ahead but this is a serious union and our job and our responsibility is to rise to that moment. We will make this our moment. Congress, we are ready. Thank you. *(Applause and standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Please remain standing for “The Red Flag”.

Red flag sung.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Ida Clemo. Colleagues, our very last item of business 35 years’ service, Ida has been a fantastic servant for the union. Ten years in London but 25 years with us in National Office and she has never spoken at the podium. Ida, you can close business.

IDA CLEMO (London): Oh no! *(Applause)* Safe journeys, guys. We have to keep the Red Flag flying, definitely. Get your branches to go to the Red Flag Festival. I don’t know what to say, yeah, you are free to go!

Congress adjourned.