

GMB

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 ONE
(Sunday, 7th June 2026)**

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FIRST DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

SUNDAY, 7TH JUNE 2026

MORNING SESSION

(Conference assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

Call to Order

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning everybody. Could I call Congress to order. Welcome everybody to Blackpool. We will now move on to the traditional opening of Congress which is the banner ceremony.

This year North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region will be forming the Banner Party. The Race Network and RMA banners will also form part of the procession this year. And the music for this year's Congress will be Bob Marley and the Wailers "Get up, Stand up".

I call Congress to order for the opening ceremony.

Banner Procession

THE PRESIDENT: What a great way to start Congress in this beautiful hall with all these banners. Thank you.

Obituaries

THE PRESIDENT: I will now call on Congress to stand in silence as a mark of respect for departed GMB colleagues. Names will be shown on the screen and a copy of the Obituary list is on page 8 of the Congress Guide. Please stand if you are able to.

Obituary list shown on screen.

Congress stood in silent tribute.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, everybody. There seemed an awful lot of names this year and every one of them may be gone but they will not be forgotten.

Safety Procedures

THE PRESIDENT: You will find details of the emergency procedure for the venue in the Congress Guide Document on page 6 this includes the fire evacuation procedure.

Derham Lounge has been allocated as a Prayer Room. No prayer mats will be provided.

Welcome to Delegates and Visitors

Welcome, delegates and visitors. I hope you had good safe journeys to Blackpool. We have many new delegates this year and lots of familiar faces as well. I would now like to introduce members of the platform party. Welcome, Sonya Davis: Vice-President. (*Applause*) Gary

Smith: General Secretary and Treasurer. (*Applause*) And throughout the week we will be joined by members of the CEC, the Central Executive Council, and Regional Secretaries, as well as the Research & Policy team, who will assisting with the Agenda, and other members of GMB staff assisting with Congress.

Could I please welcome the following members of GMB staff and all organisations who help make Congress run and be inclusive.

Our General Member Auditors, who will be supervising counting of votes are: Jayne Davies (North West and Irish Region) (*Applause*) Kevin Fox (North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region) (*Applause*) Stephen Horton (Midland Region) (*Applause*)

Joining us this year to record Congress as our Verbatim Shorthand Writer is Mary.

As you saw on the pictures, there was Mike Thear who we sadly lost, who did Congress for many years as the Verbatim Shorthand Writer.

This year we are also joined by sign language interpreters from Interpreting Matters please welcome Karen Green, Helen Foulkes and Benjamin Gorman. I would also like welcome and thank the live subtitle writers, Cate, Alison and Joanne, from Interpreting Matters who will be providing this service remotely.

Other suppliers I would like to thank as well are Exhibit World, U2 Events, Full Spectrum Printers and of course Pellacraft, because without these organisations we would not have Congress running quite as smoothly. And of course a big thanks to Gary Maziere and T5 Event

Media who provide all our staging and PA equipment in the main hall and fringes to make sure Congress really looks and feels like it always does. You can give them a clap as well if you like. (*Applause*)

Most importantly, could I extend a warm welcome to all first-time delegates. It is really lovely to have you here (*Applause*) But welcome back all our delegates who we haven't seen in a few years in person.

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

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

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

Delegates, you will be able to find all the important documents for the week in your delegate packs, which should include: the one page Delegate Outline Programme and Order of Business, Income and Expenditure Report and the Final Agenda and Congress Guide. This document gives you information on Congress motions, CEC rule amendments, Standing Orders

Committee Guidelines for Congress business, including time limits for speakers, the Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1, Representation Statements for Congress, composite motions, fringe events, exhibitions and seating plans. If there are any changes to order of business on the timetable, I will give you advance warning.

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

The names of all Regional Tellers are: Warren Fox, London Region, Rob Whilding, Midlands Region, Les Timbey, North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region, Eileen McArdle, North West & Irish Region, Lynne Logan, GMB Scotland, Terena Gover, Southern Region, Suzanne Williams, Wales & South West Region.

All tellers must remain in the hall whilst Congress is in session and delegates must be in their allotted seats when or if a vote is taken. To see if you are eligible to vote please look down at your Congress credential. If it says the word “Delegate” on it then you can vote. If it says anything else you cannot. All others in the hall are not eligible to vote.

Moving on to Standing Orders Committee, could I congratulate Karen Dudley on her election as Chair of the Standing Orders Committee for the fourth time. Well done Karen and best of luck. (*Applause*) The names of members of the Standing Orders Committee are on page 24 of your Final Agenda. I would also like to remind Congress that the Standing Orders Committee is made up Congress delegates each elected by your own delegation. They are your colleagues and work to ensure that Congress runs to preserve our debate and democracy in this hall.

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

Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): I am formally moving SOC Report No. 1. Congress, before I start, please note item 12 on page 20, no literature is to be distributed within the Congress building without the prior permission of the SOC.

President, Congress, you will find copy of SOC report No. 1 in your Final Agenda starting at page 22.

I formally move adoption of that report and, in doing so, would colleagues please note the longstanding Guidelines for Congress Business on page 17 to 21 of your Final Agenda. This will help all of you, especially new delegates, in understanding the procedures and guidelines that the President and the SOC work to.

A copy the SOC Report on behalf of the SOC will be issued to delegates later today and further SOC reports will be issued to delegates during the course of the week. I hope this will assist everyone in being able to keep track of decisions such as withdrawn motions.

Withdrawn motions. The SOC has been informed that a number of motions have been withdrawn since the printing of the final agenda, and I will read these out now and we will issue a list later today so that you can keep track of the agenda.

There are a number and I will deal with them region by region to save repetition.

North East, Yorkshire & Humber:

Motion 1: Congress Special Report Time to Speak

Motion 21: Recognition Agreement That Deliver

Motion 34: Protect Lay Members' Democratic Decisions

Motion 37: Modernisation of Expenses System

Southern Region:

Motion 3: Strengthening GMB Recruitment Processes

Motion 60: No One Left Out: Recognition of Heritage and Anti-Racist Awareness

Motion 110: Show Me the Hours.

Motion 128: Generative AI Tools in the Workplace.

Motion 164: Local Government.

Motion 247: Motion in Favour of Proportional Representation.

Motion 263: Criminalising Protest and Direct Action and Removing Democratic Safeguards
From the Legal System.

Scotland:

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?

London Region:

Motion 123: Protecting Workers from Excessive Workplace Surveillance and Algorithmic Management

Motion 124: Managing Technology, Automation and AI in Multi-drop Food Transport and Warehousing

Motion 126: Govern AI to Stop on Driving Job Losses and Pushing People into Poverty

Motion 129: Environmental Impact of AI

Motion 159: Regulation

Motion 174: Violence in Schools

Motion 233: Political Representation

Motion 234: Political affiliations

Motion 253: Community Campaigning to Stop Reform UK and the Rise of the Far Right

Motion 258: Save our Playing Fields

Motion 306: Opposing UK Support for Neo Nazis in Ukraine

Motion 30: Ukraine, Defence and the Rise of Authoritarianism and Fascism

Motion 309: Supporting a United Ireland.

Would Congress delegates please note that if any further Congress motions are to be withdrawn during the week then please advise your regional secretary who then in turn can inform the SOC.

Agreed composite motions. The SOC would like to thank delegates and their regional secretaries for agreeing 14 composite motions that also appear in your Final Agenda, starting at page 159.

Congress, there was one agreed composite motion where two or more regions are involved.

Composite 13: Public Interest Environmental Reporting. GMB Seat on New Water Super Regulator, and Trade Union Representation on Water Company Boards. The SOC is recommending that each of the regions, besides the mover and seconder, in this composite should still have the opportunity to speak to the composite if they so wish. This is by way of exception to Motion 8 “Speakers on Motions” carried at Congress 2018, which limits speakers to the mover and seconder where a motion is unopposed.

Existing policy motions. Congress, in accordance with Congress decisions adopted since 2008, the SOC is recommending that motions which are existing policy are endorsed by Congress without the need for debate, following advice from the CEC on the particular motions in question. The existing policy motions are listed in SOC Report No. 1 at pages 23 to 24 of your Final Agenda. You may also find it helpful to refer to the detailed report from the CEC which is at pages 171 to 174 of your Final Agenda. The letters EP also appears by the side of each such motion in the Final Agenda.

Emergency motions. There are three emergency motions so far the SOC ruled in order for debate. They are:

1. Emergency Motion on the Supreme Court Ruling on Severely Disabled People’s Care from Wales & South West.
2. Emergency Motion on Trans Rights Following the Updated Draft Code of Practice from EHRC 2026 from Wales & South West.

And 3. Hands off Cuba: Oppose US Economic Warfare and Escalating Aggression.

The Congress timetable will be updated and the SOC are considering further requests for emergency motions. The SOC will update Congress accordingly.

Motions out of order. Congress, the SOC has ruled that there are two motions remaining on the agenda that are out of order for debate. They are:

Motion 14: GMB Organisation Structure Review.

And Motion 15: National Education Officer.

Further details of the out of order motions which have not been withdrawn are contained in your Final Agenda at pages 22 to 23.

President, Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 1.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Before I ask if there are any challenges, can I say welcome to Tushar Singh, who is in our legal team. It is his first Congress so welcome to Tushar. (*Applause*)

Are there any delegates who wish to speak on any of the Standing Orders? Please come up and say which motions you are speaking to.

EMMA FAIR (Southern): Challenging SOC report No. 1. Congress, Motion 15 has been ruled out of order as a staffing matter. We want to be clear it does deal with staffing. What it does is set a strategic direction which is firmly within Congress's remit. We are asking the union to consider a national approach to education so that every region benefits from shared standards

and co-ordinated support. That is policy not personnel. The motion simply asks that the union consider a national approach to education including the possibility of a co-ordinating role as part of our wider organising strategy. Congress has always had the authority to set policy direction and priorities. This is exactly what this motion does. It deals with education standards, not employment matters. Regional education officers do excellent work. This motion simply ensures that their efforts sit within a national framework. Congress, this is about consistency clarity and strategy. Investment in education is how we build power. Please support. *(Applause)*

TERESA WILL (GMB Scotland): Good morning, Congress and President, National Vice-President. The purpose of this challenge is that the motion was not intended to interfere with staffing decisions. We are challenging the decision because of the serious impact caused by staff shortages across the region particularly when one or more members of staff are absent on long term sick leave. This matters because as lay members of the union we have experienced the effects of reduced regional staff support. This motion was never intended to create a serial “them and us” narrative. Its purpose is to support both current and future staff. The benefits of additional posts mean that in any workplace it is reasonable to raise concerns about staff shortages and the union should be no different. Creating additional posts would help improve work/life balance and make it easier for staff to take annual leave without guilt and reduce burn-out for those whose workloads have steadily increased.

I would draw Congress’s attention to the Special Motion Core Rule 34 which was approved at Congress 1985, where it was reaffirmed that the powers of the Central Executive Council as provided for written rules, is to revise officials’ salaries and matters relating to conditions of service. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. If there are no more challenges, no more delegates that wish to come up, can I ask Karen Dudley to respond, please.

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): President, Congress, the rebuttal for both motions is relatively the same for both Motions 14 and 15. These motions are regarding proposals for changing the GMB staff structure; therefore, it is not appropriate for Congress to debate this matter. It would have the effect of Congress voting on a motion regarding the terms and conditions for a specific sector.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Because there have been challenges I now have to take individual votes on the challenge and the reference back. This would put these motions back from the agenda. The CEC is asking delegates to vote against all reference back proposals but I will take a vote on each one. Can I see all those in favour of supporting the challenge to put Motion 14 back into the agenda, please. All those for? All those opposed. That is lost. That won't be on the agenda.

Can I see all those in favour of supporting the challenge to put Motion 15 back into the agenda? All those against? That is also lost. That will not be back on the agenda.

Thank you. Now we can take a vote on Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1. All those in favour of the report, please show. Those against? That is carried. Thank you very much.

*SOC Report No. 1 was **ADOPTED**.*

The Vice-President (Sonya Davis) took the Chair.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Morning, Congress, Sonya Davis, my first time speaking as

a National Vice-President. (*Applause*) Thank you. It gives me great pleasure to call on our President Barbara Plant to address Congress.

President's Address

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sonya. Friends, colleagues, comrades, once again it is my privilege to stand before you as National President and say, “Welcome to GMB Congress”! (*Applause*) We are back in Blackpool for the first time since 2009 and what an honour it is to be here in this fabulous Winter Gardens. But before we get into the week ahead, I would like us to take a brief moment. On behalf of our union, I would like to offer our congratulations to Gary Smith on his re-election as our General Secretary and Treasurer. (*Applause*) Also to recognise that this is Sonya’s first Congress as Vice-President. (*Applause*) And to welcome Nadine Houghton as the new GMB Southern Regional Secretary. You weren’t going to get away with it, Nadine!

Congress, we gather together in this glorious room and venue. The Empress Ballroom that we are in today is 130 years old, only a little younger than our own great union. So many famous events have taken place in this beautiful room. It has held the Royal Variety Performance, political party conferences have graced the building and a Rolling Stones concert ended in a full-blown riot. So before anyone thinks of coming up here and doing a Mick Jagger tribute, Sonya and I have the riot police on standby.

(*Laughter*)

Colleagues, we were due to be here in 2020 but Covid stopped us from getting together. That was a dark time of loss and pain, isolation and fear. Thousands died including

brave GMB members, who went to work to do essential jobs that couldn't be done on Zoom at the kitchen table: retail workers, NHS and ambulance staff, energy workers, school support staff, care workers and so many more. Our key workers were on the front-line, given bin bags to wear because there was no PPE. Devastatingly, some never came home. In March, I attended a TUC Covid Day of Remembrance for workers who died during that time. I met Kevin Sibley from the East of England Ambulance Service who laid a wreath on behalf of GMB London Region, remembering NHS staff who lost their lives during the pandemic. We will never forget those we lost. We will never forgive those who partied the night away. The emotions we feel are still raw.

One of my heroes Tony Benn, once said: "From the beginning of time there have been two flames burning in the human heart: the flame of anger against injustice and the flame of hope you can build a better world."

Anger and hope, that is what we feel, that is what drives us on. But feeling isn't enough. we need to act to come to the to organise, to demand, to show the power of our solidarity. The hope for a better world lies in our solidarity and it is not about giving support because you expect something back in return. It is not a transactional exchange. It is a collective endeavour of class unity, of common shared struggle. The true sense of solidarity is emblazoned on our trade union banners, mottos such as "Unity is strength", "Strength in numbers", "United we stand, divided we fall". They tell our story, our bond with each other. If you have ever been to Durham Miners' Gala or Tolpuddle, then you have first-hand experience of solidarity. The emotional power we feel is inspiring but humbling, too. It reminds us of who we are and what we can achieve together. But our solidarity doesn't just belong in the past. It is a living,

breathing force for good, seen all across the globe in countless struggles for a better world. We saw it this year at the Together Alliance March through the streets of London, an act of solidarity against hate and racism. I am so proud of our GMB members, reps and staff who showed on that day in the capital in the face of prejudice and division that love, hope and unity can and will win. (*Applause*)

I have seen solidarity on my travels around the country, meeting GMB members and reps: in Midland Region during my visit to a tram depot in Nottingham, in North West & Irish Region when meeting members in Sellafield, in London Region, meeting MPs' staff about their One Parliament, One Employer campaign. In North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region when being shown around the Haribo factory, in Wales & South West Region at the Welsh Labour and TUC conferences, in GMB Scotland while meeting school support staff at a school in Inverness for pupils with additional support needs, and in Southern Region during the incredible school support staff strikes.

As you know, members in schools are close to my heart. The fight for inner London weighting is being led by low-paid women who people say won't go on strike. Well, no one told the school support staff in Merton or Greenwich. They have taken strike action and will keep fighting until they win. (*Applause and cheers*)

Everywhere in our union brave GMB souls are raising their heads above the parapet, not for themselves but for their colleagues. Anger at injustice. Hope for a better future. Solidarity in action. That is what we do. That is what makes GMB great. It is the organised collective power of workers that has always brought the change to make work

better: higher pay, paid holidays, safer workplaces, maternity and parental rights and so much more.

Congress, although we have our differences with them, I believe it is only right to give credit to the Labour Government for introducing the Employment Rights Act, the biggest worker-friendly policy in decade. (*Applause*) But it will be us, it will be the unions who must make sure it is delivered, that employers obey it and improvements are made to it. GMB is meeting that challenge. I have seen for myself how we are not waiting for others to do the job for us. We are taking control of our own future, fighting for undervalued school support staff, running equal pay campaigns across the UK, battling for our manufacturing members being hit hard by escalating energy prices and campaigning on issues everywhere.

The PPE Fit for All campaign where we are striving for personal protective equipment that works for both women and men is making big waves. Sonya and I attended a fantastic launch in Parliament and it is clear that we are setting the pace on this important issue. Our campaigning and organising is building power in the workplace. After all, it is the first principle of GMB@Work and the building block of the union. People are liking what they see and hear from us. More people are joining us and more are staying with us. We don't always win. But every campaign, whether we win or lose, is a step forward. Step by step, from generation to generation, we continually get angry, have hope and act in solidarity. Through every act we are helping to create a better more equal, more inclusive, more socially just society, and a safer and more peaceful world.

Congress, even in the darkest of time people find hope and people act. This week we have as one of our speakers Margaret Aspinall, whose son James was among the 97 Liverpool fans unlawfully killed by the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, when he was just 18. She has devoted the past 37 years to campaigning, not only for the truth but for a change in the law so that no one else has to suffer what she and so many other families that day had to. Her anger, her hope, her solidarity is awe-inspiring. Congress, please join me in recognising Margaret's superhuman efforts for justice for the 97. *(Applause)*

The Hillsborough victims, those we lost during the pandemic, the working women dying before getting their equal pay and their stolen wages, the GMB members who want to make work better: we have our anger, our hope, our solidarity. And the last year has shown how our great union can turn our feelings into action. So let's recommit ourselves to going even further, to keep campaigning, keep winning, keep growing.

Friends, let's enjoy this time we spend together. Let's take time to look around at each other and cherish our friendships and solidarity and let's remember to look up, not down, because there is a world of beauty out there and none more beautiful than Blackpool Tower shining bright in GMB colours.

Friends, enjoy Blackpool. Enjoy making work better. Enjoy Congress. Thank you. *(Applause and standing ovation)* Thank you. That means a lot.

The President took the Chair.

Announcements

THE PRESIDENT: Down to business now. Congress, before we begin our first debate, I would like to explain a few points of procedure. Don't worry if you don't get it all in one go because I will keep explaining it throughout the week

To save time I will take motions in groups. If you look at that one-page session programme that shows the groupings. If you are speaking on any of these motions, you must register the number on your delegate pass at the desk in the front before going to the chairs here in front of the rostrum ready to speak. Please make sure you that you do this every time you speak. We will have changeovers of staff at that desk. I will call movers and then seconders and, in line with Motion 8 carried at Congress 2018, I will not be calling for additional supporting speakers on motions, only delegates who want to speak in opposition.

If you are moving a motion without the support of your region, you must declare it at the beginning of your moving speech. And where the CEC is supporting a motion I will advise Congress. Where the CEC has any other position, a member of the CEC will give the reasons for that decision. We will then move to a vote of all the motions in that group, either as one or individually.

As I said, I will make sure to keep repeating this throughout the week. When you are voting, and this is probably the most important thing, you are voting for the motion, not the CEC stance. The CEC stance advises Congress on how it may wish to vote. For example, if the CEC is to support a motion, it is advising Congress to vote for the motion, or, if the CEC stance is to oppose a motion, it is advising Congress to vote against the motion.

On Special Reports and Statements, the CEC will have moving and seconding speakers. I will then invite one delegate from each region to speak on the report or statement at that time. Motions relating to Special Reports or Statements that remain on the agenda will be debated and I will advise Congress on the voting process during those sessions.

When it comes to moving and seconding your motions, delegates will see a light on the right-hand side of the rostrum when they speak from the rostrum. When the light turns yellow this means that delegates have 30 seconds left to finish their speech. After those 30 seconds the light will turn red and if you are still speaking when the light turns red, you will be encouraged to wrap up or you will be cut off. We just need to get through business and it is only fair that other people get the chance to speak as well. Most importantly, practise your speeches, keep to time, but have fun as well!

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

UNION ORGANISATION: CONGRESS

We can get down to business now. We are debating our first motion of the week on Union Organisation. Congress, could I have the mover and seconder down, please, for Motion 2 and the movers and seconders for Motions 4, 5, Composite 1 and 8, could they also be ready, please. Can I have the mover for Motion 2 to come to the rostrum.

MOTION 2

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE THROUGH TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE HANDLING OF CONGRESS MOTIONS

2. STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE THROUGH TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE HANDLING OF CONGRESS MOTIONS

This Congress notes that the GMB is a member-led organisation, and Congress motions are a fundamental democratic mechanism through which branches and regions shape union policy and direction. That national guidance relating to the monitoring, implementation, and reporting of Congress motions is currently insufficiently robust or transparent. That branches and regions often receive little or no feedback on motions once they have been carried at Congress, including:

- Who holds responsibility for progressing a motion
- What actions are required
- What timescales apply
- Whether and how motions are used to inform policy development

That there is no consistently applied, auditable process to track outstanding motions year on year. That the absence of a clear feedback and accountability framework undermines confidence in the motions process and weakens effective governance within the GMB.

Congress believes that motions passed by Congress must not disappear into internal processes without clear ownership, transparency, or accountability. That branches and regions are entitled to timely, accurate, and meaningful updates on the progress and outcomes of motions they submit. That effective governance requires a formal system to monitor, audit, and report on the implementation of Congress decisions. That a transparent motions process strengthens member confidence, democratic engagement, and organisational integrity.

Congress resolves to instruct the GMB to update national guidance to establish a clear, robust, and transparent process for the monitoring, auditing, and reporting of Congress motions. To compile and maintain a centralised audit of all Congress motions, covering:

- All motions carried at Congress
- Motions remaining outstanding from previous years
- Assigned responsibility for delivery
- Required actions
- Agreed timescales
- Whether and how motions inform policy or strategic work

To require that any Congress motion remaining outstanding for more than two years must be formally reviewed and accompanied by a written explanation setting out:

- The reasons for delay or non-implementation
- Any barriers identified
- Proposed next steps or recommendations

To establish a transparent pathway for communication and feedback so that branches and regions receive regular, written updates on the status and outcomes of motions. To ensure

that branches and regions are kept informed, updated, and advised on Congress motions as a core governance responsibility, recognising the pivotal role motions play in the democratic life of the GMB.

**C22 BRANCH
WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION**

(Referred)

(Formally moved from the floor) Thank you, Wales & South West. Is that seconded formally? *(Formally seconded)*

Does anybody wish to speak against that motion? In that case, can I ask the CEC speaker Linda Carr-Pollock to respond.

LINDA CARR-POLLOCK (CEC): President, Congress speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding on Motion 2. Firstly, the frustration raised in this motion is noted and improvements to how we report progress on motions is always welcomed. However, there are many suggestions within this motion that simply cannot be resourced. It has been custom that National Office takes on the majority of the work and when there are on average 200 motions that make it to Congress it creates a considerable amount of work. The CEC recommends that this motion be referred so the CEC and National Office who can review how regions, branches and local activist groups can feed into the process, to encourage a more collective approach to implementing Congress policy.

GMB Congress is unique across the movement for not limiting motions, from word count to the number of motions a branch can submit nor, for the most part, the topic area members can talk about. As a general union we cover almost every area of the economy and the consequence of that is that we don't always have the resource to action motions carried to the fullest but we will always try. Congress policy is used all the

time to guide our decisions and influence what we say to the outside world. Therefore, there are plenty of occasions where Congress policy is used but not necessarily reported. Let there be no doubt what we carry in this hall shapes what we do outside it. Therefore, Congress, we hope that the region agrees to refer the motion back so we can use some of the good suggestions to improve our reporting. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. Does Wales & South West agree to defer Motion 2? (*Agreed*) Because it is agreed to refer there is no vote on motions that are agreed to be referred. Can I have the mover of Motion 4, please, to come to the rostrum.

*Motion 2 was **REFERRED**.*

HOLDING THE TUC ACCOUNTABLE

MOTION 4

4. HOLDING THE TUC ACCOUNTABLE

Congress we are an affiliated union with the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and we work with other unions to have a strong voice to government and industry.

Our members and post holders attend and participate in TUC committees and conferences to make our movement better and represent our union values.

Over the last few years there have been a number of occasions when the TUC have fallen foul to not taking action according to their own code of conduct at meetings, conferences and events. We are deeply disappointed by the way the TUC has handled these matters.

Our GMB members and post holders must feel safe and listened to when distressing incidents occur. Our people should always be treated with dignity and respect when representing our union and their workplace.

We ask congress that we have a clear process to hold the TUC accountable as a large affiliated union

Please support this motion.

**Y30 NEYH ORGANISING BRANCH
NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT I can't hear you, Farzana. You can still speak on it if you want to but if not, you can accept reference back. *(Reference accepted from the floor)* Thank you. In that case, can I have the mover of Motion 5, please?

WILL THORNE'S GRAVE

MOTION 5

5. WILL THORNE'S GRAVE

This Congress acknowledges and celebrates the life and legacy of the GMB's founder, William James Thorne (1857 – 1946), who became the first General Secretary of the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers in 1889.

In July 2025 members from GMB X59 North West London Branch visited Will Thorne's grave which is in East London Cemetery. The Branch was disappointed to note that Will Thorne's grave was in very poor condition; the burial plot was overgrown, the headstone had severe weather damage, and the inscription was barely legible. Noting the condition of the site, Congress resolves to restore the grave of the founder of this great union.

Congress is calling on the GMB to seek permission from the relevant authorities (i.e. East London Cemetery and the London Borough of Newham) and to seek out any surviving descendants of Will Thorne in order to install a new headstone. Congress also mandates the GMB to ensure the upkeep and the maintenance of Will Thorne's grave; this would include making sure that the headstone and burial plot are regularly cleaned.

X59 NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH LONDON REGION

(Carried)

TONY CHOLERTON (London): Moving Motion 5: Will Thorne's Grave. Congress, the condition of Will Thorne's grave is a very concerning and this motion calls for GMB to intervene so that it can be restored and given the care that it deserves. The founder of our great union deserves respect and dignity from all within GMB. The grave is now overgrown, the gravestone has severe weather damage and the inscription is barely legible.

This motion calls on GMB to ensure the upkeep and maintenance of Will Thornes grave including regular cleaning of the headstone and burial plot. If it was allowed, we could get a team together and go and remove the weeds and clean the gravestone now. However, we do need to act legally and with the respect of Will Thorne's relatives. It is noted that GMB did contact East London Cemetery and his son's relatives with this in mind. The qualification to this motion states that, "GMB has no right to interfere with a private burial plot and has no claim on oversight, upkeep or alteration". With this in mind, it would be appropriate for GMB to renew contact with East London Cemetery and the relatives of Will Thorne so that we can get the correct permission to restore the grave to the condition it deserves. The difficulties in achieving this are outweighed by doing what is right. Congress, please support this motion with the qualification so that due respect can be given to our founding father. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tony. Secunder? *(Formally seconded)* Thank you very much.

Can I invite the mover of Composite 1, please.

GMB GOLD BADGE

COMPOSITE 1

C1. GMB GOLD BADGE

This Congress says its Gold Badge is only allocated/rewarded to its served Central Executive Council (CEC) Members. At present, a member can sit on the CEC for only 4 years and then receive a gold medal. Members who don't sit on the CEC but serve the Union in other ways, maybe for ten, twenty, thirty even forty years can only receive a silver medal.

Congress says there are many GMB Members that work tirelessly and are equally as valuable to this Trade Union.

This Congress calls on the GMB to give authority to Regional Secretaries to award the gold medal at their discretion for members services to the GMB. On the basis of Equality, we call on GMB Congress for this to be investigated and report back at 2027 Congress.

Moving Region: Midlands
Seconding Region: London

(Referred)

MARTIN TAYLOR (Midlands): First-time delegate. *(Applause)* Thank you. This Congress says its Gold Badge is only allocated or awarded to served Central Executive Committee members. At present a member can sit on the CEC for only four years and then receive the Gold Badge. Members who don't sit on the CEC but serve the union in other ways for 10, 20, 30, or even 40 years can only receive the Silver Badge. Congress says there are many GMB members that work tirelessly and are equally as valuable to this trade union. This Congress calls on the GMB to give authority to regional secretaries to award the Gold Badge at their discretion for members' services to the GMB. On the basis of equality we call on GMB Congress for this to be investigated and to report back at the 2027 Congress.

On a personal level if it is accepted and does come to fruition I would like to see Sharon Yates awarded with the first Gold Badge for her services to the Potteries industry and for the fantastic campaigns she did for the Potteries. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: That was a great first speech, Martin, well done. Second or it is a composite, so is somebody else speaking?

JAN SMITH (RMA, London): Thank you, Martin, for your contribution and being a first-time delegate. A lot of what you have already said is what I was going to say so I

am going to be brief. I have got nothing written down. It is something that has been very close to my heart for a few years. I have monitored how the Gold Badge is awarded and, as Martin has said, the only way it is awarded is if you sit on the CEC and also it is to that term of office, but in some instances that term of office may not be completed. Looking around the hall, there are many of us who have done many, many years' service to this union and they do not get recognised with the Gold Badge. I urge you all to support this motion and I call on the GMB to fully investigate it and for the regional secretaries to be able to give it out to where it is so deserved. I second.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Then the mover of Motion 8, please.

GMB SUPPORT FOR THE RED FLAG FESTIVAL

MOTION 8

8. GMB SUPPORT FOR THE RED FLAG FESTIVAL

Congress notes that the Red Flag Festival celebrates the legacy of Jim Connell, Irish trade unionist and author of our movement's anthem, the Red Flag. GMB honours the historical significance of Jim Connell when we sing the Red Flag at the close of each Congress.

Since 1998 the Red Flag Festival has been held each year in County Meath, the birthplace of Jim Connell. The festival stands as a proud celebration of the enduring spirit of the trade union movement. It honours the victories hard-won by workers through collective struggle and solidarity, and it pays tribute to those who continue the fight for fairness, dignity, and justice not only in the workplace, but in the broader struggle for LGBTQ+ equality, migrant and asylum seeker rights, and the protection of all marginalised communities.

Every year the festival concludes with a commemorative event at the monument to Jim Connell in Crossakiel, County Meath; the monument stands as a powerful symbol of our shared struggle for social and economic justice.

Congress also notes that previous contributions that the GMB has made to the Red Flag Festival. The Jim Connell monument in Crossakiel stands as a testament to the dedication of the Jim Connell Society, Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council (BWTUC), Durham Miners Association, SIPTU, Meath Labour Party and the GMB London Region, whose years of fundraising and organising made this permanent tribute possible.

However, for the festival to continue to expand, financial contributions are essential to cover its costs. The festival has a solid foundation of existing support from the British trade union movement; currently ASLEF, BWTUC, GMB Branches, POA National and Local, RMT National and Local, and Unite the Union Branches all make contributions to make this event happen.

Accordingly, Congress instructs all GMB Regions and Branches to promote and support the annual Red Flag Festival. Funding from the GMB will help to ensure the Red Flag Festival continues to inspire new generations of trade unionists and keep our movement's history alive. Any donation, large or small, would make a significant difference in the running of the Red Flag Festival.

Congress also encourages GMB Regions and Branches to sponsor delegates to the Red Flag Festival (particularly young and lower-paid members who would greatly benefit from this unique experience).

X59 NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH LONDON REGION

(Referred)

MARK LIVINGSTON (London): President, Congress, first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Following on from the Will Thorne motion, this is another motion about celebrating our Movement's radical heritage. Jim Connell, author of "The Red Flag", the Labour Movement anthem which we will all sing at the end of Congress, was a trade unionist and Irish Republican, who came to Britain after being blacklisted for trade union activities in Dublin. In Britain he joined the Social Democratic Federation and wrote "The Red Flag" after attending one of their meetings on the 1889 Dock Strike. He opposed the first world war and continued to struggle for a united Ireland.

As the CEC has noted, the GMB was instrumental in establishing the Red Flag Festival to celebrate his legacy, with Mary Turner and Paul Kenney having played a significant role in establishing the Festival. But more needs to be done to promote the Festival and sponsor delegates to be able to attend. It is not just a heritage event, it is an opportunity

to join other workers from around the world and connect Jim Connell's struggles to today's struggles for workers' rights, for peace and internationalism, against racism and misogyny and all forms of oppression and bigotry. I hope the Committee will consider this and make resources available. Support the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mark. Well done. Jim Connell lived in Lewisham which is my borough, where there is a blue plaque commemorating him. I am very proud of Lewisham and that is apparently where he wrote "The Red Flag". Secunder.

BEV GUNNING (London): I rise to second this motion. For the last three years I have wondered, "Why am I singing 'We keep the Red Flag flying'? but now I am aware and engaged. The Red Flag Festival is more than just an event. It represents the very heart of the trade union movement. It draws its meaning from the red flag itself, a long-standing symbol of workers' rights, solidarity and the fight for fairness. Over centuries that symbol has stood for people coming together to challenge injustice and improve working conditions, something that sits right at the core of what GMB stands for today. The festival bring unions, activists and working people together to celebrate the hard-won victories of the past, for safer workplaces, for better pay and conditions while also focusing on the challenges we still face. It is not just about history. It is about action. It is about learning from each other, strengthening our movement and continuing to fight for dignity, equality and respect at work. And in 2026, I think the fight is more prominent than ever.

As a union with a proud history of standing up for working people, GMB has clear links to the traditions that the Red Flag Festival celebrates. Supporting and recognising this

festival helps to keep those values alive and relevant to today's workforce. This festival needs to keep going, not just for us mature members but for the young people who do not understand what it means to be in GMB. Colleagues, "The Red Flag" represents unity, strength, and it represents the ongoing commitment to fairness we all share.

For those reasons,, I am not only proud to second this motion but I will be returning next year. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done Beverley, you kept to time. Anybody wishing to speak in opposition to those motions? In that case can I ask Kevin Buchanan to respond on behalf of the CEC, please.

KEVIN BUCHANAN (CEC): Speaking on behalf of the CEC, responding to Motions 4, 5, Composite 1 and Motion 8.

Firstly on Motion 4, my thanks for accepting referral. This motion outlined serious concerns regarding the conduct and accountability of the TUC, particularly in relation to the safety, dignity and fair treatment of GMB members, representatives and post holders at TUC-organised events. The GMB is a major affiliated union of the TUC and we take our responsibilities within the wider trade union movement seriously. Our engagement with the TUC should be through ensuring our members' voices are heard. It is therefore imperative that all TUC spaces operate to high standards of conduct, transparency and accountability.

The handling of incidents referenced in the motion at TUC events and the inconsistent application of its own rules, procedures and its Code of Conduct is concerning. We share the view that all members and attendees must feel safe, respected and confident that any issues raised will be dealt with properly, fairly and effectively. There are ongoing discussions with the TUC about how we engage in conferences held by them.

Therefore, the CEC proposes that this motion be referred to enable the CEC to:

- Consider the expectations to be placed on the TUC regarding conduct, accountability and rule enforcement.
- GMB attendance and participation in TUC events beyond the TUC Congress of 2026, including equality conferences, structures where the safeguarding of members' experience must be assured.
- Engagement with the Equalities team to gather evidence, experiences and feedback from delegates and representatives who attend TUC events.

Regarding Motion 5, the CEC is asking that Congress supports with a qualification. Congress welcomes the motion's fidelity to Will Thorne's legacy and resting place. The historic gravestone and inscription are an integral part of the GMB story and are important artifacts in their own right, deserving of sympathetic restoration. A new headstone would be inappropriate as it would remove the original monument and dedication, losing its historical and biographical value. However, as the mover pointed out, the grave is certainly in need of repointing and tidying and, as was also said, the GMB did contact East London Cemetery in 2014 with this in mind and pursued the matter together with the family of his eldest son Carl.

Our qualification lies in the difficulty with the cemetery's legal responsibility not to disclose the identity of the current owner of the grave deeds and the disparate nature of the Thorne family through a large number of branches and descendants. GMB is not legally entitled to interfere with a private burial plot and has no claim upon oversight, upkeep or alteration. This said, it would be appropriate for the GMB to resume contact with the cemetery regarding the grave and attempt to track down Will Thorne's descendants in the hope that one of them holds the grave deeds.

On Composite 1, the CEC is asking that it be referred. The composite is right to recognise that GMB activists in all roles carry out great work in many forms and the union does need to ensure that proper recognition is given to our members. Recognition, however, can be made by the union in many different ways. A review of how the union recognises key activists is rightly overdue, however, as the CEC Services Sub-Committee (now no longer meeting) last looked at the Gold Badge and Silver Badge in 1992. It was agreed then that Gold Badges would be presented on retirement to CEC members and Silver Badges presented to other lay activists sitting on national section or regional committees as well as other nominees who regions felt were deserving of Silver Badges. The exception to this instruction was when the CEC agreed to present a Gold Badge to Jayaben Desai on the first anniversary of the Grunwick dispute.

Any review would need to consider the potential increased cost implications of increasing the number of Gold Badges being presented as well as considering any qualification standards and we ask that any review is referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee to carry out.

Finally to Motion 8, the CEC is asking that this motion be referred. The GMB was instrumental in establishing the Jim Connell Festival and the monument at Crossakiel records the contribution of Paul Kenney and Mary Turner. It is GMB policy already to back the festival and there is nothing to prevent branches sponsoring members to attend. However, the burgeoning cost of sending members has led to a decline in participation since the heyday of the early 2000s. The considerable costs involved, whether nationally or regionally, necessitates a referral to the F&GPC for consideration.

Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking that Motion 4, Composite 1 and Motion 8 be referred while Motion 5 be supported with a qualification. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. We have already heard that North East, Yorkshire & Humber accept the reference back. Do London accept the qualification on Motion 5? (*Accepted*) Thank you. Do Midlands and London agree to refer Composite 1? (*Agreed*) Do London agree to refer on Motion 8? (*Agreed*) In that case, because they are referred I only take the vote on Motion 5, support with qualification. So all those in favour of Motion 5, please show. All those against? That is carried. Thank you.

*Motion 4 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 5 was **CARRIED**.*

*Composite 1 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 8 was **REFERRED**.*

CEC SPECIAL REPORT: CEC RULE BOOK AMENDMENTS

Review of the GMB Rulebook

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

The Rule Book Review Group has reported to, and re-acted rule changes at every successive GMB Congress since 2022 and has updated GMB's aims and objectives; foregrounding the federal nature of the organisation including regarding our finances; restating its industrial focus; and deepening and widening the commitment to organising and campaigning within the workplace.

This year, the Review Group has been focused upon tidying up those rules and addressing consequential rule amendments of those carried in 2025. We group the below rule amendments in related themes.

The Rulebook Review Working Group met on 24 October 2025 and 28 April 2026 to discuss and agree amendments to the Rulebook for proposal to the Central Executive Council.

The Working Group would want to put our thanks on record to John Callow who has been part of establishing the group and the work of the ongoing review since 2022.

The full Special Report can be accessed here:

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/assets/media/downloads/3834/gmb-congress-2026-cec-rule-amendments.pdf>

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now move on to debating CEC Special Report on the CEC Rule Book Amendments. Can I ask Sonya Davies, Vice-President, to move the report on behalf of the CEC.

SONYA DAVIS (CEC): Congress, President, delegates, Sonya Davis, Vice-President, moving the Special Report on Rule Book Amendments on behalf of the CEC. This report is the product of a sustained review of our Rule Book that began in 2022: work designed to ensure our union rules reflect modern practice, legal requirements and, above all, our commitment to begin an organising, campaigning, member-led union. Over successive Congresses we have strengthened our aims and objectives, reaffirmed our industrial focus and embedded the federal nature of our union. What is before you

today builds on that progress, bringing together a set of practical, necessary and forward-looking amendments. Congress, these changes fall into a few clear themes.

First, tidying up and modernisation. A number of the amendments are about clarity, consistency and inclusion. We replace outdated language with gender-neutral wording, ensuring our rules reflect modern standards and our values as an inclusive union. We also correct drafting inconsistencies, update terminology and make rules clearer for members, such as specifying the national website, improving wording around responsibilities and ensuring rules are unambiguous and accessible. This may sound technical and minor but it matters. A clear Rule Book is a democratic Rule Book.

Secondly, strengthening equality, inclusion and representation at a branch level. We update the role of branch officers to better reflect the union we are today. That includes renaming the youth officer to young members officer and strengthening responsibilities around organising and campaigning. We enhance the role of branch equality and race officers, giving clearer duties in promoting diversity, inclusion and participation across our structures. We also introduce flexibility for branches to create additional officer roles based on their needs, backed by branch bylaws and development plans.

And with all these responsibilities the CEC knows that with extra duty comes additional responsibility for the union and new national support must be made available. It is why nationally a national branch Race Officer Network has been set up, but this must follow through with training and other resources so our people are better equipped. We know there is a rise in racism across our communities including in our workplaces and GMB needs to tackle it head on when it is encountered. Importantly, we incorporate our Zero

Tolerance Statement into the Rule Book, placing our commitment to tackling discrimination, harassment and abuse at the very heart of our union's rules and so our members know where to find it.

Thirdly, improving democracy and governance. We make practical updates to Congress arrangements such as nomination time-lines and clarifying the reports Congress receives, including from the CEC. We clarify rules on officer resignations, ensuring notice is given in writing to the appropriate body, improving transparency and accountability. We also update rules, following decisions at Congress 2025, ensuring consistency across our structures, including representation on the CEC.

Fourthly, preparing for the future. Congress, some of the most important changes look ahead. We are updating our rules to allow for electronic voting, reflecting anticipated changes in legislation and the Employment Rights Act that we fought for, and ensuring our union is ready to modernise how our members participate in ballots and elections. We also note the significant amendments to the Political Fund Rules agreed with the Certification Officer following changes brought about by the Employment Rights Act, ensuring our compliance with the law while protecting members' rights including the right to opt out.

Finally, a word on purpose. Taken individually some of these changes may seem small but taken together they strengthen our union. They make us clearer, they make us more inclusive, they make us more democratic, and they ensure we are ready for the future. This is what a living Rule Book looks like, not static, but evolving alongside our members, our workplaces and the wider world.

Congress, this report reflects careful work, consultation and the experience of recent Congress decisions. It tidies up what needs tidying, corrects what needs correcting and moves us forward where change is required.

I want to place on record a big thank you to the Rule Book Review Group and all those involved in this ongoing work since 2022. We still have a way to go and will continue this work into Congress 2027 and beyond.

President, Congress, I ask you to support these amendments not as an end in themselves but as part of building a stronger, more inclusive, more effective GMB. I formally move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sonya. Can I ask the speakers, one from each region, to start coming down to the front, please, and can I ask the CEC to formally second the report. (*Formally seconded*) Thank you, Ruth.

I will take it in this order: Wales & South West, Southern, Scotland, North West & Irish, North East, Yorkshire & Humber, Midlands and London. Can the speaker from Wales & South West come down to the front to speak on the report. Are you sending a speaker, Wales & South West? (*Formally supported*) Thank you. Southern?

CHARLES ADJE (Southern): Whilst we support the rule amendments, and I would like to thank the group that did this, I just want to find out when the rule amendments that were referred last year will be dealt with. I agreed on behalf of the region to refer

a number of them but we haven't heard anything since. It is just to say we support but we would like an update in terms of rule amendments that were referred. Thank you.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Charles. Scotland.

PAULA LOGUE (Scotland): Supporting this CEC report on Rule Amendments. First-time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)*

Congress, we welcome these rule changes. These are practical, sensible and necessary amendments which show that GMB is a union willing to keep its own structures under review and make sure the Rule Book reflects the organisation we are today. That matters. A modern union cannot stand still. The world of work is changing and the way members engage with our union is changing. The way we organise, campaign, communicate and represent workers is changing, too. If we want to continue growing we need rules that support the work rather than hold it back. These amendments are part of that process. They tidy up wording, they update terminology, they reflect changes already agreed by Congress. They strengthen clarity around branch rules, equality, young members, voting, Congress business and the standards we expect within our union.

This is important because the Rule Book is one of the ways the union sets out who we are, how we work, how our members participate and how we hold ourselves to account. Congress, we should also recognise the wider context across the UK. Trade unions are operating in a difficult environment, but Scotland continues to show the strength of our

movement. In the most recent official figures Scotland recorded the biggest increase in trade union membership density of any UK nation, rising to 29.4%. That does not happen by accident. *(Applause)* It happens because unions organise, it happens because unions adapt: it happens because unions remain relevant to workers in changing workplaces and changing industries.

These rule changes are part of that same responsibility. They show that GMB has continued to evolve, continued to modernise and continued to build a union capable of growing in the years ahead. Congress, if we are serious about being an organising, campaigning and activist-led union then the rules must support that ambition. For those reasons, GMB Scotland welcomes the amendments and supports the report. Thank you. *(Applause)*

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

KELVIN ENABULELE (North West & Irish): Speaking in support of this motion. *(Applause)* Colleagues, many moons ago I was in a dark place, in the wilderness, and it was the GMB Rule Book that gave me direction. My beacon, my light, my compass. That journey is why I stand here today three years on, proud to be a delegate. *(Applause)* Colleagues, our Rule Book matters. It defines who we are, it protects how we work and it must be clear, strong and watertight. So, regular review is absolutely right and fully supported by the North West & Irish Region. Thank you to the Lay Members Review Group and our National Office staff who worked on this amendment Congress. Colleagues, please back this amendment. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kelvin. North East, Yorkshire & Humber? (*Formally supported*) Midlands? (*Formally supported*) London Region?

JAN SMITH: (RMA, London): Speaking in support of the Rule Book review. London Region supports this second review of the GMB's Rule Book, which has taken another positive step forward. We welcome tidying it up and addressing some of the consequential changes remaining after rule amendments that were carried last year.

Last year's Congress removed the rules requiring organisers to be elected and this year we are providing more clarity by removing references across the whole of the Rule Book to elected officials, which needed tidying up after last year.

Colleagues, the CEC Working Group are branch post holders so we understand the need for practical rules which help and support our branches, such as making sure we refer to the same branch equality posts as we do for the CEC reserved seats. We also welcome giving more clarity to branch rules and we hope that this will encourage members to know what is expected of them and step into these roles at branch elections.

Our branch structures are embedded in the Rule Book and we are pleased that the agreed wording from a 2014 Congress CEC Special Report on branches has finally at last been put into the Rule Book. This will help branches fill posts outside of core branch positions and allow all rules on branch development plans to be in one place. Slight changes to the rules when office holders resign ensure that resignation notices are in

writing and members know who to send these to. This will assist our regional committees and finance departments.

Members look to our Rule Books to provide them with guidance and expectations by incorporating our agreed Zero Tolerance Statement into the Rule Book. This will go a long way to help members follow and understand acceptable standards of behaviour. Outdated terminology should be removed from the Rule Book and it needs to be reflected in modern communication methods used by this union. We look forward to more discussion and rule changes next year when the Employment Rights Act is fully embedded. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Jan. Before I go to the vote, could I ask movers and seconders of Motions 9, 11 and 12 to come down to the front. That is on Union Organisation: General. Charles, I have noted your question so I will make sure that somebody gets back to you on that. I will go to the vote. All those in favour of the Special Report, please show. All those against? That is carried. Thank you.

*CEC Special Report was **CARRIED**.*

UNION ORGANISATION: GENERAL

THE PRESIDENT: Could I have the mover of Motion 9, please.

SUPPORTING BLOOD DONATION

MOTION 9

9. SUPPORTING BLOOD DONATION

This Congress believes that:

- Employers should have a duty to make their employees aware of the NHS's need for Blood donors, and make it clear that they will be supported if they choose to donate blood or any other product
- Employers should facilitate workers' wishes to donate blood or any other product via NHSBT (NHS Blood and Transport) through providing flexibility and paid time off
- Workers should never lose out on pay, guaranteed hours or be subject to any unfair pressure or discrimination from employers if they wish to donate blood or any other products during work hours

This Congress resolves:

- To implement this policy within the GMB as a workplace immediately
- To call for a national GMB campaign around encouraging members around the country to consider registering as blood donors
- To work with members and employers to implement policies which support the aims of this motion
- To call for the adoption of this motion at a TUC and at a Labour party level, and for it to be embedded in government policy.

B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH LONDON REGION

(Carried)

MOHAMMAD ALI (London): I am a first-time delegate, first-time speaker (*Applause*)

One of the proudest moments of my life was walking to the local community centre at the age of 18 and coming away a pint of blood lighter. I have an even more special memory of my second donation when my blood was flagged with a special blue sticker marking it out as a “neo” donation, the only type which can be given to newborn babies under a month old. Each pint of blood that I donate can save the lives of up to six tiny babies. I am booked in for my 25th donation next week (*Applause*) and I plan to keep donating as often as I can for the rest of my life.

I am not telling you all this for claps. I am telling you all this for a reason, to show just how much of an impact the average Joe like me can have by sitting in a chair for ten minutes every few months and also to emphasise just how important it is that we support as many people as possible to donate blood if they so choose.

As a quick explainer, in England, the NHS collects blood, plasma, platelets and organ donations through the Blood and Transplant Service. Donors are not paid. This is an altruistic act of service, patriotism and generosity, demonstrating our collective humanity. Blood donation is the most common type of donation, with men being eligible to donate every three months and women every four months. I mention this because it is important to emphasise the value of being able to donate as soon as you are past your waiting period, hence why it is so important that we support workers to donate at whatever time is most convenient to them and not have to worry about taking time off work to do so. The NHS has regularly experienced low blood stocks and amber warnings in recent years. They need over 4,000 people per day to donate blood to maintain blood stocks at a safe level, but fewer than 2% of the population are registered blood donors and only a fraction of those donate regularly. People on lower incomes and those from ethnic minority backgrounds like me are even less likely to be donors and these are the people that this motion is intended to help most. The aim of this motion is to enshrine the right of workers to take time out of their working day to give blood, much like they might nip out to the dentist or to a GP appointment. This will make it much easier for people to donate and to continue to return as regular donors, ensuring the NHS never experiences blood shortages again.

I am calling on Congress to support this motion as I believe in the right of workers to perform this amazing selfless act of generosity without fear of losing pay, guaranteed hours or feeling under pressure from their employer. I thank my region for their qualification and I want to stress that this is not a health policy matter. This to me is an industrial matter. It is an opportunity for the GMB to stand up for workers everywhere.

We have successfully fought for rights such as sick pay, which allow workers to take time off to look after their own health, and I am now asking Congress to back my call to extend these rights to workers to take a couple of hours out every few months to protect the health of others and support the greatest institution in this country, the NHS.

We at the GMB have the opportunity to be trailblazers, to be the first trade union calling for employers to support the everyday heroes who literally give their blood, sweat and tears to save the lives of people they will never meet. Thank you for your time, Congress, and please support Motion 9. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Mohammad. Secunder?

SIMON HALTON-HUGHES (London): First-time speaker, first-time delegate. (*Applause*) I would like to support this motion because it shows selflessness and the character of the person. It brings strength to workplace culture. It shares community service, it boosts employees' morale and it just shows it is not about profit, it is about our fellow man. It allows us to look after each other, to save lives and it can go towards cancer treatment and other medical needs and promote health awareness. Everyone has to stick together to look after each other and support each other. That is all. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Simon, that was perfect. Well done as a first-time delegate. (*Applause*)

Could I have the mover of Motion 11, please.

TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY

MOTION 11

9. SUPPORTING BLOOD DONATION

This Congress believes that:

- Employers should have a duty to make their employees aware of the NHS's need for Blood donors, and make it clear that they will be supported if they choose to donate blood or any other product
- Employers should facilitate workers' wishes to donate blood or any other product via NHSBT (NHS Blood and Transport) through providing flexibility and paid time off
- Workers should never lose out on pay, guaranteed hours or be subject to any unfair pressure or discrimination from employers if they wish to donate blood or any other products during work hours

This Congress resolves:

- To implement this policy within the GMB as a workplace immediately
- To call for a national GMB campaign around encouraging members around the country to consider registering as blood donors
- To work with members and employers to implement policies which support the aims of this motion
- To call for the adoption of this motion at a TUC and at a Labour party level, and for it to be embedded in government policy.

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

(Carried)

MARTIN MEYER (GMB Scotland): First-time speaker. *(Applause)* This is a motion calling for recognised trade unions to give each other solidarity where a rogue employer looks to impinge on trade union rights. The motion becomes necessary when an employer decides that those rights are something to be managed, restricted, avoided, or even just ignored. In Scotland's further education sector we in GMB have found such employers. I work at the nursery in Edinburgh College. The membership for support staff in GMB Scotland has quadrupled in 15 months. *(Applause)* This was all achieved by me and my fellow reps encouraging our colleagues to join a fighting and campaigning union, a union that is truly member led. Even though GMB is recognised across all colleges in Scotland, we are seeing our sector fight back against this growth.

This is a sector in theory signed up to Fair Work in principle but falling short in practice, a sector where employers have looked to lock out GMB wherever possible in favour of unions that are more favourable to their position.

We should be clear, Congress, that when a worker raises a health and safety concern that worker should be listened to. If a recognised trade union seeks to represent those workers that union should be respected.

A very live example of this happened just last week where my colleagues at Forth Valley College were at an employment tribunal fighting for their right to attend health and safety committees. I am proud to say it is fight we won. (*Applause*) At this moment I would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to my fellow reps at Forth Valley, in particular Grace Hepburn, who is here with me today. Grace has fought tirelessly and relentlessly for GMB, for our members in Forth Valley College and our members across Scotland. It is through these efforts and the efforts of GMB reps that we have forced employers to take notice. While at the employment tribunal the college had invited a sister Unison – sorry, I meant union into the college, giving their senior staff free rein to wander and recruit.

The motion is clear that this about recognised trade unions supporting each other. We support the fight GMB has engaged in to stop a union without recognition and no negotiation rights from misleading school support staff in what they can achieve for them. In Scotland's colleges we have recognition: recognition that is being blocked despite established agreements. That is the danger here. Once an employer learns that it can single out one recognised union and the wider movement will not respond, it has

a learned a very useful lesson. It has learnt that trade union rights can be divided, it has learnt that recognition can be hollowed out and it has learnt that solidarity can be treated as optional. It has to mean something when an employer is trying to divide us.

This motion asks the TUC and regional TUCs to make that solidarity practical. When a rogue employer attacks the rights of one recognised union, sister unions should be asked to stand with that union, write to that employer and make clear that trade union rights must be respected because divided unions help bad employers, united unions protect workers. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Martin. It is lovely to see so many first-time delegates. Well done. Secunder, please.

GRACE HEPBURN (GMB Scotland): President, Congress, I am here to second Motion 11. I want to thank Martin for his kind words. Didn't he do well, what an amazing speech, Martin, excellent for a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I want to tell a story about what trade union solidarity can achieve. I am from Falkirk and we have a hotel in the middle of the town that houses refugees. I think it was September last year all the trade unions got a call out to go and stand in a counterprotest and were vastly outnumbered. It was really quite scary. But what came out of that? The trade unions that were in attendance started talking and we formed a group called Forth Valley Trade Unions in the Community. It was a complete wake-up call. There are lay members in this group now from GMB, PCS, CWU, EIS, Unite, Unison and we have got support from the STUC as well.

Earlier this year we held a gig called Solidarity Sounds. The gig sold out in minutes. The far right didn't like that, they didn't like that at all. In fact, they came and protested at it. *(Applause)* So next year we are going to do it again, and we are going to do it bigger, and the year after that and the year after that. They don't like it when we stand together and employers don't like it when trade unions stand together because when trade unions stand shoulder to shoulder with their sister trade unions in solidarity, Congress, we can move mountains. Congress, please support the motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Grace. Mover of Motion 12, please.

BRANCH ADMINISTRATION SYSTEMS

MOTION 12

12. BRANCH ADMINISTRATION SYSTEMS

This Congress raises concern that the systems provided to Branch Secretaries and the Office 365 Computer systems/GMB emails for Activists and Support Staff, needs to be updated and improved to enable the professional running of branches to enable them to effectively service the membership and branch needs.

Currently, there is no access to any Case Management System or tracking that enables the proper co-ordination of information coming from members and a means by which Officers, and other Branch Activists, can share relevant data and record progress of issues they are dealing with at any given time. It is also true that Officers do not have any direct means beyond emails of informing Branch Secretaries when they have dealt with matters on behalf of members, or activities undertaken within companies on their worksheet. This can lead to duplication of effort and at times confusion.

Regional or Branch Officers can waste a lot of effort in trying to track information or confirm who is handling issues on behalf of the member. Also, a co-ordinated system would allow for information to be available should an Officer or Activist need to cover a case in someone's absence. This also applies to legal cases being handled by Unionline, so that basic information about progress, or the stage it is at, is more readily available.

Equally, there is no means of recording information about companies where we have representation or engage in recruitment, for example, general discussions, policies, procedures and minutes to ensure all parties can share their knowledge related to the most recent actions or engagements.

GMB Activist email access has limited memory capacity and therefore does not lend itself to the storage of data, which is essential for Branch Secretaries to do their job properly. In

some instances, Activists' emails have been refused for key Branch admin staff. This forces the use of external emails in order to conduct branch business involving our members. This is not satisfactory and could cause breaches in other ways.

Whilst mindful of the need for systems that are cost effective, the present system is totally inadequate for a forward-looking modern Union, therefore, this needs urgent attention.

Other unions have developed the means for effective co-ordination and information sharing as well as online systems related to support for members that can be accessed by Branch Secretaries when dealing with general enquiries or requests for help on a wide range of other issues, e.g. those facing redundancy or employment related support. Branch Secretaries are told we are responsible for all front-line representation but have not been given the professional systems to do this properly. In fact, we have the minimum required and is wasteful in resource time and duplication of effort.

We call upon the CEC to urgency review the administration and computer systems that are available to Branch Secretaries and Support Staff within the next 12 months, with an action plan and proposals to significantly improve the current position.

**MANCHESTER CENTRAL Q22 BRANCH
NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION**

(Carried)

KEVIN FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): Just get it right. Hold on, I will put the timer on.

THE PRESIDENT: It is on!

KEVIN FLANAGAN: Congress, I am delighted to be speaking in the sunny resort of Blackpool. *(Cheers)* Brothers and sisters, this motion reflects the frustration of trying to operate professionally at branch level with basic IT systems and a lack of proper investment to support branches and lay activists in their vital role for this union. The branches are the front-line of this movement. Let's never forget that. The branch secretaries are part of the life blood of this movement and they should be applauded for what they do. *(Applause)*

The lack of effective management systems is poor in the present climate. Officers and activists often operate in two separate spheres with no central means to track or to be aware of each other's work in the organisations we cover or the cases we are handling at any given time. We need a system that is live and enables us to see how we are progressing with cases and who last had their hands on the organisation and what the discussions were about. That is basic. That is what we need. That is what we need to do the job well. Branch admin staff at times unable to get emails, although mine has just been addressed, forcing us to use alternative email systems and having to find ways to deal with issues and cases that really should be modernised in a better way to ensure that we do not run the risk of breaching any other regulations. An email that is so restrictive it keeps telling me to delete files as there is not enough memory or it cannot cope with case papers and records. Where do I go if I want to see who the last officer was who dealt with any of my branch or my employers or any of the issues that we are dealing with at branch level? I can't. I have got to keep chasing them up on the phone, asking for information, sending emails. All of that is taking time and effort we really means we have to modernise what we are doing and find better ways of doing it. It is wasteful and it is time consuming if we are having to come up with other solutions to what should be the basic standards that we need.

Other unions are beating us at this game. Other unions have online systems they can call on and not only they can call on but that members can call on, dealing with industrial relations matters, dealing with health and welfare matters, dealing with advice and guidance. We don't have access to that that is easily managed at branch level. The enemy should not be the systems we are engaged with. It should be a system that enables us to do the job. In industry, if we are trying to represent members and they

haven't got the tools to do the job, we demand it. Come on, we are behind the game. Let's get on with it. Let's get the tools we need, let's modernise the branch systems to enable us to do the job effectively because wasted time is money. Looking around for information is money. We need the basic tools to do the job. Congress, I ask you to support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Just a little bit over. Secunder, please.

CONNOR PARKINSON (North West & Irish): Congress, it's my first-time attending and first-time speaking. (*Applause*) I am not quite sure how I am going to follow Kevin's eloquently very well put together speech but I will do my very best. In my short time in the GMB, I have been a member for five or six years, I have relied very heavily on my branch secretary who is sat in the front row over there, Mr Smith. He has been more helpful to me than I could have ever asked for. (*Applause*) I can see first-hand that what he is got is not enough. He deals with thousands of members often at the hands of his phone. The branch administration systems that Kevin is rightly asking for need putting in place, otherwise we are going to fall further behind the times. How can a union progress without the systems progressing with it?

At branch level it needs to be noted that new systems also need the right amount of training. We need to enable branches to access improved communication systems and that can only increase membership. Without that, what is the union for? We need to support those who need supporting most. We cannot do that if we continue to fall behind the times. I would like to thank you every branch secretary across the country

who works tirelessly with what they have, to help those who need it most. Thank you, Congress. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Connor. Does anybody want to speak in opposition to any of those motions? No, in that case, can I ask Colin Gunter from the CEC to give the reply.

COLIN GUNTER (CEC): President, Congress responding to Motions 9, 11 and 12 on behalf of the CEC, all of which we are supporting with qualifications. First, on Motion 9, donating blood is a fantastic and important civil act. Members wishing to donate blood should not be prevented from doing so by their employer. The CEC does have some qualifications, the first being that not all people are able to give blood; the second it is a voluntary act. The branches will be best-placed to promote blood donation efforts locally rather than a national campaign. As for calls to submit motions to TUC and Labour Party Conferences, it may be more appropriate for our sister unions in the health sector and Labour-affiliated campaign groups to raise issue.

On Motion 11, the GMB has long recognised the importance of solidarity between unions, particularly in workplaces where joint recognition exists. Employers who attempt to divide unions or undermine agreements will be met with a united response across the movement. The CEC qualification is that we must strongly reinforce the importance of the TUC taking firm action where non-recognised unions seek to undermine unions with recognition agreements. Such behaviour is divisive, harms workers and is scab behaviour, cutting across collective bargaining and threatening the integrity of the wider movement. The TUC has mechanisms to challenge this behaviour

and the CEC supports strengthening and utilising these mechanisms wherever necessary.

Finally on Motion 12, the CEC acknowledges the concerns raised in the motion regarding the limitations of the current systems available to branch secretaries, activists and support staff. Extensive work has already been undertaken to identify a modern membership system and potential technology partners capable of addressing these challenges. The new platform will provide a significantly improved technical foundation with the capacity to support many, if not all, of the improvements highlighted in the motion. However, our qualification is that the GMB must remain selective about the functionality delivered and the access that is granted within any new system.

GMB operates under a strict data access governance model where permissions are approved and limited strictly on a role-appropriate basis. In addition, it should be noted that there is already a request process in place so that active accounts can have data storage increased from the standard two gigabytes to 50 gigabytes where required with additional costs.

Therefore, Congress, please support these motions with those qualifications. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Colin. Before I go to the vote, could I just ask the movers of Motions 17, 18 and 23 on Union Organisation: Recruitment & Organisation to be ready to come down to the front, please?

Announcement

I have an announcement. Congress, just to let you know that the fringe meeting on the Hillsborough Law scheduled for this lunch time has, unfortunately, been cancelled.

Back to the motions. Does London Region accept the qualification on Motion 9? Yes?

It is not very good sound in here: you will have to shout louder. (*Accepted*) Does

Scotland accept the qualification on Motion 11? (*Accepted*) Does North West & Irish

Region accept the qualification on Motion 12? Yes. (*Accepted*) We will go to the

vote. All those in favour of Motion 9, please show. All those against? That is carried.

All those in favour of Motion 11, please show. All those against. That is carried. All

those in favour of Motion 12, please show. That is also carried?

*Motion 9 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 10 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 12 was **CARRIED**.*

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT IN BRANCHES

MOTION 17

17. MEMBER INVOLVEMENT IN BRANCHES

This Congress calls upon the CEC to develop a series of meaningful Branch pilot programmes to improve Union democracy and member engagement.

Congress notes a trend of Branch closures and therefore would want to look towards a series of 'Virtual, Hybrid, Branch, Pilot's' (VHBP's) which could operate across traditional workplace and physical locality boundaries. This would enable those members who have been subject to a Branch closure the opportunity to stay active within the Union structures.

The W60 Branch within the Midlands Region offers themselves for any such pilot helping to improve connectivity across the Union if this motion is supported by Congress.

**W60 WELLINGTON BRANCH
MIDLANDS REGION**

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Can I ask the mover of Motion 17 to come to the platform, please.

MARK HARRIS (Midlands): Another first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you for your support. This is about member involvement in branches and branches not operating as they possibly could. We are in a changing landscape. Branches are not as active any more. People cannot attend meetings directly and, therefore, we have to get those people who are left out, who do not have the proper branch structure that I am lucky to have in W60 where I have the support of all the management in my branch to be able to stand here in front of you and have the opportunity that a lot of people don't have any more because the specific branch is not operating at its full potential.

This motion calls on the Central Executive Council to develop a series of meaningful branch pilot programmes designed to improve union democracy and member engagement. We want to work with the CEC to build tools to strengthen our collective voice because we are an organised union and organised labour and therefore our strength lies in the organisation and we want those members who are out there without the structure to come into our structure.

W60 is prepared to lead on that, to test and pilot a programme to have a virtual hybrid branch for those members to be involved again. The virtual option will invite the remote worker or isolated member into the room with a single click. Hybrid models combine with the irreplaceable warmth of in-person meetings, with accessibility of

digital access and boundary-crossing structures. This is not to build superstructures outside of the rules but to help failing branches to build up again, to get their structures back again, and we as a stable branch are prepared to help those people with those needs that we can assist with. I call on this Congress to support this motion. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Do we have a seconder for Motion 17?

BYRON COOKE (Midlands): Good morning, seconding Motion 17. *(Applause)* I don't know how I can follow Mark's speech there so I will keep it very brief. This is something a lot of branches already do. However, this motion is designed to standardise the practice to allow members to access branch meetings more easily. Hybrid meetings allow greater flexibility for everyone, especially people with young families, who cannot always get to meetings. It is easier to have a meeting on Zoom on whatever program you prefer when you have small children. You put them to bed, you are not having to drag them out and that is quite a big thing. That is something we are piloting at the moment. So I second this motion, thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Anyone wishing to speak against. Can we have the mover of Motion 18 to come the rostrum, please.

INAPPROPRIATE RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF.

MOTION 18

18. INAPPROPRIATE RECRUITMENT OF SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

This Congress notes that the special conference organised by the National Education Union (NEU) on 28 February 2026 is/was an attempt to justify to its members the recruitment and

representation of support staff who are already represented by three TUC affiliated unions. (GMB, UNISON and UNITE).

Consequently, it is further evidence that the NEU is continuing to undermine the existing National Joint Council (NJC) recognition agreement, set up in 1997, for the express purposes of collective bargaining and representation of non-teaching staff.

The NUT was launched in 1889 in order to represent teachers within the state education system. The ATL began life as the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association and changed its name to the Association of Teachers and Lecturers in 1993. At this point it was a 'non-striking professional association.

As far back as 2003 the TUC had warned ATL and threatened them with potential expulsion if they continued to recruit Teaching Assistants.

In 2017 the NUT and ATL merged to form the NEU. Upon merging in 2017 the NEU voluntarily entered into an agreement explicitly acknowledged that the NJC unions are the recognised unions for school support staff and collectively bargaining on behalf of those workers. In signing this agreement, the NEU committed to not actively organise or recruit school support staff, to avoid undermining existing bargaining arrangements and to ensure the three recognised unions could continue to win for school support staff.

In 2023 the NEU was fined by the TUC for breaching these agreements and was formally censured yet again in 2025.

Congress calls on the CEC to vigorously defend the current recognition arrangements and to vigorously oppose all attempts by the NEU to undermine and subvert them.

Congress endorses the censure of the NEU for its attempts to develop inter union conflicts in our schools as totally divisive in the labour movement. Congress calls on other parts of the movement- both industrial and political wings- to cease fraternal dealings with NEU until it ends this divisive activity. Congress recognises that necessary business with the NEU and the parts of the movement in political office will be necessary, but this should not involve any fraternal links. Congress considers that until the NEU ends this divisive activity fraternal links should not be restored.

L26 RICHMOND & WANDSWORTH BRANCH SOUTHERN REGION

(Carried)

LYNN POLLARD (Southern): I am severely dyslexic so please bear with. *(Applause)*

I rise to support Motion 18: Inappropriate Recruitment of School Staff. This motion does not create division within the trade union movement. It is defending agreed structures, protecting collective bargaining and standing up for the members we represent. For nearly three decades school support staff have been represented through

the National Joint Council Recognition Agreement established in 1997. That agreement recognises GMB, Unison and Unite as the unions responsible for collective bargaining and representation of non-teaching school staff.

These arrangements were put in place for a reason. They provide stability, consistency and a strong collective voice for hundreds and thousands of school support workers in our schools. Yet despite longstanding agreements, we continue to see attempts by the National Education Union to recruit support staff who are already represented by recognised unions. The facts are clear. The NEU traces its roots to organisations established to represent teachers and education professionals. When the NUT and ATL merged in 2017 to create the NEU, they entered into an agreement acknowledging that the recognised union for school support staff remained with the NJC unions. Importantly, the NEU committed not to actively organise or recruit school support staff in ways that would undermine existing bargaining agreements. That commitment was not made lightly and it was made because all parties understand that inter-union competition weakens workers and strengthens employers. Unfortunately, these commitments have not been honoured. Congress should note that the TUC has already taken action on the issue. The NEU was fined in 2023 for breaching these arrangements and was formally censured again in 2025. These are not minor disagreements. They represent findings by our own movement that agreed trade union principles have been broken.

Colleagues, every minute spent fighting one another is a minute not fighting for better pay, safer workplaces and stronger public services. School support staff face enormous challenges. They are dealing with low pay, recruitment/retention problems, increasing

workloads and years of under investment. We need unions working together to improve their lives, not competing with each other for membership numbers. Recognition agreements matter. Collective bargaining arrangements matter. Trade union solidarity matters. If one union can simply ignore agreed boundaries and recruit wherever it chooses then the foundations of trust within our movement are weakened. That benefits nobody except the employers, who would rather see the workers divided.

That is why this motion is important. It calls for CEC to vigorously defend the current recognition agreement. It calls on GMB to oppose attempts to undermine and subvert these arrangements. And it sends a clear message that support staff deserve strong, stable, recognised representation.

Congress, we are proud of the work the GMB does for school support staff. We are proud of the gains we have secured through collective bargaining and we are proud to stand up for the principles of solidarity and mutual respect that have always underpinned our movement. I urge Congress to support Motion 18, thank you.
(Applause)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Can we have the seconder for Motion 18, please.

KIM MARSHALL (Southern): Good morning, Madam President, Vice-President and Congress, seconding Motion 18: Inappropriate Recruitment of School Support Staff. As someone who has spent many years working in schools and representing school support staff, I know first-hand the challenges the workers face. Teaching assistants, learning support assistants, midday supervisors, admin staff, site staff and many others

play a vital role in our schools yet they are amongst the lowest-paid workers in the education system and frequently have to fight hard to have their voices heard. This is why clear recognition arrangements matter. When unions compete for the same groups of workers despite existing agreements, it creates confusion for members, weakens collective bargaining and risks dividing workers who should be standing together.

School support staff need strong representation focused on improving pay, terms and conditions. They do not need inter-union disputes distracting from those priorities. In Merton our branch has spent many years campaigning alongside school support staff, including our ongoing fight for fair pay and London weighting. *(Applause)* Hooray! We know the value of building strong workplace support and speaking with a united voice.

Congress, our movement is strongest when unions work together, respect agreed boundaries and focus on improving the lives of working people. I urge you to support this motion, thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Anyone wishing to speak against. Can I have the mover of Motion 23 please, to come to the rostrum.

BETTER RECORDING OF PARTICULAR PROTECTED

CHARACTERISTICS

MOTION 23

23. BETTER RECORDING OF PARTICULAR PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

This Congress notes the increasing requests made of Branches to work with members with particular protected characteristics. Yet membership records are often incomplete leading

to difficulties in accurate identification. Therefore, Conference calls for GMB to develop and promote a model survey which could be used by all Union Branches in order to increase and correct the current baseline of information to:

- i) Raise the opportunities to access reasonable adjustments for employers;
- ii) Facilitate working with underrepresented and marginalised members and communities;
- iii) Provide for powerful and accurate intelligence to help workplace representatives negotiate with employers, and finally;
- iv) Encourage Union Activists in their organising and activism by telling them where to start.

D44 DERBYSHIRE COMMUNITY BRANCH MIDLANDS REGION

(Carried)

MAGGIE PALMER (Midlands): Good morning, Madam President, Congress. I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am here today to move Motion 23. Our ability to record protected characteristics and that is because of the shift from analogue to digital, from paper to computer. Cloud-based and AI-driven systems can do a lot of work now and that is aiming to help with accuracy and speed of data collection. Increasingly, we are also governed by governance standards and guidance to record and be in a position to report on those things. However, numerous reviews consistently highlight those gaps that remain with problems that lie not only in a lack of recording but the absence of analysis regarding how those characteristics intersect. Add to that the layer of hidden characteristics, for example, those some don't wish to record maybe or disclose on sexual orientation, religion or disability, not to mention the problem with agencies using incompatible systems preventing a complete joined-up picture being built of an individual.

The TUC Equality Audit of 2020 noted that while many unions already collect data on gender (85%), race (59%), disability (56%) and LGBTQ+ characteristics (59%) and

young people (61%), this data is often incomplete or based on samples, so it is extrapolated, it is a good guess, a best guess. As trade unionists are we demonstrating that we lack curiosity about a person's multiple identities? Is there a systemic and structural bias within the system itself? How do we know this currently? There is a fundamental need to add the human element to our membership, service design and organising interventions which support true engagement. We cannot expect every branch to operate with a low percentage of accurate intelligence as to their membership make-up, but we can equip them with the tools and knowledge to understand how to do something and importantly, support them to focus their efforts. Brothers and sisters, I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Before I call the seconder, can I please remind everyone if they could be mindful when they are getting up and moving their chairs because there is an echo that is travelling throughout the room, so could people please be considerate, thank you. Can I ask the seconder of Motion 23 to come to the rostrum, please?

KAREN MORELL: (Midlands): Seconding Motion 23. (*Applause*) Thank you. President, Congress, this motion stands for fairness, inclusion and the right to remain in work with dignity. As a union the GMB always stands up for working people, but to truly represent every member we need to fully understand the challenges people face in the workplace. We believe the GMB should develop a confidential survey for all members to complete, covering all characteristics such as age, race, gender, disability, health conditions, caring responsibilities and any special needs or adjustments people may require. Too often people struggle in silence. Many workers are trying to cope with workplaces that simply aren't designed with their needs in mind. Without

understanding the scale of these issues, we cannot effectively challenge employers or push for improvements that people desperately need.

This is not about giving special treatment. It is about ensuring the equal opportunities and fair access to work. Reasonable adjustments are not a luxury. They are a necessity for people to remain employed, healthy and financially secure. If we fail to gather this information properly then some workers will continue to feel unsupported, overwhelmed and eventually be forced out of employment altogether. A strong union is an informed union. By gathering accurate information the GMB can build strong campaigns, negotiate more effectively and ensure members' voices are heard, especially those who are too often overlooked. We have an opportunity to make workplaces more inclusive, more supportive and fairer for everyone. I believe we should take it. Thank you. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Anyone wishing to speak against? We will now go to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 17? Against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 18? Against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 23? Against? Thank you, that is carried.

*Motion 17 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 18 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 23 was **CARRIED**.*

VICE-PRESIDENT: Can I please ask the mover of Motion 19 to come to the rostrum and 22 to be ready as well.

ORGANISING WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SECTOR

MOTION 19

19. ORGANISING WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SECTOR

This Congress notes that GMB represents those working for a variety of trades unions including TUC affiliates and non-affiliates. We recognise that such workers must organise and fight for improved pay and conditions like any other.

Yet the GMB also recognises that such organising carries its own unique set of circumstances that requires support and that the GMB should facilitate knowledge sharing and organising priorities between branches in this sector.

Congress resolves:

- to support the establishment of a network for GMB branches representing those who work in the industrial relations sector
- in consultation with this network, establish best practice and priorities for organising in the industrial relations sector

B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ BRANCH LONDON REGION

(Referred)

HANNAH COUSINS (London): Good morning, Congress, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am pleased to move this motion on behalf of M23 BMA branch, but I am also proud to represent my own branch this week Unite M23 branch, representing staff working for Unite the Union.

Congress, I am incredibly often and often feel very lucky to work for a trade union after working for most of my adult life in the hospitality sector and more recently on the Tyne & Wear Metro. I know how vastly different the pay and conditions are from my current employer. But this shouldn't be unusual: trade unions should be setting the standard for all employers to follow. But Congress, like any employee, staff working in the industrial relations sector can still be subject to the same conditions they tirelessly fight to protect their members from. We still face poor workplace culture, bullying

harassment. We still face issues around pay disparity and threats of redundancy and we still face inconsistencies, with policies and recognition agreements being ignored.

Congress, this has a direct impact on our members. Burn out and poor mental health can be incredibly prevalent in our workplaces and when trade union staff are suffering members will, unfortunately, suffer as a consequence,

This motion will commit GMB to creating an action plan to ensure the industrial relations sector is connected, well organised and in a strong position to support and empower members to win in their workplaces. I do note the CEC has recommended that this motion is referred to the region so they can decide how best to engage with members. I work in Newcastle myself and, as far as I am aware, all trade union branches are based in the London region, so I would ask how this could be put into action, and hope that is addressed when the CEC comments later and hope London Region can get supported and liaise with other regions on this as well. Congress, thank you very much, and please support the motion. *(Applause)*

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

JAMIE WALKER (London): M23 Unite Branch. I am seconding the B33 GMB@BMA/BMJ's motion: Organising Workers in the Industrial Relations Sector. My comrade Hannah said it all there. I will just add in that as a Unite employee who has also had GMB supported campaigns and actions at his workplace, it is surprising how many times workers in the industrial relations sector just put up with it. There is almost a shame associated with taking industrial action when you are already working

in a trade union. You might feel like you have failed somehow. How could you have let it get so bad? Shouldn't you know better? Rightly or wrongly, the employer may want you to feel like that. Don't rock the boat, don't change things. You might think, "This is going to look bad, the media will poke at us for this". Well, here's some news, they do that to us anyway, whenever we take action, regardless of the sector we are in.

So, image and media is no friend to the trade union movement and should be no barrier to our industrial relations workers in GMB working together and connecting improving and training and organising obviously. A trade union with hundreds and thousands of members will surely run like a retail store with hundreds and thousands of customers. The industrial relations sector employees still need to be activists, they still need the training, they still need the support and connection that we give to our members and activists across all of the sectors that GMB looks after. We want this motion to be supported as the network inside GMB to make sure that we grow and improve the skills of our members who are employees of the trade unions, and for betterment of their workplaces, which of course leads to betterment of all your workplaces, so please second this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Is there anyone wishing to speak against? (No response)
Can I have the speaker for Motion 22, please.

MEMBERS AND BRANCHES.

MOTION 22

22. MEMBERS AND BRANCHES

This Congress calls upon the CEC to ensure that when a member joins this Union they should be told which Branch they are in, given contact details of the Secretary and advised of meetings.

**W60 WELLINGTON BRANCH
MIDLANDS REGION**

(Referred)

BYRON COOK (Midlands): Good morning, again. I am wearing glasses this time so I will be able to read it all right. This motion is quite a simple one. It pretty much says it all so I won't bore you too long. When a new member joins the GMB, they need to be told exactly which branch they are in and which branch they fall under as well as meeting dates. We are all here because of the branches. We are only custodians of the union and we need to ensure the future, and branches play a vital part in that. That is what this motion is asking for, so I move this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: The seconder, thank you.

MARK HARRIS (Midlands): Good morning. Still a first-time delegate but at least second-time speaker. I fully agree with Byron. We are proposing a simple format email that all new members can refer to. We know that all the information is available on the website but in a period of distress and it is a new environment, it was for me, you need some place to refer back to. Just a simple format email will do the job. Thank you very much. I call on you to support this. *(Applause)*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Anyone wishing to speak against the motion? *(No response)* Can we have Gwylan from CEC, please.

GWYLAN BRINKWORTH (CEC): Vice-President, Congress, responding to Motions 19 and 22 on behalf of the CEC. Turning first to Motion 19, there are many GMB members working for our sister trade unions across the country and therefore in different regions. Members are free to make networks to organise and share knowledge of industrial issues. We are asking for this to be referred so regions can best decide on how to engage with members.

On Motion 22, the CEC is asking for this to be referred. The motion outlines what should happen in practice. Members should receive communications telling them what branch they are part and invited to any planned branch meetings in addition to other activities. If there are examples where this is not the case, they should be referred to the relevant region or branch as appropriate.

Congress, to sum up, the CEC positions are that Motions 19 and 22 be referred. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gwylan. Can I please ask speakers for Motions 24, Composite 2 and Motion 29 to come to the front please. Can I also ask London Region do they agree to refer on Motion 19? (*Agreed*) Midlands Region, do you agree to refer Motion 22 (*Agreed*)

*Motion 19 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 22 was **REFERRED**.*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you.

The President took the Chair.

UNION ORGANISATION: REPRESENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

THE PRESIDENT: We move to Union Organisation. Can I have the mover of Motion 24, please.

LAZY BRANCHES

MOTION 24

24. LAZY BRANCHES

This Congress calls upon the CEC to ensure that Branches are active and fulfilling the roles of the Union as covered by the rule book.

If Branches are not active, the Branch Secretary and Committee will be given support to ensure this is resolved. If appropriate improvement is not received or the Branch Secretary does not fulfil the role the Branch will be dissolved and Members distributed to Branches that are active.

A Branch Secretary should not decide if they are able to be contacted or not, it is part of the role.

W60 WELLINGTON BRANCH MIDLANDS REGION

(Referred)

MILES SHORT (Midlands): Good morning, Chair and the rest, I forget their names because I am losing my mind! I have come to talk about this motion. You will have to excuse me because I wasn't quite ready for it.

This Congress calls upon the CEC to ensure that branches are fulfilling the roles covered by the Rule Book. This is because I believe in two and a half years or three

years we are going to have our biggest fight we have ever had as a union. I don't want to mention this guy's name, but he got 5 million quid, and I am thinking, "Why has he got 5 million quid?" From a bloke abroad. I feel we are going to be in a big fight in two and a half years' time, so everything has got to be right, the Ts have got to be crossed, the Is have got to be crossed. I thought I had seen everything with Maggie Thatcher the Milk Snatcher but this guy is a load (*turns round and shows t-shirt slogan*) crap. Thank you very much. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Miles. You are sailing a bit close to the wind there. Secunder of Motion 24, please.

ANGELA GILRAINE (Midlands): Morning, everybody, morning, President, Vice-President and the top table, morning, Congress. Can I ask you all a question, please. How many people have looked at their schedules on the branches and thought, "Who the hell are they? Where are they from?" Can I have a show of hands, thank you. Part of this motion is that we could possibly have a lot more people at Congress but there are branches out there that are quiet, you don't know whether they are coming or going or have ever been there. It has an impact on other branches. I do not know whether they get subsidised or some kind of funding but we could amalgamate them to a bigger branch. It is not fair on members like us who are paying our subs when you have just got branches which are just sitting in the background. That is one of the reasons we brought this motion to the forefront because, as I say, most of you will know what we have said in the motion, that there are lazy branches. That is why I am seconding the Motion and thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Angela. Mover of Composite 2. I think it is London Region moving it.

GMB CASEWORK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

COMPOSITE 2

C2. GMB CASEWORK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Congress notes that GMB does not currently have a central, union-wide casework management system which makes the roles of the Branch Secretary and GMB Workplace Representatives much more of a challenge as casework is largely managed locally by individual reps within branches, using informal or disconnected methods.

As GMB activists, we deal with significant numbers of members enquiries on a regular basis. Often members need to contact the union in significant distress or for urgent representation.

This causes lack of visibility, meaning branch officials and workplace representatives cannot easily see what cases are being handled by other reps within their branch.

Unfortunately, despite some progress made in recent years, the process for members to be able to get in touch with their branches for advice and representation remains outdated.

Often members will call numerous different GMB offices to report the same issue and their case will be passed to the branch several times with incomplete information. As a union we still push too many members to call an office by phone to relay their case rather than enter a case form or contact us online, which is inefficient and requires significantly more resource. The process for passing cases between regions for members who have moved or contacted the wrong office remains inefficient due to different systems being used.

Many other unions operate online forms which help to triage cases and pass queries more effectively directly to the branch with the required information.

Congress believes that a casework management system would improve coordination, transparency, and continuity of representation, and as such would help ensure consistent standards of case handling across the union. Thereby allowing branches to become more self-sufficient regarding their casework.

Improved visibility of cases would support reps, not replace them, by allowing better handover, peer support, and escalation where needed. A casework management system would strengthen GMB's ability to represent members effectively and demonstrate professionalism and accountability.

Congress resolves to:

1. A review of how we can make the process for members' enquiries more efficient

2. A single unified online form, shared across the union for members to be able to contact the GMB
3. A single casework system to be adopted to standardise handling queries and track when a member has already contacted the union.
4. Instruct the Central Executive Council (CEC) to investigate the development or procurement of a secure, GDPR-compliant casework management system for branches
5. Consult with branches during the design and implementation process.
6. Provide training and guidance to reps to ensure the system is accessible, user-friendly, and supportive of lay representation.

Moving Region: Wales & South West

Seconding Region: London

(Referred)

ROBERT WHEELER (London): Madam President, Vice-President, Congress, good morning, moving Composite 2: Handling Casework. Congress, as GMB activists, we deal with vast numbers of members' enquiries on a regular basis. Often members need to contact the union in significant distress for urgent representation. Unfortunately, despite some progress made in recent years, the process for members to be able to get in touch with their branches for advice and representation remains outdated. Often members will call numerous different GMB offices to report the same issue and their case will be passed to the branch several times with incomplete information. As a union, we still push too many members to call an office by phone to relay their cases rather than enter a case form or contact us online, which is inefficient and requires significantly more resource. The process of passing cases between regions for members who have moved or contacted the wrong office remains inefficient due to different systems being used. Many other unions operate online phones which helps to triage case and pass enquiries more effectively directly to the branch with the required information.

So how do we resolve these issues? A review of how we can make the process for members' enquiries more efficient include:

- A single unified online form shared across the union for members to be able to contact the GMB.
- A single casework system to be adopted to standardise handling queries and track when a member has already contacted the union.

Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank, you, Robert. A seconder for Wales & South West.

ROBERT SWIFT (Wales & South West): First-time delegates, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am pleased to second this important composite motion. My colleague has clearly outlined the practical problems we face, so I want to reinforce why this change is not just helpful but essential for the future of our union. At its core this motion is about how we serve our members. Every day members come to us, often in distress, often needing urgent help, yet too often the system they encounter is fragmented, slow and frustrating. They repeat their stories, contact multiple offices and receive inconsistent responses. That is not the standard our members deserve. This motion is about efficiency and visibility. It is about supporting our reps and it is about modernisation and credibility. This motion sets out a sensible measured path forward. Congress, this is about building a union that works better for the people we represent. For these reasons, please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Robert. The mover of Motion 29, please.

BRANCH WORKING REVIEW

MOTION 29

29. BRANCH WORKING REVIEW

This Congress calls upon the CEC to conduct a review of how Branch Secretaries are supported at National and Regional level to identify the resources they need to effectively service the membership and conduct their Rulebook duties.

We are concerned that Branches and Branch Secretaries have seen significant increases in expectations for the servicing of members at a time when resources have been reduced in recent years, especially with the decision to move from 10% to 7.5% share of subscriptions given to branches. We have also seen an increased demand on branches to fund areas of work previously met by the Regions, for example, training Activists and expenses to attend Regional or other activities. Therefore, Branches are starting to face increased financial pressure which is detrimental to effective servicing of membership.

Equally, there are no effective forums in some regions to enable Branch Secretaries and essential Activists to feed back their concerns or to co-ordinate how best to conduct their branch duties. As a result, Branch Secretaries often feel isolated with no real voice to influence changes being implemented at other levels of the Union.

A review of how the responsibilities of full-time Officers and the role of Branch Secretaries are shared in relation to the companies and members under their jurisdiction is required. The current system of passing all responsibility to Branch Secretaries for representational work against a backdrop of employers increasingly acting to thwart and misuse procedures has significantly increased the number of meetings Branch Secretaries are expected to cover.

We recommend the CEC establish a Branch Working Review to deal with the following:

- How best to ensure that Branch Secretaries are fully supported, and that their workloads are realistic against current working practice.
- To review the role of full-time Officers, their duties and responsibilities for servicing members to enable them to give effective branch support when required.
- To ensure that Activists on National Working Groups or conducting duties for groups of members in their region, are fairly rewarded for the tasks they perform, and their work is linked to the branch structures.
- To update and make recommendations to Congress/Rule Revisions in relation to the expenses, Honorarium and payments made to Branch Secretaries, case Support Workers and Activists, to ensure a fair system across all Branches and Regions of the Union.

MANCHESTER CENTRAL Q22 BRANCH NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION

(Referred)

KEVIN FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): President, Congress, old time sage, old-time speaker and old-time campaigner! (*Applause*) Congress, I am moving Motion 29 with a heavy heart. President, Congress, I have been delighted to serve this movement. It has been a privilege and remains a privilege day in and day out. Believe it or not, I know I look too young but this is my 52nd year of service to this movement. (*Applause*) I am not here to whinge. I am here to make sure we have got the best movement we need and the best service we need for the membership that we serve. (*Cheers*)

I am a part-time lay activist. My honorarium is £600 a year. That is based on the scale that was agreed at this conference and I was told that is what I am worth. I have a general branch with Uber, Amazon, private hire, legal, manufacturing, charities - you name it, I have got it. That is a fact. I don't complain about it. I love being with people and I love serving members, but sadly, in all the years I have done this, this is the time when I feel least valued. There is a time, brothers and sisters, when I believe we have got the priorities not quite right, where the systems do not quite connect and where you start to feel like a second-class citizen even in your own movement.

That should not be happening. There should be no place for that. Conference, branches are the lifeblood of this movement. I have already spoken about the need for good administrative systems. I have already spoken about the need to enable us to represent cases, as was just eloquently spoken before. Last year I dealt with over 140 cases. This year so far on my books I have got 70 cases since January. It is almost a full-time job. Only for the charity work that I do I couldn't complete half the work I do, and they fund half of that. It is not the way we need to resource branches. We need to look at the way in which we support the branches and the lay activists at local level, to be able to

do the job professionally and not to be looking over our shoulders all the time.

(Applause)

I, like many in this room, was somewhat surprised when I discovered there was still a Branch Working Group because I haven't been consulted in the last five years as far as I am aware. I have not had one email as a branch secretary. I have not been asked my opinion about how to improve it. I have not been spoken to. If there is a working group, when I got to regional council, I was somewhat surprised. Let's get our finger out and make sure that communication with our branch secretaries is effective and meaningful and hits the target when it should do. *(Applause)*

How we share the cake is important. It is important that we enable people to have the resources they need to do the job at ground level. I know you are going to ask me to refer this. There is no parallel system for me. There is one union, we are all in it - officers, full time, lay activists - we work together in this movement and I respect those who are doing that. I want to see that strengthened, I want to see that encouraged Congress, I ask you to support this and to make sure you come back to the working group with decisions that are made so that we do improve this. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin, for that passionate speech. We recognise the 52 years' service you have put into this movement.

DAVE HOPE (North West & Irish): Seconding this motion. It is fantastic when you follow Kevin because he says everything so you don't have to say much. I have to say

Kevin 50 odd years, I made my first speech here in this beautiful ballroom over 40 years ago and it is fantastic to be back here in Blackpool! (*Applause*) It is the best place. Well, Benidorm is a bit better because it's got sunshine. Basically, all we are asking for is there is a Branch Working Party there, and every time I ask, they have not met, they have not met; all Kevin is asking with this motion is it doesn't get put in Gary's bottom drawer, it gets sorted and it gets fixed in good time. I would say this time next year when we come to Congress let's have the working party results and what they recommend next year. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, David. Congress in Benidorm sounds quite fun! Anybody speaking in opposition to those motions? (*No response*) In that case, can I ask Dave Clements from the CEC to speak on their behalf.

DAVE CLEMENTS (CEC): Responding to Motion 24, Composite 2 and Motion 29. On Motion 24 we recognise the aim of the motion to ensure elected lay members are held accountable to their branches and its members. The Rule Book currently has clear procedures on dissolving branches (Rule 42) as well as clear responsibilities for the branch secretary (Rule 37) Rule 35 outlines what action should be contained in branch development and branch recruitment plans, including communications, required branch resources and what support a branch needs. Congress 2026 is not a Rules Congress so rule amendments cannot be submitted. We are asking that this motion be referred to see if there are live examples of poor practice, but in the first instance, these should be raised with the relevant regional committee.

On Composite 2, the union is currently undertaking a major legacy systems replacement programme that directly underpins the digital infrastructure required to deliver the improvements proposed in this motion. It is also the responsibility of regions to set up effective systems to track member cases and inter-regional communications, ensuring that members get the best possible service and treatment throughout their dealings with GMB. While the aims of this motion are acknowledged and supported in principle, the proposals cannot be implemented at this time without disrupting the roll out of new programme we will monitor the roll out of the new system with this motion in mind, which is why the CEC is asking for this motion to be referred.

Finally on Motion 29, this motion substantially duplicates work already under way through the established Branch Working Party. The union is looking at delivering a significant and ongoing programme to strengthen branch capacity, support branch grass-roots organising, drive union growth through GMB@Work strategy, support development and training for branch officer holders and gives branches flexibility to create new roles to support branch secretary work. The CEC Organising Sub-Committee has delegated authority to define and implement best practice in branch development planning, roll- out and shop steward development. The proposals outlined in this motion fall squarely within this remit and should be considered as part of the existing union-wide programme rather than through the creation of parallel structures.

In relation to proposals on remuneration, this motion risks blurring the established distinction between the roles, rights and responsibilities of lay members and employed officers. The Rule Book is explicit: branch honoraria must be approved by regional committees which are the appropriate and accountable bodies to oversee these matters.

Any attempt to centralise branch positions or redefine this process would be inappropriate and unnecessary. Further, on expenses, the CEC Finance & General Purposes Committee have just reviewed, simplified, revised and uplifted expense rates, with changes coming into effect on 1 April 2026. These include significant increases on travel time allowances and conference allowance as well as the previous 2025 uplift in the overnight meal allowance. The CEC is asking that this motion be referred, however, so that we can build the requests of the motion into the current workstreams instead of creating parallel structures.

Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking that Motion 24, Composite 2 and Motion 29 be referred. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Do Midlands agree to refer Motion 24? (*Agreed*) Do London and Wales & South West agree to refer Composite 2? (*Agreed*) Does North West & Irish Region agree to refer Motion 29? (*Agreed*) In that case because they are all accepted for reference back, there is no vote.

Solidarity Video – KVPU Ukraine

THE PRESIDENT: That is the end of the motions for this morning, but before we break for lunch, we have a short solidarity message to play you from an international sister trade union, the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine.

(*Video shown*)

THE PRESIDENT: It is always lovely to get messages of solidarity from our sister trade unions. There is a Ukraine event and other fringe events as well today. We have finished business for this morning so you have a bit of free time before those fringe events. Enjoy the stalls, enjoy lunch time and be back here at 2 pm, please. Thank you.

Congress adjourned for lunch.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Congress assembled at 2.00 p.m.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I call Congress to order, please. I hope you all had a good lunch break and you got to see stalls and go to some fringes. Colleagues, I do need you to listen because we have a slight change to the running order today, so please make a note of what I am about to say. Your Regional Secretaries have also been notified of these change. We will continue with the awards, General Secretary's Report and Midlands Region video as planned on your programme. Then we will debate the CEC Statement on Politics and the Labour Party, and Motions 231 and 235. Our guest speakers Margaret Aspinall and Sue Roberts will then address Congress. We will return to the agenda and continue with Motions 230 and 25. If you are speaking this afternoon, please listen out for when your motion is called. Can I ask the SOC to give us a short update. Karen to move SOC Report No. 2.

Standing Orders Committee Report No. 2

KAREN DUDLEY (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): President, Congress, moving SOC Report No. 2. Can I please start with a correcting the record with regards to Motion 174 from London Region. In SOC Report No. 1 it was incorrectly stated that this motion had been withdrawn. The correct position is that it was agreed that this motion is existing policy.

Withdrawn Motions

The SOC has been informed that the following motions have been withdrawn:

From the Midlands Region:

Motion 199: Reforming the NHS Pay Review Body Into a Truly Independent Negotiating Body.

Motion 209: Introducing Strong AI Protections for NHS Workers and Patients.

Motions 211: Protecting NHS Jobs by Ensuring AI is Used Only as a Supportive Tool.

Motion 307: Ukraine: Defence and the Rise of Authoritarianism and Fascism.

From Southern Region:

Motion 141: Fair Commission and Charges for Private Hire Drivers.

From London Region:

Motion 243: Abolition of the Monarchy.

Emergency Motions

The SOC has accepted three emergency motions so far as being in order for debate.

They are from Midlands:

Emergency Motion 1: Middle East: Impact on Aviation

Emergency Motion 2: Government Adoption Apology (*Applause*)

From Scotland:

Emergency Motion 3: Updated EHRC Guidance on the Equality Act 2010 - Protection for Trans, Non-Binary and Gender-Diverse Members.

The SOC recommends that this motion is composited with the emergency motion from Wales & South West under the title: Trans Rights Following the Updated Draft Code of Practice from the EHRC 2026.

The Congress timetable will be updated and the SOC will consider further requests for emergency motions. The SOC will update Congress accordingly.

Please note that the following emergency debates from Report No. 1 will be debated as follows. Emergency Motion 1 will be on Monday afternoon, Emergency Motion 2 on Tuesday afternoon and Emergency Motion 3 on Thursday morning.

Bucket collections

The SOC has agreed three requests for bucket collections as follows. From the North West & Irish Region for the following charities, to be split three ways:

1. Little Lights, Liverpool (formally known as Zoe's Place)

2. Angel Eyes, Northern Ireland.

3. Street Life Blackpool.

The SOC recommends that this collection takes place on Monday.

From Scotland a charity called Drumchapel LIFE. The SOC recommends that this collection takes place on Tuesday.

And from London a charity called Motor Neurone Disease Association. (*Applause*)

The SOC recommends this collection takes place on Wednesday.

President, Congress, I formally move adoption of SOC Report No. 2.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Does anyone want to challenge SOC Report No. 2? No. In that case, can I put it to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against? That is carried.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Karen. Colleagues, there was an unfortunate error this morning when the wrong Obituary list played. I am really sorry if that caused any distress. We will now play the correct Obituary list, so if all those who can would stand, thank you. (*Congress stood in silent tribute*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Congress. My apologies. Thank you for your understanding that sometimes things do not run smoothly.

WILL THORNE AWARD

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

(Video shown)

Gemma, would you like to come up on the stage. Come on.

GEMMA WILLIAMSON (NEYH, K40 Keighley & Airedale): Good afternoon, everybody. Sorry, I am a little bit emotional. As I said in that video, this award isn't just for me, it is for my entire branch and I hope the fact that our tiny little branch that has been all over the news that stood outside on that picket line in the absolute pouring down rain, more than anything, we won something from that. Don't get me wrong, the fight isn't over and I am not going anywhere, I am going to continue to keep fighting. *(Applause)* I hope everyone can take from this that, no matter how small or big your branch is, so long as you can remind your members of what they are worth and getting them united to stand together to see their value, you can achieve anything. So please, keep on fighting and thank you, everybody. *(Applause and standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Gemma, really well deserved.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

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

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Congress, thank you. I am not really sure how you follow that. That was absolutely tremendous.

Colleagues, like you, I come from a very modest background and so standing here as I have had the privilege to do for a number of years now, it is never lost on me how special that is. I listened to the debate this morning about Thorne and his grave, the motion from London Region. Thank you for bringing that. Like Thorne I was a gas worker and so, to stand before you as your General Secretary Treasurer again is truly, truly humbling for me and thank you for your support and support me in carrying on with the General Secretary Treasurer's role. So thank you everybody, colleagues, and it is great to see everyone here in Blackpool.

We should never forget, though, that this union is not about general secretaries. We are a union that is built by and for our members. They are the women and men who make our union great: people who do amazing things every single day. I want to pay a special tribute to a person who as an activist, a member and a GMB employee for the past 29 years, has done so much for our union and who is now retiring. Louise Gilmour has been described by the Scottish President as being as hard as a coffin nail. I know from personal experience that is not true - she is far harder than that. With all the rows that we have had over the years I can testify to it. Louise is one of the hardest working

most committed people we will ever meet. When this union was at rock bottom, dragged down by those from the past whose behaviour shamed us, she was one of those who stood up and she called it out. Louise, your time in GMB hasn't always been easy, I know that, sister, but you have prevailed and what a journey. From a machinist in Glasgow on the shop floor in the Scottish Secretary. You are a leader, you are a fighter and, above all, you are a friend. (*Applause and standing ovation*) Are you getting emotional?

Really the story is a GMB one, it is about hard work, it is about perseverance and it is about achievement. Every day across this great union we see those same things. In GMB London Region we have started work at Sizewell C, which is going to be the new nuclear power station. Twelve months ago at our Congress some of you will remember it was announced that Sizewell had the go-ahead. The region is on site already campaigning, winning, growing, organising the security staff and starting to battle on the issues that matter to our members.

They are also winning in Parliament. I have had said so many times there are no political superheroes for us in GMB, but the unsung heroes in this world are often the ones who work for the politicians. And GMB London Region has done some incredible things last year, growing the membership on the back of the One Parliament, One Employer campaign. One of the things that I think is so fantastic about the campaign, like all the best campaigns that we run, is it is led by lay members. The region has also lead the way with their retention and retrieval work. They are delivering real growth in financial membership and in fact the project has been so good we have adopted it

across the whole union. Well done to everybody in GMB London Region for the fantastic work that you are doing. (*Applause*)

In Midlands - sometimes a thorn in my side at this Congress - I do want to recognise one person in particular who has made such a difference for this union, and that is Sharon Yates. (*Applause*) She has campaigned night and day for our great ceramics industry and a couple of weeks ago, because of the campaign, the Government announced a game-changing financial support package for the sector. Sharon, when there was darkness you lit a flaming beacon of hope. Congress let's salute our Hero of the Pots.

The older I get the more emotional I get. I do not know what it is about getting old, but in Birmingham I cannot tell you how emotional I was when I watched our members getting a quarter of a billion pounds, wages that were stolen from them by the Council and returned to them because of the fight our members took on. (*Applause*) They said we would never win equal pay in Birmingham. I remember that but we did win it. We won, we prevailed and our members are better off as a result.

Another region that sometimes causes me problem, the great big North East, Yorkshire & Humber region (*Cheers*) You drive me mad but I love yous dearly, really. Look the work you are doing is simply incredible. The pace of the Equal Pay campaigns is just furious. Leeds, Sheffield, Sunderland, Durham, all this work that is going on tackling pay injustice. We are winning victories and battle by battle you are building our union. In Doncaster Council we fought and campaigned to get our members back in the National Joint Council and that didn't just win our members a pay rise, much

deserved as it was, it is also bringing a whole new layer of activists through our union. You have just seen the fantastic work at Airedale Hospital. That is incredible and the Secretary of State on the back of that campaign, has committed there be no more NHS sub-cos without union agreement. That is genuinely a transformative and historic win. *(Applause)*

To our host this week, North West & Irish Region, and just a few miles up the coast here there is a huge success story for this region at BAE Systems at Barrow. Lee and the reps team are doing an incredible job building the union at the yard and I am so proud when I see thousands of apprenticeships being brought into the membership of our union. At AstraZeneca, our members in Macclesfield have fought to let the Government know that we need to retain jobs in this country. We can't have jobs from AstraZeneca outsourced. There are high skilled GMB members' jobs producing essential pharmaceuticals and we say to all the team involved, "Your union is with you all the way". Well done to everybody! *(Applause)*

Of course to that very special team in Northern Ireland, I always love coming over to see you. I have heard about the potential cuts at Translink. I promise you the whole union will be with you and I will be with you side by side. As for our members at Boeing and Airbus, I understand there will be announcements tomorrow. Solidarity - and we will see this through, I promise you! *(Applause)*

GMB Scotland, what a busy and fantastic year you have had. The stuff you are doing in care is incredible and again the Equal Pay work in Falkirk and Dundee and beyond is absolutely incredible and a credit to you all. I want to pay tribute to our convener at

Ferguson Marine shipyard. Alex Logan will be retiring. He is an old friend of mine. We have just secured another five years of work at Ferguson Marine. I was proud to stand with Alex Logan when the yard was nationalised and his fight ensures there will be another generation of shipbuilders on the Lower Clyde. Well done to Alex. *(Applause)*

The team working on the NHS and Ambulance Service in Scotland, I watch the numbers and I watch what you are doing with new shop stewards coming through. Incredible work - fighting and campaigning and winning on pay. Well done to each and every one of you.

In Southern Region, I am well aware of the challenges that the region has had, but you are continuing to be such a strong campaigning presence for this union and, as we heard from the National President, we have a new Regional Secretary in Southern Region. Nadine, welcome to your first Congress. I know you are going to do incredible things with the great group of people you have got in the region. *(Applause)* Thanks to the whole regional team in Southern Region, not least to the Regional President Charles Adje and to the whole Committee. I really do appreciate your challenge, your support and your patience.

Southern Region has again done some incredible things, not least in the boroughs of Greenwich and Merton where school support staff have been taking strike action in support of the London Weighting Needs Inflating campaign. Just last month GMB members took strike action in their bid to deliver equality with teaching staff. I have heard it said so many times around our movement that teaching support staff in schools

won't take strike action. Nobody has told that to our members in Southern Region. Let me say this colleagues, we are the ones, it is this union that is fighting for school support staff and we are not talking lectures from big egos in the National Education Union.

(Applause and cheers)

Wales & South West, again I love spending time down there with you. At Cardiff and Swansea, I have been out visiting workplaces and listening to members. The campaigns on Equal Pay are so vibrant and they are fantastic. In Plymouth, government investment in defence will ensure we are going to secure jobs for decades. It is a place close to my own heart as I was a senior organiser in that part of the world. And GMB union, our team in Plymouth will ensure the investment going into the city and into the dockyard will translate into good union jobs. I recently visited Hinckley Point as well. There is so much fantastic work going on at that site, but the national launch of the PPE Fit For All campaign, Martina, you and the team deserve so much credit for the work you have done. I hope everybody spends a wee bit of time talking to Martina and the team about that campaign. It is absolutely fantastic, the best of GMB. *(Applause)*

Colleagues, our success in workplaces everywhere takes place against a really turbulent time in politics. After 14 years of Tory chaos, we have a Labour Government with a huge majority but struggling in power. They have made mistakes, the polls aren't good and the Party leadership is subject to daily debate. We have an enduring relationship with Labour. It is not a sentimental thing. It is because workers need a political voice. It is the reason our great union helped build Labour in the first place: to have the ability to change laws in favour of working people.

For more than 100 years, the Tories and their allies have tried to use the law to break our union. We have always needed a political voice as part of our struggle and Congress, we still do. Our recent relationship with Labour hasn't been easy and, unlike some in this movement, I just don't believe in washing our dirty linen in public, but when I have met this Government on your behalf I have pulled no punches about their failings and our frustrations: too slow, too timid, too open to pressure from the business lobby. We as a union have fought attempts to say dilute the Employment Rights Act and we fought to get financial support for our key industries like ceramics. Let me say this again, Congress: Sharon, the support won for your industry would not have happened without you. You campaigned, you shouted and you got Labour to listen, and that is the difference GMB makes. (*Applause*)

Our relationship with Labour can be difficult but it means we have a seat at the table, and being there gives us a chance to kick them underneath it. I would far rather our union was fighting with a Labour Government to make them better and get them to do the right things by our members than deal with the chaos of others. I battled for 14 years under the Tories to try and get them to listen. From my time in Scotland I have seen close up how poorly the SNP govern and I have also seen how the Greens failed when they were in power in Brighton.

Congress, some may be tempted by the likes of the Greens. Well, for GMB members working in energy, defence or energy-intensive industries, the Greens are a direct threat to your livelihoods. Stevie and Trig in gas, Matt and the team in nuclear construction, Ian at Rolls Royce, Lee and the team at Barrow, building nuclear submarines, our members in Devonport, the team on the Upper Clyde - the Greens are not, and never

have been and never will be, on your side. They want your jobs and, Mr Polanski, you and your supporters hear this: get your hands off our members' jobs. (*Applause and cheers*)

As for Reform, let's just nail this. I hear the anger and frustration of our members. I hear it when I visit workplaces all the time. I know our people are struggling and hurting, but do not believe for a minute that Farage and his rebadged Tories are on the side of trade unions like ours. When many of us were in this hall were cutting our teeth as union and political activists, supporting the miners, going on picket lines, being on marches, organising against the poll tax, it was Reform's leaders who were cheering Thatcher to the rafters. They championed the policies that have left such deep scars on our communities, so when I hear Reform saying they are on the side of the metal bashers, I say, "No chance". The only thing Reform wants to bash is our union and our members' rights. (*Applause*)

Reform are targeting the right to organise and collectively bargaining in places like Amazon. They oppose sick pay for all. There is a cancel culture in that party and it is union members' rights that they are after. So much of the anger in our politics is driven by economic pain. We have suffered repeated shocks to the system: the 2008 crash, Farage's Brexit project, the Ukraine war and now Trump's war in the Middle East. Economic insecurity is leading much of the electorate, and with it many of our members, to the seemingly attractive hands of the easy slogan populists on the left and the right. Many of our people have seen their communities hollowed out and good-quality jobs exported abroad. Our manufacturing industry faces unfair competition from China. We have no real industrial plan and too many of our government contracts

go overseas. It staggers me but how can anybody think it is right that 18 tugs that are going to be used to tow the nuclear fleet at Faslane are going to end up being built in Vietnam. How does that happen?

We also have to be honest about energy policy. We do want to see our economy decarbonise, that is why this union and our sister union Prospect set up Climate Jobs UK, but when politicians talk about a just transition what our members see is rising energy bills at work leading to cuts in investment in jobs. Right now it seems that lots of things are shutting down but not much is opening up. Lots of good union jobs are going and nothing of real value is coming. The UK has fired a starting gun on a rapid transition without being race ready. All pain and no gain.

Congress, my challenge to the Secretary of State is clear: Ed, where are all the good jobs you promised? Where are the tens of thousands of union jobs to match what we have in Aberdeen, in Middlesbrough and in our industrial heartlands where manufacturing is being smashed? Ed, where are the good jobs that you said were coming? (*Applause*)

Congress we need change. We need that change. We need to ensure that every contract with the Ministry of Defence is awarded to UK factories and yards. We want to ensure the supply chains for Sizewell are rooted here in the UK. Let's use the JCB machines built by Jim our convenor and the team at Uttoxeter. Let's make sure the infrastructure for Sizewell is built at our Arnish yard on the Isle of Lewis. There is a political moment happening around the world and this moment can be seized. Hyper-globalisation and neoliberalism are dead. Societies are voting no to the inequalities created, no to the

transfer of value to China and others. There is a movement taking place where the state can be active again, taking action to bring back jobs, bring back hope, bring back prosperity to our communities. And it is happening and it is happening because of us. Just look at what is happening in Barrow. We have over 4,000 members on the site building nuclear submarines. Government investment in defence means that the town centre is coming back to life. They have converted the Debenhams in the town to train apprentices. We are putting a submarine in the old Debenhams store and we are building a future for the people of Barrow and our members. The state taking action using government money for critically important defence investment and the town is being reborn as a result. If we can do it in Barrow we can do it across these islands.

Congress, the months ahead, I have to tell you, are going to be tough. Trump's war has ensured that is going to be the case. The economy is going to suffer. Inflation will go up and we face fuel cuts as we move into the autumn. The cost of borrowing is likely to go up as well. Whoever is in 10 Downing Street that is going to mean very tough choices over borrowing and spending. As we are clearly in an incredibly volatile and uncertain world, with conflict and crises coming faster and nearer, there must be no false debate about welfare and defence. GMB proudly celebrates the skilled work that our members do in the defence manufacturing sector. They are the building blocks of what keeps our country, our values and our way of life safe. These workers, our members, pay taxes, they support good public services and good public service jobs. We are going to spend more on defence and we are also going to have to fight to ensure that we have the public services this country needs and deserves.

Congress, let's have no nonsense about setting one group of workers against another. Not in this union. This is GMB and we support our members wherever they work. *(Applause)* We are not going to have one group of workers set against another, defence and public services, and I hear the same divisive nonsense when we talk about equal pay. People tell us it is too expensive, it can't be done, we need the money for other things. Let me tell you that is absolutely rubbish. One of the biggest dividing lines between our union and Labour has been on equal pay. It is us who fought to get the commitment from Labour to finish the work of Barbara Castle and deliver an equal pay enforcement body. I am very pleased to say, Congress, that after our hard work, after our campaigning, the Prime Minister has said that the enforcement body for equal pay will happen and that represents a massive step forward and a big win for the working-class women in our union who have been robbed of their money for far too long. *(Applause)*

It is your campaigns, it is our campaigns that have brought us to this point in Glasgow, in Birmingham, in Blaenau Gwent, in Leeds and Barnet and Brighton, and in so many places around the country. Equal pay for us is not men versus women but workers united against their employer. *(Applause)*

I will never forget - and we have got representatives here from Glasgow - when 1,000 cleansing workers in Glasgow refused to cross the picket lines in support of their union sisters when they fought for equal pay. That workforce united is now untouchable. No pay cut. No jobs lost. Congress, on the back of equal pay we are building our union, we are bringing through new leaders in the workplace and we are essentially delivering

the biggest redistribution of wealth to working class women in this country. And that is what a good union does. That is what the GMB is about.

Congress, we are at a moment where the forces of division are seeking to pull people apart, to sow suspicion and spread their hate, and our country must face the challenge head on, pull together, give hope. GMB stands for unity. We are our members. We are straight, we are gay, we are trans, we are women, we are men, we are black, we are white, we are brown, we are Christians, we are Muslims, we are Jews, we are Sikhs, we are English, we are Scots, we are Irish, we are Welsh, we are everything else. We come from every corner of the world. We are every faith, we are every creed, we are every colour. Above all, we are each other: we are all GMB. (*Applause and cheers*)

Since 1889, it has always been our solidarity that is our strength. We will face the forces of division with the same purpose, the same determination, the same belief. Let the message go from this historic place: whatever the challenge, whatever the odds GMB is ready for the fight and, Congress, I promise we will win. Thank you. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary, for a really powerful speech. I now put the General Secretary's report to the floor for endorsement. All those in favour, please show. Anyone dare to be against? That is carried.

The General Secretary's report was **CARRIED**.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I just remind people if they are leaving and move their chairs would they kindly pick their chairs up because it is very echoey in here. Thank you. We will now play the first of our regional success videos, and they are always inspiring, starting with Midlands.

Midlands Regional Success Video

Video played to Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Midlands, for that inspirational video. That was brilliant and really sets the tone for the rest who have got to follow. Thank you for showcasing everything the Midlands have been doing over the last year.

CEC STATEMENT: POLITICS & THE LABOUR PARTY

CEC Statement: Politics and the Labour Party Introduction

- 1.1 GMB actively engages in the political arena because what happens here directly impacts on working people's lives just as much as what happens in the workplace.
- 1.2 Pay, pensions, energy bills, job security, health and safety, public services, employment rights and the future of the industries our members work in are not determined by employers alone. They are shaped by governments, by legislation, by budgets, and by political decisions taken in Westminster, the devolved nations, in mayoral offices and in local councils.
- 1.3 If we are serious about defending and improving the lives of GMB members, then we cannot be absent from the places where those decisions are made.
- 1.4 This is the simple truth which was at the heart of our Congress 2025 Special Report on Political Strategy: if we do not do politics, politics is done to us.

The full CEC statement can be accessed here:

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/assets/media/downloads/3834/cec-statement-on-politics-and-the-labour-party.pdf>

THE PRESIDENT: Congress we now move on to debating the CEC Special Report on Political Strategy. I will explain how this debate will be taken. Our CEC members will

move and second the report. I will then ask each region that wishes to speak on the report, to the rostrum. Delegates will get up to three minutes to speak. Could the speakers for those regions be ready to come down the front, please.

As we have motions still on the agenda that stand in opposition to the statement, we will debate those motions before taking a vote on the statement. If the statement is carried, then those remaining motions will fall. If the statement is not carried, then we will move to a vote on those motions. Can I invite the Vice-President, Sonya Davis, to move the report on behalf of the CEC. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: President, Congress, Sonya Davis, the National Vice-President, moving the CEC Statement on Politics and the Labour Party. Congress, let us be clear, politics is not something distant to our union. It is not abstract, it is not something that happens somewhere else, to someone else. Politics is in our members' pay packets. It is in their pensions, their rents and mortgages, their energy bills and the public services their families rely on every day.

We all know that what happens in Westminster, in devolved Parliaments, in mayoral offices and in local councils shapes working people's lives just as much as what happens in the workplace. So, if we are serious about defending and improving the lives of GMB members, we cannot step back from politics. We must step into it because the simple truth is this: if we do not do politics, politics will be done to us.

Congress, you said that clearly and unanimously last year when you passed our Special Report and it remains just as true today. That is why we need to continue to organise.

We need to focus on the core business of our union: making work better. Because while we do politics, it is not our priority. Our political strength only exists because of our industrial might and if we continue to build that we can only increase our influence with government, and effectively deliver for our members.

Now, let me speak honestly about our relationship with the Labour Party. It is a relationship built not on blind loyalty but on purpose, not on silence but on strength, not on a blank cheque but on accountability. We are affiliated to Labour because it gives working people, organised through their unions, a voice where decisions are made. The Labour Party was born from the trade union movement more than a century ago. It was created to take the voices of working people into the heart of political power. Through our affiliation we ensure those voices are heard loud and clear. Without organised labour, politics risks becoming disconnected from the reality of working people's lives.

Through GMB our members bring their experience, their struggles and their aspirations directly into Labour's democratic structures. Not from the outside looking in but from inside the room where decisions are made, and that matters. I sit on the Labour Party's National Executive Committee as one of your representatives. That seat exists because of our affiliation. It exists because this union has real democratic influence within the Labour movement. No other political party in Britain offers trade unions that level of influence. It means that when policy is being developed we are there, when decisions are being shaped we are there, when leadership is chosen, our members have a voice. But let me be clear, affiliation does not mean agreement on everything. It never has

and it never will. Because our duty is not to any political party, our duty is to our members.

So yes, we support Labour when it delivers for working-class people but we also challenge Labour firmly and unapologetically when it falls short. We have done so on winter fuel payments, on failing to deliver justice for the WASPI women, on welfare, on energy, on equal pay and on the treatment of migrant care workers, to name but a few. And we will continue to do so because our independence matters. But our independence carries weight because of our affiliation. When we speak, we are heard. When we challenge, we cannot simply be ignored. We speak as one of the largest trade unions in the Labour movement representing hundreds of thousands of working people. Without that relationship our voice would not be stronger, it would be weaker, our influence would not grow, it would shrink. And we have seen what that influence can achieve. Rights are never handed down, they are won through struggle, industrially and politically.

One of the clearest examples is the New Deal for Working People. Through our link with Labour, GMB helped shape that agenda. We took the experiences of our members and turned them into demands for change. That helped deliver the Employment Rights Act 2025, the biggest strengthening of workers' rights in a generation. Think about that, Congress. For the first time in decades employment law moved decisively forward for working people. That did not happen by accident. It happened because working people organised. It happened because this union had a voice in politics. It happened because we had a seat at the table.

Congress, we have also had a wake-up call. The 2026 elections were tough. Labour lost councillors, lost ground in heartland communities across England. Wales saw historic losses. Scotland delivered no breakthrough. Across the board the message was clear. Too many working class people feel unheard, they feel squeezed and they are looking elsewhere. That is dangerous ground. Because when people lose faith in mainstream politics, others move in: divisive voices, populists and the far right, feeding off anger whilst offering no real solutions. We have seen where that road leads and we cannot allow working people to be taken down it. So, Congress, this is about power: real power, collective power, the power to turn workplace experience into political change, the power to ensure our members are not simply affected by decisions but help shape them. So, never let us step away from politics, let us never give up our voice: let us never surrender our place at the table because our members deserve nothing less. Congress, I urge you to endorse the report. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sonya. Can I invite Dave Douglas to second the report please.

DAVE DOUGLAS (CEC, North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC (*Applause*) to second the Statement on Politics and the Labour Party Congress, politics is shifting beneath our feet. The two-party system many of us grew up with is breaking down. People feel frustrated, angry, disillusioned. Too many feel politics no longer works for them. And into this space step people offering easy answers from the right, and yes, from parts of the left as well. But easy answers don't pay the mortgage, they don't protect jobs, they don't keep the lights on and they don't stand up to the reality that GMB members face every day.

Congress, many of you know I am a heating engineer. I have been all my working life and I have spent that life in homes across the mining towns of Yorkshire. I know what it feels like when decision made in Westminster, Whitehall or the board room land directly on working people's shoulders. Politics is not theory to us: it is jobs, it is pay and it is pensions. It is whether your industry has a future or is written off by people who never pay the price.

Here is the reality: only one political party in this country gives trade unions a democratic seat at the table. Not a photo opportunity, not a polite meeting, real influence where it counts, and yes, that means giving them a kick under the table when they need it. But we are in the room. No other party offers that: None. I understand the frustration, I can feel it myself and some say try something new, look elsewhere, break away. But Congress, let us deal with the world as it is. There is no other political party that gives trade unions real influence, understands the industries our workers works in and has a credible route to government. Not one.

Let's be clear about Reform UK with their faded blue ties which were once navy, left out in the sun too long. They wrap themselves up in our flag and they talk about patriotism. They try to speak the language of working people but when workers' rights were on the line, where were they? I lived it. I saw the responses to those letters from those Tory deserters when we asked for their help in real time. They opposed the Employment Rights Act at every opportunity and when you have been a rep who has dealt with those issues in that Act, it shows their true colours. They talk about rolling

back protections and returning to the failed politics of cuts and austerity. That is not standing up for working people. That is taking us backwards.

Congress, don't judge politicians on what we their say on social media. Judge them by which side they are on when workers need them, and Reform are no friends of working people. (*Applause*) We must be honest about the other side, too. Not every bad idea comes from the right. On the left, particularly the Greens, they talk a great game about climate and transition but fail to confront the reality facing working people in energy putting some of our highest skilled workers at risk, particularly in nuclear, manufacturing and heavy industry. You cannot simply switch off all sectors without a plan. You cannot tell workers their jobs are disappearing and call it progress. And you cannot build a greener future by throwing working-class communities on the scrap heap. Our members keep the lights on. They built the infrastructure and they power this economy.

A transition to net zero? Absolutely, and you will hear me talk passionately about it out there, but it must be a jobs first transition. That means real investment, real industries, real skill and real jobs. (*Applause*) We don't need slogans, we don't need headlines or press releases. We need real work for real people. When politicians get this wrong working people pay the price, jobs disappear, communities hollowed out like mine, families left to pick up the pieces.

Congress, many of our communities are still living with the scars from decisions made decades ago. My message to any politician left or right, who thinks working people will quietly accept that again, is simple: not on our watch!

So what do we do ? We do not walk away from politics. We do not hand power to someone else. We organise. Employers organise politically, big business organises politically, wealth organises politically, so we must organise politically too. If we are not in the room, decisions will still be made. They will just be made without us. That is why our affiliation matters. It gives us power, it gives our members a voice, it makes sure working reality is heard when laws are written.

Congress, this comes down to one word: power. The power to defend jobs, the power to win rights, the power to shape decisions and the power to improve working lives. If working people do not use political power, somebody else will. We organise in our workplaces, we campaign in our communities, and yes, we organise politically, too. That is how working people have always won. Congress, I second the report.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Could I have the speaker from Southern Region to speak to the statement and then it will be Wales & South West.

ALI HAYDOR (Southern): President, Congress, speaking against the CEC Statement: Politics and the Labour Party. Congress, the statement is somewhat empty, outdated and offers no real change or hope to our members. It says we need a seat at the table yet how many GMB members and activists had their membership cancelled, in turn removed from the table? And yet this Government gave space at the table to Ambassador Peter Mandelson.

The statement mentions the Employment Rights Act yet it has been watered down. It gives no protection for gig workers and what happened to our demand for a £15 hourly wage?

Congress, we fight for fairness in our communities yet this Labour Government is carrying out further cuts to our services. Why, when we had 14 years from the Tories? The statement mentions about extremists on the left and on the right and yet this Labour Government gave us the “island of strangers” speech. Which side is the Prime Minister on? Let’s be honest, Congress, we don’t need Specsavers, we can all see this Labour Party is no longer red. This statement is somewhat blind to the reality.

Congress, last month’s elections clearly displayed the working class have abandoned the Labour Party because Labour abandoned them first. Many of our members voted differently, desperately looking for change: change this Labour Government promised but has not delivered. Our members are tired of old politics, politics that has failed to deliver for 40-plus years. Labour’s MP Clive Lewis said recently the Labour Party has become “Poundshop Reform”, and I agree.

Congress, what is not acceptable from the Tories and Reform should never be acceptable from the Labour Party. Not now, not in the future. This statement and current GMB position is not a true reflection of our members’ feelings. Congress, it is time for change. It is time to put the working class at the heart of politics and not rich donors. It is time to be flexible and not to put all our eggs in Labour’s basket. It is time to make politics work for the many. Congress, please vote against the statement

because, like the President said, feelings of anger and hope is not enough: we need to act for a better future. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ali. Wales & South West.

CHRIS MARSH (Wales & South West): Speaking in favour of the CEC's political statement. Congress, this is a good report and whilst I have my own political views on where this Government is getting things wrong, it is important we remember we have a relationship with Labour. It is important to understand that everyone, myself included, will have their own relationship with Labour. We have thousands of our members who vote Green, SNP, Plaid Cymru and yes, even Tory and Reform. If we sat everyone down, even if he wanted to, we wouldn't be able to convince them to vote Labour.

We have to be realistic. Different people have different expectations of their union. We are the ones who come to Congress and that marks us out as keen. Others just like repping in their workplace, some like the social element at meetings and some just join to get cover for them when times are tough. That is fine, that is their choice, but we should remember that it is our responsibility, as custodians of the union, to deliver the changes that improve their lives. Our link with the Labour Party enhances our ability to do that. Yes, they should listen much more, and on issues other than just workers' rights, but colleagues, our forebears realised that you need political representation to make the world a better place. That is why they founded the Labour Party. Look at our work on health and safety, the Open University, the minimum wage, a New Deal for Working People. Congress, they are all from this floor here, delivered through the

Labour vehicle. They would not have done this without us and back in March we got the Labour Party to commit to ending term-time only contracts. No other party has come up with and the Plaid Cymru Government in Wales will not commit to that. It is not on the statute book in Scotland where the SNP have been in government for 20 years. This proves that our methods work. It not quick but it is effective and all those unions who aren't affiliated are already piggy-backing on our hard work in these achievement. Congress, that is fine. We know the GMB makes the political weather that other unions sit under.

Congress, this report outlines the road back to our next achievements. We don't have to sparkle with Starmer or bounce with Burnham but need to have a method for getting those wins for our members. This method has been proven for 126 years. Let's use it as a roadmap for the next 126. Support the CEC report. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Chris. GMB Scotland.

TOM CARR-POLLOCK (GMB Scotland): Speaking in support of the CEC statement. Congress, GMB Scotland supports this statement but we do so with our eyes open. In Scotland, many of our members feel deeply disillusioned with Scottish Labour. We have struggled to engage meaningfully with a party that has too often tried to distance itself from the UK Labour Party and the UK Government rather than make a clear confident Labour case for working people. That strategy did not deliver and in May Scottish Labour fell to its lowest number of labour MPs. Just two years ago there was a real potential for Labour to retake power at Holyrood after almost 20 years of SNP government. That would have given Scotland a government with workers, jobs, public

services and trade union values at the centre of its agenda. That opportunity has been squandered.

GMB Scotland has therefore been quick and firm in calling for an independent review, a serious review of what went right and what went wrong, how this was allowed to happen and how Labour rebuilds its relationship with working-class communities across Scotland. We are not prepared to pretend that everything is fine, but, Congress, none of that changes the central argument in this statement. Our affiliation to Labour gives GMB political power. It gives us access, it gives us standing and gives us a voice where decisions are made. It means that even when we are angry, even when we are critical, even when we are difficult, we are still in the room.

In Scotland in energy, we have been critical friends of Labour in recent years, often with the emphasis on critical. We have been vocal in questioning the UK Government's rush to net zero and its talk of a just transition, which, in reality, has too often become a jobless transition. That debate is not finished. Labour politicians have listened and more and more are backing a more measured transition to renewables, one that will reduce emissions while protecting thousands of skilled well-paid unionised jobs in oil and gas. That is what affiliation can achieve.

The alternative? The hasty needless shut down of the North Sea pursued by other parties on the left and by some opponents of this report threatens industrial calamity while weakening our country's energy security. The debate over energy policy is an argument we can and will win because Labour will listen to its friends, even the difficult and critical ones.

That is why we are disappointed at the prospect of some regions not supporting this statement. To walk away from the political power you have as a Labour affiliate would weaken our ability to influence the work of the Government. And Congress, we should be honest about the so-called progressive alternatives. In Scotland, the Greens would inflict lasting damage on many of the sectors where GMB Scotland has members. Their approach to energy, manufacturing and industry would mean job cuts to communities and cuts to our industrial future. GMB Scotland will continue to challenge Labour hard. We will not offer blank cheques and we will not stay silent when our members are let down. But we also know that political power matters and for GMB members, Labour affiliation remains the strongest route we have to shape policy, defend jobs and make work better. Congress, GMB Scotland supports this statement. (*Applause*)

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

LINDA MERCER (North West & Irish): I am here to support what everybody else has been supporting. You will have to excuse me, I have got brain fog. That is what my doctor keeps telling me.

In January 1906, our founder Will Thorne became a Labour MP. He was one of the first Labour MPs elected. He represented members in West Ham South and Plaistow, for almost 40 years until 1945. He viewed his trade unionism and politics as mutually inclusive. He saw from the early days of the Labour Party that both industrial strength and political influence can combine to improve lives for our members, and I think it

worked. Well, I know it worked. That was true over a century ago and it remains true today.

For 14 years, the Conservative Party attacked working-class people and workers everywhere. Their rights have been cut. Much has changed for the trade unions, workers, the Labour Party and the country since Will Thorne engaged in Parliament. We cannot say that the Labour Party has done everything we expected them to do and everything that we asked for since forming the Government. You get shocked about the things that he has done and the things he has rejected. The local elections were heartbreaking. I was out there posting things, talking to people in the streets and I knew that my councillor I was supporting at the time was not going to win because almost every house that I went to was throwing the paper in the bin, "I'm not voting for Labour ever again". That was people who used to vote for Labour. Everybody was unhappy and it was very sad for those that lost their seats. Next year we don't know what is going to happen but we hope that it can be improved and that our MPs, and a lot of them are good MPs, will get in and stay.

Reform are against every single trade union. In this room if you are a rep in local government, Richard Tice has said your pension is too generous. Well, I have worked in local government and I wouldn't say my pension was that good. I wish it was. You are struggling to pay the gas bill. Luckily, I have got free electricity at times during the day. Nigel Farage wants to privatise the NHS. Our NHS is already cut to the limits and he wants to sell it off to some friend of his. I don't know who but he's got orange hair and it is him in any case.

Reform do not even believe in the National Minimum Wage. Despite this, the country and the current polling shows Reform could form the next Government. That frightens me. I don't know about you. The threat to workers and our members is real and present. The idea that this is the moment to break our historical link with the Labour Party, and the Labour Party is my party and your party and everybody else's party who are workers. (*Applause*) The Labour Party was formed for working people and it is our Labour Party.

THE PRESIDENT: Linda, would you like to finish on that point? Are you nearly there?

LINDA MERCER: So we not going to throw away the baby with the bath water. We are going to carry on and, like Gary said, keep working with the Labour Party to get a better outcome. Thank you, everybody. (*Applause*)

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

LES TIMBEY (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good afternoon, Congress. Speaking in favour of this special report as a Labour Party survivor in Durham. I say that because my contribution in this debate comes from my experience as a lifelong trade unionist and Labour Party activist, in what has been a Labour heartland for years. Yet little more than a year ago my city, the home of the Durham Miners' Gala, a county built on coal and solidarity, voted a Reform council. Congress, I get it. I know that many of my class feel let down by Labour. I get their frustration when their lives are getting not any better, they are struggling to find good well-paid jobs and the cost-of-

living crisis makes their weekly shopping costs out of control. Let me tell you, as someone who actually knocks on the doors, I know exactly how those people feel about the cutting of the winter fuel allowance and the letting down of the WASPI women.

But I also know Labour was set up by the trade unions to be the voice of the working people in Parliament. With the rise of the far right, it has never been more important that we have a strong voice representing our interests. And whilst we can make grand statements based on political purity or talk again and again about the potential for other parties to take over the voice of trade unions, the fact is nothing has done more for working people than the Labour Government: the creation of the NHS, the end of fire and re-hire, employment rights, Surestart, the abolition of Section 28, the five-day working week, pension compensation for the miners, the end of future sub-cos in the NHS. All fought for by us and delivered by the party of our class.

Don't get me wrong, I know that we must demand more. I do not believe in writing a blank cheque just because somebody is wearing a red rosette but rather, I believe in using our power our influence, to push Labour faster and harder to deliver for us, the working class.

In Durham, I haven't given up fighting, I am going to take on Reform and their policies every time because I believe the people of Durham deserve better, and that means I am going to have to fight hard to win my comrades back and I certainly haven't given up fighting inside the Labour Party, because I know the people of the North East won't have their lives improved by Nigel Farage and his cronies. Let me be clear, if you open up the debate about affiliation then we won't be standing here talking about affiliation

to the TUC, the Greens or Your Party, we will be talking about affiliation with Reform. To do that because of political one-upmanship in this hall would be nothing more than a disgrace.

THE PRESIDENT: Les, I am going to have to ask you to wind up.

LES TIMBERY: I see it as my duty and the duty of every single one of us to fight for our politics, to fight for working people and always fight for our class. I urge you to support this statement. Comrades, solidarity! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Les. Midlands.

BEN COOK (Midlands): President, Congress, my name is Ben Cook and I am proud to represent the Midlands Powerhouse. (*Cheers*) I rise to speak in support of the CEC's Statement: Politics & the Labour Party. I want to say by saying this - I am incredibly proud that all the hard work, all the organising, all the fighting has resulted in a Labour Government. It is something I have waited for for most of my adult life. Let's be honest, have we got everything right? No, we haven't, we have made mistakes, but we are delivering real change for working people.

Take the Employment Rights Act, this is not small progress, this is transformative. It means rebuilding collective bargaining, giving workers real power again and it improves maternity and paternity rights, strengthens union access and begins to end zero-hours contracts. For members like mine in Asda Retail this is a genuine opportunity to finally build a real voice and real power in the workplace.

Then there is the Renters Rights Act. For me this is personal. I have lived it. I have had a Section 21 served on me, not knowing where me and my sons were going to sleep, and I couldn't get help until a judge evicted us under a Section 21 no-fault eviction.

So, I say this with pride: this Government is changing that and it is ending that injustice. *(Applause)* But, Congress, our job is not done. In my constituency, my MP is Richard Tice and during the general election when I acted as parliamentary agent, I saw first-hand what those politics look like: misogyny, homophobia, racism, transphobia. And let me be clear, there is no place in our movement or our country for division and hate. *(Applause)*

And as trade unionists, we know our role: we educate, we agitate, we mobilise and we organise against the far right wherever it appears. We have hundreds of GMB-sponsored MPs and that gives us power, but sponsorship is not a blank cheque. If they don't listen, if they don't deliver, then we as organised workers have the power and the force to change that. I am really proud that Sharon Yates in my region is proof of that. *(Cheers)*

But there is still work to do in our schools, where our staff are under relentless pressure and underfunded around SEN, and in manufacturing, where we must protect and grow good union jobs. And the battleground around AI, where we must ensure that technology work for workers not replacing them and not exploiting them. We want to tell everybody in this room that if you are feeling disenfranchised with politics everybody, in this room has the power to change. Whether you go on the doorstep

knocking, whether you become a local council candidate yourself or you want to stand to be a parliamentary candidate, you can do that. Trade unionists make the best candidates because we understand the real issues on the ground, in the workplaces and in the communities. Please support this statement. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ben. London Region.

CRISTINA PICU (London): Congress, on behalf of GMB London, I stand here to support this report. Politics affects our members every day. Whether it is pay, rights at work, public services or pensions, decisions taken by politicians have an impact on working people. If we are serious about defending our members, we need to be involved in these decisions. That is why our political workers matter. We have seen the difference it makes across GMB London Region. In Thurrock, for example, political interventions helped stop a wage cut for care workers. In East of England Ambulance, Service, political pressure helped keep the Beckford call centre open. In Westminster, more than 70 MPs have backed our One Parliament, One Employer campaign on pay inequality. In Barking & Dagenham, councillors worked with our branches to secure a recognition agreement for cooks, cleaners and maintenance workers. And during our dispute with Churchill more than 150 MPs and Peers backed GMB members fighting compulsory redundancy. We won the campaign and secured the company's first recognition agreement anywhere in the UK.

These are not theories or talking points. They are real examples of what happens when industrial organisation is backed up by political influence. Now, being affiliated does not mean agreeing with everything any politician does. The GMB has never been shy

about speaking up when we think Labour has got something wrong, and nor should we be. Our job is to represent our members, not cheerlead for politicians. But we will be weaker if we walked away from politics altogether.

Congress, employers organise politically, big businesses organise politically, those with wealth and influence organise politically every day. Working people need to do the same. We must clear that, while alternatives can be explored, this comes at the expense of dealing with the influence we do have, and, if we get it wrong, it comes at the expense of working people. Our best hope is to influence changes from inside not from outside the room. This report recognises that reality and that is why GMB London is proud to support it. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cristina. So now we take the motions. Can I ask the movers and seconders of Motions 231 and 235 to come down, and I will take the mover of 231 first, please.

POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE FOR WORKERS

MOTION 231

231. POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE FOR WORKERS

This Congress notes the brutal anti-worker attacks carried through by this Labour government since taking office in July 2024. Almost 18 months since its election, Labour has failed to fulfil its pledge (and GMB policy) to repeal the Trade Union Act 2016 or lift the ban on secondary action (carried at GMB Congress 2025). Its latest betrayal is to renege on its manifesto commitment that all workers have unfair dismissal rights from day one.

New austerity measures continue the long, painful driving down of British workers' living standards. Vicious job and budget cuts in Labour-controlled councils also continue, as do attacks on the trans community and migrant workers, and ongoing complicity in the genocide in Gaza.

This branch recognises that with ongoing Labour austerity and the rising threat of Reform, more and more people are looking for a political alternative. The founding of Your Party, as

well as the thousands who have joined the Greens in recent months, demonstrate the opportunities for the building of a genuine party of the working-class. However as of yet no political party exists which represents the collective voice of the working class and trade union movement.

In our view, a new political voice for the working-class based in the trade union movement - campaigning on a socialist programme of anti-austerity, anti-racist and anti-war policies - has the best potential to undercut Reform and the rise of the populist right.

With motions passed at Unite policy conference and UCU conference opening up discussions in those unions about their political strategy, and many other unions meeting to debate these issues, it is vital that GMB members are not left behind in the discussions developing across our movement.

Therefore, this Congress agrees to:

1. Launch a discussion at all levels of GMB about our relationship with Labour, and the need for a political strategy that supports our members to take action on the basis of agreed GMB policies.
2. Encourage Regional Councils / Committees to organise members meetings at which members of the GMB Parliamentary Group, as well as Jeremy Corbyn, Zarah Sultana, and other Independent Alliance MPs, are invited to speak. This should include reviewing to what extent an MP's voting record has been in line with GMB policy.
3. Launch a union-wide consultation about the best use of our union's political fund, including the question of funding candidates outside the Labour Party who will fight to implement GMB policies.
4. Convene a special policy and rule amendment conference in 2026 to discuss and draw political and organisational conclusions. This would potentially include the building of a new workers party, standing and supporting workers candidates, and calling for a conference across unions to build a political alternative for workers based on a pro-worker, socialist programme.

S37 SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH

SOUTHERN REGION

(Fell)

ALI HAYDOR (Southern): Moving Motion 231: Political Alternatives for Workers.

Congress, this motion starts from a simple reality: many working people feel they no longer have a political voice. Since taking office Labour has failed to deliver on many key commitment to trade unions and working people. At the same time we continue to see cuts to jobs and services, falling living standards and growing frustration amongst working-class communities. As trade unionists we cannot ignore that reality because quality of life matters.

Congress, if we are honest, we know more and more workers are looking elsewhere. Many are joining new political movements. That is why this motion matters. It does not call on GMB to support a new party today. It does not call on GMB to break its political links tomorrow. What it does call for is discussion, democracy and consultation. A discussion about our relationship with Labour; a consultation on how our Political Fund is used and a serious debate about whether working people need a new political voice rooted in the trade union movement. Other unions are already having these discussions. GMB members should not be excluded from this debate.

Congress, if we believe in democracy we should trust our members to have this conversation and decide what political path best advances the interests of working people. This motion simply opens the door to a debate that already is happening across the country and in the trade union movement. I ask Congress to support the discussion, support democracy and support this motion. I move, thank you.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ali. Secunder.

GERRY HACKETT (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)*

Madam President, Congress, this motion is not about making a final decision today. It is about recognising that many working people are asking serious questions about political representation. Our union needs to be part of that discussion. Across the country, workers are facing rising costs and pressure on living standards, job insecurity and cuts to public services. Many feel that the political system is not delivering for

them. As trade unionists we have a responsibility to listen to those concerns and discuss how best we can represent our members politically.

That is why this motion calls for debate, consultation and member involvement. It asks us to discuss our relationship with Labour, to review how our Political Fund is used and to consider whether our current political strategy is achieving the outcomes that our members expect.

Importantly, it does not instruct Congress to support any particular party or political project. It simply says that GMB members should have the opportunity to participate in discussion that is already taking place across the wider trade union movement. Other unions are debating these issues. GMB members deserve the same opportunity to have their voices heard and their voices considered. Congress, our union has always believed in democracy and member-led decision-making. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Gerry. Thank you. Mover of Motion 235.

LABOUR PARTY AFFILIATION - CONSULTATION OF MEMBERSHIP

MOTION 235

235. LABOUR PARTY AFFILIATION - CONSULTATION OF MEMBERSHIP

This Congress calls on the CEC to undertake a consultation of the membership regarding whether to continue affiliation to the Labour Party.

R26 READING & BERKSHIRE BRANCH SOUTHERN REGION

(Fell)

ROB STIRLING (Southern): First-time delegate, first-time speaker (*Applause*) I am moving Motion 235. This Congress calls on the CEC to undertake a consultation of the membership regarding whether to continue affiliation to the Labour Party.

This is a controversial motion, as you can see. As I am sure you are all aware, for over 100 years, the GMB has been fighting for the rights of workers, ensuring that our class has a voice to influence decisions that are being made that affect our lives. Throughout our history, GMB and other trade unions have been organising workers and taking action to improve our own living conditions. However, due to the way in which Britain is set up politically, to ensure the gains and improvements we were making were not lost, it became clear the working class needed to have a voice in Parliament. A voice that could argue on behalf of the workers in the corridors of the power, that could ensure workers were front and centre when drafting legislation and laws, that could wrestle the reins of power out of the hands of bosses and into the hands of workers. Hence the Labour Party was born.

At its inception, the Labour Party was meant to be the political organisation of the trade unions. Unions organised the workplaces so we could beat the bosses at work and the Labour Party was created so we could beat the bosses in Parliament. And for many years Labour has been very successful, most notably with things such as the creation of the NHS and the “from cradle to grave” welfare state. Even when not directly in power, Labour’s presence in Parliament meant that the needs and demands of the workers could not be ignored.

However, since the 1980s and 1990s, and the dawn of New Labour, questions have been raised. Are Labour still speaking and acting on our behalf? Some of our sister unions have withdrawn their support from the party and there has been a serious battle recently within the party, for the soul of that party. I am sure there are people in this very room who have been suspended, bullied or simply made to feel so uncomfortable in the party that they are no longer members. For a party that claims to be on the side of workers that is simply not something that should be ignored.

Increasingly, we have seen trade unions being sidelined and ignored by Labour. In fact, on a number of occasions in recent years, the GMB has seen fit to condemn and speak out against things the Labour Party are doing, as we have all seen, from things like the watering down of the recent Workers' Rights Bill, we have to ask ourselves: are Labour still the party of the trade unions and do we want to continue to be affiliated to them?

That is one of the benefits of being in a member-led democratic union, the membership gets to decide, and that is what this motion is asking for, that the membership has the right to decide about whether or not the union remains affiliated to Labour. We are calling on the CEC to consult with our members, the decision-making body of this union, to see if we still want to be affiliated to the Labour Party. We have the right and the authority to make that decision and not to have that decision decided for us. Ideally, the GMB and senior management should not seek to sway that vote by pushing members in one direction or another. Let us truly respect our members by listening through genuine democracy.

Maybe the voice of the trade unions and the working class would be better served by being aligned with another party, or perhaps we could lend our support to specific parties on a case-by-case, election by election basis, to whoever agrees to support our aims. Or perhaps we feel there is something worth fighting for within Labour and we would be best positioned staying affiliated and fighting that battle from within. Whichever way, it should be for our membership to decide. Congress, I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Rob, thank you. Secunder.

ROB BORLAND: (Southern): Hello! First-time delegate and first-time speaker,
(Applause) Seconding Motion 235. Madam President, Congress, membership of the Labour Party is something our members are already talking about in branches and workplaces across the union. There are strong views on all sides about our relationship with Labour and this is not a new debate but one that has been ongoing for many years. When members already have that debate and the discourse is rising, the right thing to do is simple: we ask them. This motion does not decide the outcome today. It just asks for a proper consultation so our members can have their say.

We know our political relationships matter. GMB works with Labour to influence decisions and to hold them to account, and that relationship has delivered real gains for working people. Even Gary Smith has said the Employment Rights Bill was one of the most positive steps forward for workers in decades, but he has also been clear that Labour don't always make it easy and we need to keep pushing them and making them listen. That is the reality our members see as well. There are clear positives to

affiliation, such as influence, access and having a voice where decisions are made, but there are also frustrations, and members feel that. So, rather than eschewing what members think, we should just ask them, because if we expect government to listen to the GMB then the GMB has to listen to its members. A clear mandate gives it strength whichever way it goes because we know we are acting on what members actually want. It also gives an opportunity to really communicate with our members on why politics matter and how it shapes the everyday decisions that affect our members at work. This is about being honest, democratic and making sure our position comes direct from our members. Congress, trust our members enough to ask the question. Congress, I second.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rob. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to either of those motions? Come up and let us know which motion you are speaking in opposition to, please.

FARZANA JUMMA (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good afternoon, President, Congress. Farzana Jumma, Regional President of the shy and humble North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. *(Cheers)* I am speaking in opposition to Motion 231. If there is a region that understands how political decisions made in Westminster impact workers' lives, it is mine. For too many of the legacy of Thatcher lives on in our families and communities; in every industry and coalfield area, ravished by privatisation, casting a dark shadow over too many futures. Today those same areas face new challenges: the need for investment, the ambition to move to cleaner, renewable energy, the need to regenerate and diversify.

I like many of my members am so angry about international issues, including Palestine, and I feel the anger on the winter fuel allowance, WASPI women, delays over the Hillsborough Law, benefit cuts, loud and clear. I am no fan of Starmer but our job is not to judge or have favourites, it is to make work better.

Let's take the boiler ban, we overturned it, safeguarding thousands of jobs. We got millions of pounds invested into glass in Knottingley. We got nuclear developed and last week we secured the investment needed for keeping our Potteries alive with the wonderful Sharon here. (*Applause*) And yes, we forced the Government to recognise the State of Palestine. These are serious politics to deal with serious problems. Most importantly, politics makes a difference. Congress, I am asking you to oppose this motion. It opens the door to the far right which causes further hate and division with Reform. Our members need us to be grown-ups and support them no matter who Government is. Currently locally this now means working with Reform-led authorities. Our job does not change and we continue to work hard for our members. Congress, let's keep GMB rooted in reality, in delivering for ordinary working people. Please oppose this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Farzana. Next speaker, please.

SARAH YOUNG (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region, proud trade unionist, socialist and trouble-maker, standing to oppose Motion 235. I want to tell you about the local so-called progressive candidate in Sheffield, a longstanding forever present shadow who has always cared more about political purity than the collective power and views of working people. Of course he

always knows better and only last year as part of a campaign, frankly made up of a bunch of odd-bods, tried to break our union agreement on the Sheffield bins. That battle he never had a chance with because we have got 85% density, but they still made our members' lives hell, smashing their car windows, sharing rape threats and throwing vile abuse, all in the name of being "on the right side". That gang popped up again in May as the TUSC candidate for Manor Castle, a traditional white, working-class part of the Steel City. He claimed to be the voice of the trade unionist. Congress, he got 27 votes. Reform, however, got 1,241. That is the reality of what we are opening the door to if we open our affiliation. We will not be here debating the differences between TUSC, Your Party, the Greens or George Galloway's Working Party. We will end up opening the door to Reform. Comrades can pretend that is not the reality but I can tell you from the heart of the industrial north that is absolutely where we will end up. I for one cannot allow that to happen so someone can feel better about themselves in this hall today. This is too important to play political purity top trumps with. This is about the political voice of our class. Please oppose this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you Sarah, spot on with the timing. Well done. Sharon.

SHARON YATES (Midlands): I am Sharon Yates and I am a bit fed up hearing my name today! (*Applause*) I am opposing Motion 35. I will tell you how it is. I will tell you the reality of why we need to be with the Labour Party. I have fought for years against the Tories, fighting for the industry - to no avail. They just ignored us and basically laughed at us and treated us as second-class citizens. So what happened because they didn't listen, and this will be every other political party other than Labour, because I will get to that in a second? We are losing factories, we are haemorrhaging

jobs because we have never ever been listened to. We lost Royal Stafford, we lost Moorcroft. Happily, Moorcroft re-opened but we have lost Denby. If anybody sees the video, they will see the devastation of those people pushing a kiln for the last time in an industry working-class people work for. The Labour Party is a working-class party. I am not happy with the Labour Party and neither is the General Secretary and many of you aren't, but it is our party. It is only us who can make those changes. In the last two years, just from a little branch in Stoke, Stoke Unity S75, I had the full support of my branch and I had the full support of my region, the Midlands Region, and also the General Secretary. It went national and I fought tooth and nail against these MPs and Ministers and finally last month we sealed the support of £120 million for the ceramics industry. (*Applause*)

That has been done in two years. You have to learn when you are a union rep or a union with these Governments, it takes time and it takes patience. I have always believed that if you fight for something, you will get it, and that is why it is so important that we are on the inside. If I wasn't on the inside, God knows what would have happened. The industry would be lost. Now, because of this money, we have given people hope, we have given people their livelihoods back, we have given them security. We have given hope to the city, to the little shops around because the ceramics industry is going to survive. But it is only the start. We have got to keep tapping away at the Government. Like I said, the Labour Party is our party, and I will leave you with this: if we believe, we can achieve. So please support what I have just said and oppose Motion 35! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: I was very lenient with you there. Are there any more people speaking in opposition. In that case, Ali, you have the right of reply, as does Rob.

ALI HAYDOR (Southern): We have heard a lot about members, members and members - hashtag members. Well, the vast majority of our members voted against the Labour Party in the last election. So let's get that right. If the Labour Party was delivering for our members, why did they vote against the Labour Party?

Opening the door to Reform. Yet Labour and Starmer are copying Reform's policies, just a lighter version, so isn't Starmer and the Labour Party somewhat holding open the door to No. 10 Downing Street to Reform? Is this what we should be supporting and carrying on?

On £12.71, the minimum hourly wage, comrades, is that enough for our members to live on? To pay their bills, pay their rent, pay for food. Is that providing a decent quality of life? Can our MPs live on £12.71. Many of our members when I speak to them, especially care workers, are working six or seven days a week, over 60 or 70 hours a week. Is that normal when many of our union officers work 32 to 35 hours a week? Why should the union officers work roughly under 40 hours when our members on £12.71 work longer. (*Boos*)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, please, give respect to the speaker.

ALI HAYDOR: So Congress, the reality is that it is not working. We need to change it because that is what our members are calling for. We need to trust our members because we are a member-led union, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Can I just remind people who are making speeches, please do not bring staff matters into your speeches, thank you. Rob.

ROB BORLAND: I didn't realise I had a right to reply so I have not actually prepared much about this. Just on a couple of things that have been said, we are not calling at the moment for disaffiliation from the Labour Party. We are just asking for people to be given the right to say whether or not we want to remain affiliated. That is what Motion 235 is asking for, just to be given a say in that. We have heard that last year there was a special statement on the Labour Party and things like that. I do not remember ever being asked if I wanted to give my views on that statement. I do not remember ever being asked if I want to remain affiliated to the Labour Party. That is all this motion is asking for: to ask our members, who are the sovereign decision making body of the union, whether or not they want to remain affiliated to the Labour Party.

There was also a lot of talk about if we start questioning we are going to open up the door to Reform, and that to me suggests a lot people don't have faith in you as the sovereign decision-making body. I would be flabbergasted if anyone in this room is considering voting for Reform. All we are asking for is to respect our members, who are you guys, to be able to make the right decision. I do not see it as opening up the door to Reform because none of us would vote for Reform, I would not have thought.

Sorry that was a bit incoherent but, as I said, I was not prepared to do a second bit.

Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Okay Dave, I will ask you to respond on behalf of the CEC because there was opposition to the statement. It has been a long debate but an important one, and this is the last speaker on this.

DAVE DOUGLAS: (CEC, North East, Yorkshire & Humber): President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 231 and 235. Congress, we have had a full and open debate. That is not only right, it is also necessary. To be clear, the CEC is seeking withdrawal of all three remaining motions in favour of the CEC Statement: Politics & the Labour Party. Last year we debated these matters at length. Just 12 months ago, our GMB Congress voted unanimously to endorse the CEC Special Report on Political Strategy. This established a clear member-led political strategy based on influence, accountability and delivering for our members. It also reaffirmed our affiliation to the Labour Party. The motions before us reflect genuine concerns about the direction of Labour and decisions taken in government, but they all seek, in different ways, to revisit the same questions that Congress has addressed and settled very recently.

Motion 231 calls for consultation on a political alternative for workers and engagement in the creation of a new political party. The CEC believes this cuts directly across the position agreed by our Congress. GMB is already politically active at every level, with strong democratic and regional structures that enable members to shape policy, hold representatives to account and oversee the Political Fund.

Congress, we also should not be naive - politics in this country is under the most severe strain. There are no easy answers. Populists of all political shades from right and left are trying to sell easy solutions to the problems we face. Congress, let's be clear, current polling shows that Reform is in the front with trade union members. Is that really the political alternative we want for our great union? History tells us where that can lead.

Motion 235 seeks a further consultation on Labour Party affiliation. Congress has already reached a clear and democratic decision on this issue through the adoption of the Special Report. GMB's affiliation and Political Fund are already subject to democratic oversight and accountability. We do not need yet another consultation because Congress is sovereign and delegates made that decision unanimously only last year.

President, Congress, the CEC recognises the strength of feeling behind these motions. Nobody in this hall is suggesting Labour gets everything right.. I certainly don't. We have challenged robustly where we believe Labour has fallen short and will continue to do is, because our loyalty is not to any political party: our loyalty is to the interests of GMB members. (*Applause*)

This debate comes down to a simple question: do we walk away from achievable political influence that generations of trade unionists fought to build? Do we walk away from the influence we have on employment rights and job creation? I will say my sister's name once again because I know she absolutely loves it and I want to see her

face: Sharon and GMB Midlands show why what we do matters. Their fight to get support in the ceramics industry only works because we can influence a Labour Government. We do not walk away from that. Politics shapes our members' lives whether we engage or not. The choice is whether those decisions are made with us or without us. We are not a think-tank or a charity. GMB is an industrial bedrock, a titan of the Labour Movement that founded the Labour Party. We are proud of who we are and what we do. We have a seat at the table but, like I said before, that doesn't stop us kicking them underneath it. That is how it should be. That is how it has always been. That is how you get things done and use politics to make work better. Therefore, Congress, the CEC is seeking withdrawal of Motions 231 and 235 in favour of the CEC Statement: Politics & the Labour Party. I ask Congress to support the statement. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. I will now put the statement to the vote. All those in favour of the statement, please show. Any against. Thank you. The statement is carried, which means those two motions fall. (*Applause*) It was a good debate and I thank everybody who took part in it in a comradely way.

*Motion 231 **FELL**.*

*Motion 235 **FELL**.*

*CEC Statement: Politics & The Labour Party was **CARRIED**.*

HILLSBOROUGH LAW NOW CAMPAIGN

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, it is my great pleasure to invite Margaret Aspinall and Sue Roberts to address Congress. They have worked tirelessly for decades to get justice for the families of the Hillsborough tragedy. Some of you will have been at Congress 2016 when Margaret last spoke to us. We are honoured to have both Margaret and Sue to update us on where the Hillsborough Law now is with their campaign. Welcome, Margaret and Sue. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

MARGARET ASPINALL: Thank you, Congress, Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and everybody, for inviting Sue and me here today. There is something I would like to say before I start, and that is I have listened to everybody this afternoon and I thought everybody spoke very well but can I ask you all please, let's bring Labour back to the way it used to be years ago. (*Applause*)

I have seen a great change in Labour. My grandmother years ago, in Harold's Wilson day, had a shop and she handed it over to Harold Wilson to have one of his very first meetings. They are the people I would like to have back in the Labour Party, because I think Labour has changed so much, and I have been Labour all my life.

But Labour have let Hillsborough families down. They let us down in the very early days. They done the talk but they didn't do the walk. Actions speak louder than words. (*Applause*) They always have done. I don't need the tea and sympathy that we were getting offered 38 years ago. I always thought with Labour we would get the truth of Hillsborough. We talk about racism. I absolutely agree with everybody here, it is a disgrace. We should not have racism in this country. Never! (*Applause*) But, on saying that, I felt the racism was against Liverpool people. I thought it was racism

against our supporters, against our city and against our people. (*Applause*) We have had this fight now for all them years. Obviously, we can't go any further. What Sue and I are here for today is for the people of this country to change things, to say that was so wrong, so corrupt, that has gone on for all of these years and it has been going on pre Hillsborough. If you go back and look at Jimmy Savile, everybody knew about that. That was a cover-up. Jeremy Thorpe, Cyril Smith, all cover-ups, every one of them.

We knew from the very early days, and can I tell you all now I knew from the very beginning, within four weeks, that Hillsborough was going to be a massive cover up. How did I know that? What gave me that impression? I will tell you what gave me that impression. I was well taught by my mother about Orgreave. My mother said to me when my son died at Hillsborough, who was just 18, that Margaret Thatcher owes a debt to South Yorkshire Police. That debt was repaid by the deaths of our 97 and not one person being held to account.

I met Margaret Thatcher for the first time four weeks after the disaster. It is a thing that sticks in my memory. As old as I am now because I am going on for 80 now, I am an old women, I was a young women when it happened, but I am an old woman now, but I will do anything and go anywhere to help the people of this country who have helped us. (*Applause*) I don't have scripts. I have never had a script. I don't need a script because I speak the truth and speak how I feel, and, if people don't like what I say, that is their issue not mine. (*Applause*)

When I met Margaret Thatcher, all the families got taken down to the Crypt, four weeks after the disaster and it is a thing that stays in any head and always will. I don't care who listens to this or who sees this, I am telling the truth. We went down into the Crypt and we were all lined up, regimented, all lined up waiting for Mrs Thatcher and her entourage to come in. She went along the line shaking all the families' hands and having a little word with them. I didn't know the families then obviously, it was only four weeks later, and we were all devastated, we were in a mess. Before she came up to me I said to my husband, "Don't shake her hand when she comes to us." Of course Jimmy did. He was in a bit of a mess and he just shook her hand, but she came to me and I just said, "I'm sorry, Mrs Thatcher I don't want to be disrespectful but I cannot shake your hand." "Why ever not, dear?" (*Applause*) A patronising voice I will never forget, "Why ever not, dear?" I said, "Because my son is in a grave at just 18, his first away game. My first born. You tell me why he's in a grave alongside 94 others? (at the time it was 94 others because 95 on the day died) You tell me why my son is in a grave in the ground early? He done everything right. You tell me why is he there with 94 others?" "My dear, there were 780 policemen on duty that day." I said, "No, Mrs Thatcher, you've got that wrong, it was more than that. Then what the hell were they doing?" Her words to me were, "Their job, my dear, their job." I said, "95 people innocent people have died and that was their job?" "I'll step away from you, dear, you are so angry." I said, "I'll do you a favour, Mrs Thatcher, I'll step away from you. Get out Jimmy, walk out now." And we did. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

I knew from that day on that this was going to be a massive cover-up because she wanted to protect her police force. So the families had a hell of a job on their hands. As you all know, 38 years on, Sue and I are still here alongside Charlotte Hennessey,

Steve Kelly and other families. We have been down every court case we could go. I will never forget Labour and Jack Straw giving us the scrutiny by Stuart-Smith. It was the worst thing he ever gave anybody. It was a disgrace. It was a massive disgrace, but what gets me, and why Sue and I are here for the people of this country to try to change things, not only the culture, is to have a Hillsborough Law.

I know you have heard a few things about it, but a Hillsborough law has nothing to do with the Hillsborough families. It will do nothing for us, absolutely nothing. But what it will do for the people of this country, and their children and their grandchildren, is it will change everything that we have had to fight against. We will get a duty of candour. A duty of candour is for them to tell the truth. Do not lie. You tell the truth.

And parity of arms. I didn't realise that families had to pay every step of the way. Every court case we took, every private prosecution, judicial review, pretrial review, families had to pay for every penny. I had four other young children. I had to borrow. I am not ashamed to say it. I was a working-class mum, that is all I was, a working-class mum, and I am proud to say it. I worked for everything that we have got. I have worked hard for it and I still now to this day do a bit of work and pay taxes to this country, but I am certainly not paying taxes for them to pay the perpetrators, and the victims getting no help whatsoever.

What we are fighting for is a parity of arms so that no matter what the police get, any service gets, those who are fighting an injustice get exactly the same amount of money and they don't have to go out campaigning. (*Applause*) Because when they say to you the judge will be looking at this, the judge will be looking at that, I am sorry but I don't

even trust bloody judges because a lot of them can be corrupt as well. When you can get a judge in one of the trials who can turn round and say to Mr Duckenfield, “Don’t worry, Mr Duckenfield, you won’t serve a custodial sentence”, and that is before the trial stated. You go to a private prosecution and the judge goes beyond his remit and directs the jury twice. What Judge Hooper did, and I will tell you his name and I am not ashamed to say it, is he gave the questionnaire to the jury and there was five questions. We were all sitting there as families and he turned round and said, “Now, if you find Mr Duckenfield guilty on the first question, you go to the second question. If you find him guilty on the second question, you go to the third question. But if you find him not guilty on the first question, you come out and say not guilty. You don’t have to go to the other questions.” The jury gets sent out. Within a matter of maybe two days or a day, I can’t quite remember, the jury came back to ask a question on the third point. Do you follow me? They came back to ask a question on the third point. What did Hooper say to them? He looked at the families and said, “It doesn’t mean to say they found him guilty on the first and second.” I thought, “Have I got ‘Idiot’ on my bloody head?” They must have found him guilty to get to the third point. That is what he put to them. He turned round and said to the jury, “What message will be you be sending out to the emergency services if you come back with guilty?” What chance did you have? What chance did we have when he can do that and go beyond his remit?

This is what families have been up against for all of these years. To me we have changed a lot. We changed the verdict when top people were saying to us, “You will never get those changed [it was 96 at the time] Margaret, you will never get that changed, it is never going to happen. We bloody well did! We bloody changed it!

(Applause)

So, we got the unlawfully killed verdicts and yet not one person has been accountable, not one person for 97 innocent victims unlawfully killed. The system in this country stinks. It has got to change and we are here to try to change a culture that is so morally wrong, so corrupt, it is an absolute disgrace. I would like to say to all of you - and please mark my words - the truth costs nothing. Lies and cover-ups have cost all of you taxpayers billions. I have said it to Mr Starmer. I have told him straight, I have had quite a few meetings with the Prime Minister, one thing about me is you will never brain wash me. I do not get brain washed. I think so many people can be brain washed under divide and rule. People have got to stick together. You have all got to stay together. You have all got to make sure you never, ever give up for what you know is right, proper and just. Never ever, ever give up! (*Applause*) Sorry Sue, I should have left something for you to say, I am sorry.

SUE ROBERTS: How do you follow that?

MARGARET ASPINALL: Mention Andy Burnham, please.

SUE ROBERTS: I will do, yes. (*Laughter*) Margaret mentioned that she has spoken and said it is a disgrace what happened. She then said to Andy Burnham, "I want to go and address these people. I want to go down to London. I want to speak to MPs and people from the Lords." So Andy arranged for Margaret to have that conversation and Margaret told them straight, "You are all a disgrace." She did tell them that and she did say, "The suit doesn't make the man, the dress doesn't make the lady." (*Applause*) Following that meeting, as we were walking through the streets of London, Margaret

and Andy Burnham were walking together and Margaret said, “Something has got to change in this country. This is appalling. We need a Hillsborough Law”, and that was the start of the Hillsborough Law. Andy then placed what should have been the Hillsborough Law before Parliament in 2017. Then, unfortunately, it wasn’t Labour in charge anymore, and what did the Conservatives do with the Hillsborough Law? Nothing. Now we are 95% of the way there. We have got a lot to thank Margaret and Andy Burnham and our legal team for but there are powers that be behind the Prime Minister from the Civil Service who say it is all to do with national security. National security does not come into Hillsborough Law. If there is something that would breach national security there are already controls in place. So, they are just trying to whitewash people. I do believe we will only get a Hillsborough Law from the Labour Party. I do not believe Reform would want it. The Conservatives have shown already that they don’t want it. We need for you to please contact your MP and get behind Hillsborough Law. Follow Hillsborough Law Now on Twitter and social media. Please, please, we do need your support. We are that close but we need to push it over the line. Margaret wants to say something more.

MARGARET ASPINALL: I do. I never shut up to be honest with you. When I said to Sue mention Andy Burnham, what I meant her to say was Andy Burnham stood on The Cop in front of 30-odd thousand people and they weren’t all chanting to him, “Justice for the 96”, even though we know now it is 97, but “Justice for the 96.” He stood there and he took it and I was very proud of him when he done that and, because of that, because of Andy standing there, he promised me he would take it back into Parliament, which he did do. He kept his word, he did do, because within a couple of weeks we were seeing the Ministry of Justice, we were having meetings with the

Ministry of Justice. I have got to thank Andy because things changed for the Hillsborough families when Andy stood on that Cop and took that message back from all of that crowd. We owe Andy but not just Andy, the likes of Jimmy McGovern with his drama doc. I do remember when Sue was saying then about me being in Parliament doing the talk, which I did tell them straight they all should be ashamed of themselves, later on, someone from the House of Lords came up to me and somebody from the Government and said, “You should be in Parliament, Margaret”, and I said, “If I was in Parliament you’d all be bloody sacked. It’s a good job I am not or the whole lot of you would be gone”. (*Applause*) Me personally I think ordinary people could do a far better job. It doesn’t take Einstein to sort things out, it takes common sense. It only takes common sense. I am afraid I have got a mouth and I don’t care, if people don’t like what I say, that is up to them but I am speaking on behalf of the nation, I hope, and for the good of this nation, the good of their children and their grandchildren and their futures. That is why I say please, please help to bring Labour back to the way it used to be - for the working-class people and no one else. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: What a privilege it is to have Margaret and Sue with us. What awe-inspiring people they are. Like I said this morning, they are not doing it for themselves, they have lost their children: they are doing it for other families not to go through the same thing. And that is pretty special, that is solidarity. Margaret and Sue, thank you so much. (*Applause*)

The Vice-President took the Chair.

UNION ORGANISATION: REPRESENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Congress, we now move to debating motions under Union Organisation: Representation & Accountability.

Could the movers and seconders of Motion 30 come to the rostrum and Motions 31, 32 and 33 please come down to the front. The mover of Motion 30 please come to the rostrum.

HAVE A SAY

MOTION 30

30. HAVE A SAY

Congress on occasions anyone of us can have a matter about us addressed in our current Rule 5/6 matters including the appeal process. Throughout this process if a matter is being reported that names you or is about you, our procedures do not allow for you to address any comments made, be interviewed or have any input to a proceeding about you in our current procedures.

These matters can have a significant impact on individuals.

We ask congress that we create a clear procedure that allows named individuals to have a say in these proceedings.

Please support this motion.

**Y30 NEYH ORGANISING BRANCH
NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**

(Referred)

JOSH BLACKLOCK (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): I am not quite sure how to follow that one, such a powerful message. Good afternoon, Congress, panel, Josh Blacklock from the loud and proud North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region.

(Applause) This is just a short and sweet one. Congress, there is currently a set of procedures known as Rule 5, Rule 6 and appeals. In these procedures, any single one

of us can be named for whatever reason. However, the current procedure deems that when you are named, you have no right to comment, you have no right to be interviewed and you have no right to have your say on the matter. This scenario can and has previously caused a negative impact on individuals. It can also sway a decision based on information that may be not entirely correct, with no ability to confirm or deny. Because of this we request that the CEC creates a clear-cut procedure for Rule 5/6 and the appeals process for the right for each individual who deserves it, that when named on these matters, to have their comments about it. We are going to refer this back to the CEC. Please help us protect ourselves and our members. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Before I call a seconder, please can I remind everyone to lift their chairs because of the noise echoing around the hall. Please be a bit considerate for others. Can I have the seconder, please, for Motion 30. (*Formally seconded from the floor*)

Can I have the mover of Motion 31, please.

EMOTIONAL AND WELLBEING SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS DURING RULE 5, RULE 5A AND RULE 6 PROCEDURES

MOTION 31

31. EMOTIONAL AND WELLBEING SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS DURING RULE 5, RULE 5A AND RULE 6 PROCEDURES

This Congress notes the significant impact our reps frequently see on individuals' mental health and welfare whilst supporting them through investigatory, disciplinary, grievance and sexual harassment processes in the workplace. With employers generally signposting members to Employee Assistance Programmes, charities and NHS mental health services for support and reps being advised to do similar.

This Congress further notes that the GMB currently do not provide similar signposting or funded support access to members subject to Rule 5, Rule 5A or Rule 6 procedures.

This Congress believes that the GMB should ensure that members, officeholders and activists receive the same level of support that we bargain for with employers and provide to GMB employees when subject to suspension, grievance, investigatory and disciplinary procedures.

This Congress resolves that the GMB must review the existing provision of support afforded to members subject to investigation or suspension under Rule 5, Rule 5A or Rule 6. Amendments should be made to ensure all members subject to such proceedings are provided with signposting, and that members without access to workplace provided EAP's, including retired, self-employed or unemployed members, full time branch secretaries, and accompanying reps are provided with access to a GMB funded support platform for the duration of and a period of 3 months following the conclusion of any Rule 5, Rule 5A or Rule 6 process.

**K14 KENT COUNTY BRANCH
SOUTHERN REGION**

(Referred)

LYNN POLLARD (Southern): I do not think we have got a seconder for this one either.

Lynn Pollard, Southern Region, still dyslexic! This motion addresses something that is often overlooked but can have a profound impact on our members and activists: the emotional and mental wellbeing of those involved in Rule 5, Rule 5A and Rule 6 procedures. Regardless of the outcome, being subjected to an investigation or a formal procedure can be an extremely stressful experience and, trust me, I know, I have been there. It can create anxiety, uncertainty and isolation, affecting not only the individual concerned but also their family, their work and their wider wellbeing. As trade unionists we rightly challenge employers to provide support mechanisms for workers facing disciplinary and grievance procedures. Many employers provide access to employee assistance programmes, counselling services and wellbeing support, yet when our own members, activists and branch officers find themselves involved in internal proceedings, equivalent support is not always available.

This motion is not about changing the rules or influencing outcomes. It is about reassuring members that people are treated with dignity and compassion while these procedures take place. No member should feel abandoned because they are retired, self-employed, unemployed, or otherwise unable to access workplace wellbeing services. No representative supporting a member through these procedures should be left without support themselves.

The proposals in this motion are practical, reasonable and consistent with the values we promote every day in our workplaces across the country. They recognise that supporting wellbeing is not a luxury, it is a responsibility. If we expect employers to care for the welfare of the workers then we must hold ourselves to the same standard. Congress, I urge you to support Motion 31. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Southern Region, do you have a seconder? (*Formally seconded from the floor*)

Motion 32, could I have the next speaker, please.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURE PROTECTING OUR LAY MEMBERS

MOTION 32

32. POLICIES AND PROCEDURE PROTECTING OUR LAY MEMBERS

We are calling on congress to develop and adopt policies and procedures within our rulebook to protect our lay members, activists and post holders when things occasionally go wrong.

Our members work incredibly hard and on occasions when there has been a matter for investigation, our members are left isolated. Without any support in rule there are no consistent protections for our members in our union.

As a worker and equality focused organisation we must provide a safe environment for our lay workforce to be able to access support, ensure they are regularly kept up to date and are informed of outcomes within a reasonable time period. The mental health impact of investigations has a detrimental effect, and we must provide clear policies that consider a person's wellbeing during a difficult process.

This motion was referred last year however as no progress has been we feel it needs to be voted on by congress 2026.

We call upon congress to agree to:

- Creating a working group from regional council members across all of our regions to create policies in rule to protect our lay members within two months of Congress 2026.
- Consultation on this must be union wide with regional members being able to feed into this process in a timely manner.
- To report back no later than Congress 2027 with a final policy and procedure keeping the welfare of our members in mind in our rulebook.

Congress please support.

**Y30 NEYH ORGANISING BRANCH
NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION**

(Lost)

CRAIG NEIL (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): President, Congress, proud to be North East, Yorkshire & Humber. *(Cheers)* I am moving Motion 32: Policies and Procedures Protecting Our Lay Members. On occasion, when there has been a matter for investigation, our colleagues are often left isolated. Without any support in rule, there are no consistent protections for our members in our union. We are calling on Congress to develop and adopt policies and procedures within our own Rule Book to protect our lay members, activists and post holders when things go wrong.

Being a workplace representative is not an easy job and we volunteer for it. It can at times be an emotional and volatile environment. If things don't go the way of a member then the representative is quite often in the firing line, the only outlet left available, and this leaves us vulnerable. Not enough is done to protect and monitor the wellbeing of lay members when things reach there stage. We all understand that strict workplace

boundaries must be enforced and confidentiality must be maintained, but that does not mean that members should be left alone. A supportive peer, someone to talk to rather than a legal adviser or investigator, should be the absolute bare minimum. Official advice from other employers is to seek support from a trade union representative or certified workplace counsellor and this is where we drop through the net. Testimony gathered includes, “I couldn’t tell anybody what had happened and felt so alone.” “There were no calls from anyone to check how I was, just a letter posted with dates.” “I felt like I had done wrong even though it was found I had no case to answer. My mental health suffered greatly.” Those are real words from real members. We are expected to carry this weight with no real support network or formal outlet.

As an organisation we must provide a safe environment for our lay workforce to be able to access support, ensure they are regularly updated and informed of outcomes within a reasonable time. We must provide clear policies that consider a person’s wellbeing during a difficult process. Let me be clear, we are not providing these.

We call upon Congress to create a working group from regional council members across all regions to create policies and rules to protect our lay members within two months of Congress 2026. Consultation on this must be union wide, with regional members being able to feed into this in a timely manner, and to report back no later than Congress 2027 with a final policy and procedure keeping the welfare of our members in mind in our Rule Book.

Now to the meat of this. This motion was referred last year. However, as no progress has been made, we feel it needs to be voted on by Congress 2026 - you. Congress, we must do better. We can do better. Please support this motion, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Seconder.

ROSS BENNETT (NEYH): My name is Ross, and I am a first-time delegate (*Applause*) from the shy and humble yet also loud and proud North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region. I am seconding this motion because I believe it is vital that we as a collective provide the greatest level of support possible to our lay members. I won't repeat everything Craig has already said (because I have got less time) and set out so well, but I do want to focus on certain matters in this motion. This motion is not new. There was support from the floor last year and it has already been referred once. That shows this is an issue the members care deeply about and we emphasise it should not be delayed. This motion is about ensuring members are not left isolated without consistent protections and at times when they are already facing situations that could have a huge impact on their lives. And all too often the process itself is the punishment. The uncertainty, lack of clarity and inconsistent support can take serious tolls long before any outcome is reached. We cannot ignore the impact that uncertainty and isolation have on our members' wellbeing. By introducing union-wide policies and procedures we can provide clarity, reassurance and consistency.

Our region has put measures in place to implement this but national policy and procedures need to be implemented to protect all of us. The benefits are clear: better mental health and wellbeing, stronger confidence in the union, and a fairer workplace

experience for all members regardless of the region or the workplace. I ask if we are a truly a worker and equality focused organisation, is that not reason enough to act? Congress, please support Motion 32 to establish a working group to develop these policies with a report back in 2027. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Mover for Motion 33, please.

GMB REPRESENTATIVES WELFARE SUPPORT

MOTION 33

33. GMB REPRESENTATIVES WELFARE SUPPORT

Congress, I'm proud to be here today as a GMB Rep and as a Pharmacy Technician working in the NHS in Plymouth.

In my professional role, I care for patients. In my union role, I care for staff. And both roles come with responsibility, pressure, and emotional weight. As an NHS rep, I don't just represent one group of workers. I represent porters, cleaners, admin staff, nurses, AHPs, and pharmacy staff. I represent Band 2 to Band 7. I deal with disciplinaries, grievances, sickness cases, bullying, and people who are genuinely at breaking point.

Many of us do this work while still doing full-time NHS jobs. We come off a ward, a dispensary, or a clinic, and walk straight into a case meeting. We finish a shift and then answer messages from members in crisis. We do this because we care. But caring comes at a cost.

We are exposed to trauma. We hear about suicide attempts, domestic abuse, stress-related illness, and unsafe staffing. And then we go back to our own roles and try to carry on as normal.

Unlike paid union officers, workplace reps are not employed by the GMB union. But we carry the emotional burden of union work every single day. And right now, Congress, there is no dedicated welfare support system for us as GMB representatives. We are trained and expected to help to look after members' wellbeing, but who looks after ours?

If we want strong representation in the NHS, we must look after the people who provide it. Burnt-out reps leave. Overwhelmed reps step down. And when that happens, members lose experienced advocates.

This motion asks GMB to do something simple but powerful; to create a Representative Welfare Support Hub for GMB Union reps; a place for confidential emotional support; a place for trauma-informed listening; a place to be signposted to help when we are struggling. This is not about weakness. This is about sustainability.

If the NHS is serious about staff wellbeing, then GMB must be serious about rep wellbeing.

I am proud to be a GMB rep. I am proud to be an NHS worker, but I want to be able to do both without burning myself out in the process.

Congress, I ask you to support this motion, not just for today's reps, but for the future of representation in our industries, private and public sector.

P19 BRANCH
WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION
(Referred)

IAN MINARDS (Wales & South West): Moving Motion 33: GMB Representatives Welfare Support. Congress, I am proud to stand here before you today as a GMB representative and as a pharmacy technician working in the NHS in Plymouth. In my professional role I care for patients. In my union role I care for staff. Both these roles carry responsibility, pressure and emotional weight. As an NHS GMB rep, I do not represent just one group of workers. I represent porters, cleaners, admin staff, nurses, allied health professionals and pharmacy teams, from band 4 right through to band 8. I sit in disciplinaries, I support grievances, I manage sickness cases, I deal with bullying, harassment and NHS staff who are genuinely at breaking point. Like so many reps in this room I do this alongside a full NHS job. We come off a ward, a dispensary or a clinic and go straight into a case meeting. We finish long shifts and then answer messages from our members in crisis. We do it because we care. But Congress, caring comes at a cost because what we are exposed to is not just workload, it is trauma. We hear about suicide attempts, we hear about domestic abuse, we hear about stress so severe it makes people ill. We hear about unsafe staffing levels on wards and colleagues pushed beyond their own elements. Then we are expected to go back to our own roles and carry on as normal. But we are not untouched by what we hear. We carry these stories with us and, unlike paid union officers, workplace reps are not employed by the

GMB, and yet we carry the emotional burden of union work every single day and right now,

Congress, there is something missing. There is no dedicated welfare support or system for GMB representatives. We are trained to support others, we are expected to protect wellbeing but who looks after us. Because here is the reality: when reps burn out they leave, when reps become overwhelmed they step down, and when this happens, our members do not just lose a rep, they lose experience, they lose trust and they lose advocacy at the moment they need it most.

If we want strong effective representation in the NHS and beyond, we must look after the people who deliver it. That is what this motion is about. It asks something simple but powerful: to create a representative welfare support hub for GMB reps. A place for confidential emotional support; a place for trauma-informed listening; a place where reps can be signposted to help when they need it. Not as a last resort but as a normal accepted part of doing this role. And let me be clear, this is not about weakness, this is about sustainability because you cannot pour from an empty cup. You cannot support others effectively if you are struggling yourself. If the NHS is serious about staff wellbeing, and we know it must be, then GMB must be serious about its reps' wellbeing. I am proud to be a GMB rep, I am proud to work in the NHS, but I want to be doing both without burning myself out. Congress, please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Seconder?

NICK AMOS (Wales & South West): Seconding Motion 33. First-time delegate, first time speaker (*Applause*) Thank you. Congress, the speaker has powerfully described the reality of being a GMB workplace rep, particularly in the NHS, and I want to be absolutely clear, what we have heard today is not unique to one workplace, one sector or one region. This is the lived experience of reps across our union. Our representatives are the first line of support for members at their most vulnerable. Reps listen when someone is facing bullying, disciplinary action, sickness, breakdown or crisis. They absorb the stress, anger, fear and trauma, often in between shifts, on breaks or at the end of their exhausting day's work, and yet, as has been said, there is currently no dedicated system to support the wellbeing of those reps themselves.

This motion does not criticise GMB. It strengthens it and it recognises that strong effective representation depends on healthy supported representatives. When reps burn out, step away or silently struggle on, it is not just them that lose out - it is our members, our branches and our organisation.

What is being asked for here is modest, sensible and necessary: a confidential welfare support hub for representatives, a place to talk, a place to be listened to, a place to be sign posted before crisis becomes collapse. This is not about weakness. It is about resilience and sustainability.

Congress, we cannot continue to ask unpaid work place reps to carry emotional labour without support, especially when we know the toll that trauma-informed work takes. If we truly value our reps we must back that up with action. Supporting this motion sends

a clear message that GMB understands the demands placed on representatives and that we are prepared to look after the people who look after our members every day.

For those reasons, Congress, I urge to you support this motion and help future-proof our union by caring for those at its heart. I second. (*Applause*)

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to any of these motions? (*No response*) Can I ask the CEC's Donna Spicer to come up and speak, please.

DONNA SPICER (CEC, Southern): Responding for the CEC to Motions 30, 31, 32 and 33.

On Motion 30, existing procedures for Rules 5, 5A and 6 provide a structural framework for handling complaints, disputes and disciplinary matters. They allow for full hearings in which all parties directly involved have the opportunity to present their case through written submissions, oral evidence and relevant witnesses. A central and essential feature of these procedures is confidentiality. This protects all individuals involved, including complainant, respondent and witnesses, and ensures that matters be considered fairly, free from external pressure, reputational harm or informal interference. Maintaining this confidentiality is critical to preserving trust in the process and ensuring that individuals feel safe to engage with it.

The motion seeks to extend participation to individuals who may be named or referenced within proceedings. While the intention is understood, this raises serious

concerns that need to be fully considered. Expanding the right to intervene in cases beyond those directly party to complaint risks creating overly complex and protracted processes. It would also alter fundamentally the balance of the current system, potentially undermining procedural fairness rather than strengthening it. Crucially, there is a significant unintended consequence that must be recognised. If individuals believe that raising a complaint could lead to wider participation, or scrutiny from others named or connected to the case, this may deter members from coming forward in the first place. The union must prioritise creating an environment where members feel safe, protected and confident to raise concerns. Any proposal that risks discouraging complaints or exposing individuals to additional pressure of perceived retaliation would be a step backwards.

The existing Rule Book already contains the necessary flexibility to ensure fairness, where required, under Rules 5.12 and 6.2. The leadership has agreed that the October CEC will undertake a strategic forward look towards Congress 2027.

On Motion 31, the CEC is seeking to refer Rule 5, 5A and Rule 6. Procedures and issues involving complaints and disciplinaries around membership can be a difficult process for everyone involved. The substance of the motion should be referred to the full CEC to consider as it may want to update guidance or template letters for use including sign posting to services, which was last agreed by the CEC in March 2023.

On Motion 32, the CEC is asking this to be referred. The concerns raised in this motion appear to relate primarily to Rule 5, 5A and Rule 6 procedures. These are areas where the union already has established processes alongside clear authority for the CEC to

issue additional guidance on how such procedures are conducted. This includes the ability to strengthen welfare considerations, communicate expectations and support mechanisms without the need for Rule Book amendments. It is important to be clear that introducing prescriptive policies into the Rule Book is not always the most effective or flexible approach. The current framework deliberately allows for guidance to be updated in response to experience and evolving best practice.

The branch has had a lengthy written stance from the CEC on this issue, laying out the unintended consequences of the motion. In addition, the branch has already been written to by the senior lay leadership of the union, with a time-line and commitment to resolve these issues, with expressly the involvement of regional committees. We intend to keep to those commitments and work with the regions in good faith so our members feel safe and supported during Rule 5, 5A and Rule 6 procedures. We hope that the region accepts reference back so we can do the good work we have already committed to do.

On Motion 33, the CEC is seeking to refer. The GMB recognises the vital work that our reps give to the union in supporting members and making work better, including in difficult and complex cases involving our members. We further recognise the impact this has on our reps and our staff.

The motion calls for the creation of a representative welfare support hub for GMB union reps. We would ask that the matter is referred to the CEC and its Finance & General Purposes Committee for further consideration, including the remit of any hub, as well as the cost of setting up and running this service.

Therefore Congress, the CEC is asking that Motions 30, 31, 32 and 33 be referred.

Thank you.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: The CEC is asking for all of these Motions to be referred.

Does North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region agree to refer Motion 30? (*Agreed*)

yes. Does Southern Region agree to refer Motion 31? (*Agreed*) does North East,

Yorkshire & Humber agree to refer Motion 32. (*Not agreed*) Does Wales & South

West Region agree to refer Motion 33? (*Agreed*) We are going to go to a vote on

Motion 32. The CEC are asking for you to oppose Motion 32. All those in favour of

Motion 32, can you please put your hands up. Against? That is lost.

A SPEAKER: Point of order.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: I am sorry, it has been lost.

*Motion 30 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 31 was **REFERRED**.*

*Motion 32 was **LOST**.*

*Motion 33 was **REFERRED**.*

Can we have movers and seconders for Motion 35, please.

MEMBER TRANSFERS AND THE PROPER APPLICATION OF RULE 37.6

MOTION 35

35. MEMBER TRANSFERS AND THE PROPER APPLICATION OF RULE 37.6

This Congress notes that we have a defined process for the transfer of members between branches and regions as outlined in the 2025 Rulebook under Rule 37.6. This includes the branch secretary being aware of and involved in the process where 3 or more members are to be transferred and additionally notified at the point of transfer for interregional transfers.

This Congress further notes that the rulebook procedure is not being followed in all instances, with transfers occurring without the knowledge or consent of branch secretaries or regional committees and transfers being centrally administered by the NAU and regional offices.

This Congress believes that all members, branches, employees, departments and regions should adhere to rule when administering member transfers, and that clear reports of membership transfers both within and between regions should be available to relevant officers and regional committees to ensure good governance and democratic oversight.

This Congress resolves that the GMB should ensure all staff involved in membership transfers are reminded that the rulebook procedure must be followed, with relevant training devised and delivered if necessary. Additionally, the NAU should provide a monthly report to each region detailing the transfer of all members into or out of the region, detailing the branches which each member has been transferred between.

K14 KENT COUNTY BRANCH SOUTHERN REGION

(Referred)

AVA PAYNE (Southern): President, Vice-President, Congress, I am here to speak on Motion 35. I am going to speak briefly (apparently!) and constructively on this motion because the CEC Special Report has already agreed to refer it, so I am just here to give you my take, which is not criticising any region or branch officer or department because the motion is about making sure that when members move between branches and regions, the process is clear, transparent and properly understood by everybody.

So, the Rule Book gives all of the fancy stuff on how to do it, and I think we will hear that from the CEC, so let me find another bit. In practice, apart from the Rule Book, many members have no idea about the administration involved in moving branches, especially when they pay by direct debit, they keep paying direct debit and, as far as

they are concerned, they are covered but when they need to actually get support, news flash - you are in a different branch, you are in a different region, you are in a different place. All that I am asking the CEC to do is when they are looking at these rules, that they think of the lovely member because they need to know where they are, who they are and whether they are in my branch or your branch. We welcome the spirit of the motion in asking staff involved in transfers to be reminded of the Rule Book process and to be given training where necessary, because this is about good administration and good governance and, most importantly, making sure members know what they are doing. So I therefore ask that when this matter is looked at, consideration is given on the clear reporting to branches and regions, and simple communication to members so they understand what a transfer means, who supports them and what happens next. Congress, I would refer.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ava. Seconder? (*Formally seconded from the floor*) Can I call the CEC and Paul Hunt.

PAUL HUNT (CEC): Vice-President, Congress, Paul Hunt responding on behalf of the CEC to Motion 35. On Motion 35, the CEC is seeking to refer. As the motion acknowledges, Rule 37.6 was amended by Congress 2025 through the CEC Special Report. However, it is possible not all regions have amended their processes. If there are examples that the relevant rule is not being followed, these examples and the motions should be referred in the first instance to the relevant regional secretary or regional committee. Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking that Motion 35 be referred.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Does Southern Region agree to refer Motion 35. (*Agreed*)

The President took the Chair.

THE PRESIDENT: Before we go on, can I have the movers of 230, 236 and 237 come to the front. Just to give you a heads-up, we are going to move Motions 248, 249, 250 and 251 to tomorrow morning just because we want to finish on time. So I am sorry if you have got your speech prepared but it gives you another evening to practise them and then you can come tomorrow and be exactly on time. Can we have the mover of Motion 230 please?

ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS

MOTION 230

230. ANTI-TRADE UNION LAWS

This Congress notes after its election in July 2024, The Labour government has failed to fulfil its pledge and GMB policy to repeal in full the Trade Union Act 2016, or lift the ban on secondary action, voted on at GMB Congress 2025. Although Labour's Employment Rights Act receiving royal ascent on 18 December 2025.

While The Labour government proclaims that the vast majority of the Tories' 2016 Trade Union Act has been repealed. What it doesn't put in its press briefings is that the most restrictive aspect of that legislation, the undemocratic 50% strike ballot turnout threshold, still remains.

If they wanted to The Labour government with its 160+ seat majority could have passed emergency legislation on day one of office, abolishing not just the 2016 laws, but all the anti-trade union laws on the statute books.

This congress calls on the CEC and the senior management team to fully re-commit to working in collaboration with our likeminded Sister Unions and the TUC, to take appropriate actions, to help to persuade and pressurise the Labour party into implement further legislation as a matter of urgency, that will help strengthen rights and freedoms for Unions and workers, and will mean the repeal of remaining anti-union laws.

**B14 BANBURY NO1 BRANCH
LONDON REGION**

(Carried)

PAUL McCARNEY (London): First-time delegate and first-time speaker. *(Applause)*
Moving Motion 230 with no seconder. This Congress notes after its election in July 2024, the Labour Government has failed to fulfil its pledge and GMB policy to repeal in full the Trade Union Act 2016, or lift the ban on secondary action, voted on at GMB Congress in 2025, although Labour's Employment Rights Act received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025.

While the Labour Government proclaims that the vast majority of the Tories' 2016 Trade Union Act has been repealed, the repeal of restrictive strike laws, minimum service levels, the Strike Act (Minimum Service Levels) in 2023 was repealed removing controversial work notices that previously worked in Border, fire and health services to work on strike days, to name a few. What it does not put into its press briefings is that the most restrictive aspects of that legislation, the undemocratic 50% strike ballot turn-out threshold, remains because it is legally tied to the introduction of electronic voting.

This Congress calls on the CEC and the senior management team to fully re-commit to working in collaboration with our like-minded sister unions and the TUC to take appropriate actions to help persuade and pressurise the Labour Party into implementing further legislation as a matter of urgency, that will help strengthen rights and freedoms for unions and workers, and will mean the repeal of the remaining anti-union laws. Please support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Secunder? (*Formally seconded from the floor*) Thank you, London Region. Mover of 236 please.

EXPECTATIONS OF GMB-SUPPORTED COUNCILLORS

MOTION 236

236. EXPECTATIONS OF GMB SUPPORTED COUNCILLORS

GMB supports elected representatives in a variety of ways, including through political campaigning, engagement, and shared values around improving the lives of working people.

We note that elected representatives often participate in decisions that directly affect workers, including matters relating to employment practice, workplace justice, and the fair treatment of staff.

We believe that GMB supported councillors and elected representatives should uphold standards that reflect the union's values, including fairness, respect, and the consistent consideration of workers' interests.

We ask congress to agree that we

1. Develop clear standards outlining GMB's expectations of supported councillors and elected representatives in relation to workplace fairness and decision making.
2. Provide guidance and training to GMB supported representatives to ensure they fully understand the union's values and the importance of fair employment practices.
3. Introduce a process for reviewing adherence to these standards, with the ability for GMB to reconsider support where conduct is inconsistent with union principles.
4. Report on this framework annually to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.

D30 DURHAM AND TEESSIDE GENERAL NORTH EAST, YORKSHIRE & HUMBER REGION

(Carried)

SUE ATKINSON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): Good afternoon, Congress. I am from the proud North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region, moving Motion 236. (*Applause*) It might seem strange to some of you that this motion has come from a big general branch like mine. It might seem even stranger when you note that our political officer Kat is so tight with the political fund, hardly anybody gets a look in! But we have brought it here today because of our experience on the ground. I am so proud of my branch. It is an extremely active one. Over the last year we have taken on Tetley

Tea and nearly created a Christmas crisp crisis (that is a bit of a mouthful!) by taking KP workers out on strike. We have supported dozens of industrial actions. More than once we have reached out to our local politicians for support only to be roughly ignored. This despite the fact that so many local councillors declare themselves to be proud trade unionists. In some ways I have become used to disappointment when it comes to my local council and maybe I just shrug my shoulders in the same way when councillors come and ask us to support them in their election campaigns.

Comrades, I believe with our political links with the Labour Party, the union must use this political connection to improve the lives of working people, but the support can never be unconditional. This motion is simply to make sure that we support candidates who support our values and deliver for our members so. Please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Susan. Secunder?

ANTHONY JACKSON (North East, Yorkshire & Humber): (*Cheers*) D30 Durham and Teesside Branch, seconding our motion on how we manage our support for councillors. I don't want to make this about party politics. I am not here to have a debate on the value of our Political Fund. Instead I am here to make the case we should use our political and industrial power to seek to support the political leaders of our movement only when they back ordinary working people in our fights. That is because we cannot allow our members to be taken for granted, as it often is, but, more importantly, support that is not really based on our demands and priorities is not real support in any meaningful way.

Across the North East, we recently lost hundreds of Labour councillors. Far too many of them had become completely distant from our members. If we are serious about having our voices heard, we must have those serious conversations and keep them honest to the values of the Labour Movement. Congress, let's keep councillors connected and accountable to us. Please support this motion. Thank you. I second.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Anthony. Does anybody wish to speak in opposition to either of those two motions? Thank you, Midlands, you have informed us you are withdrawing Motion 237. In that case, can I ask Dean Gilligan for the CEC to reply, please. Then could 241, 242, and Composite 11 be ready as well?

DEAN GILLIGAN (CEC): Hello, Congress, how are you doing? President, Congress, Dean Gilligan of the CEC responding to Motions 230 and 236.

On Motion 230, the CEC supports the motion with a qualification. The qualification is that the motion refers to failure to repeal in full the 2016 Act. The CEC recognises that significant elements have already been repealed and Congress should acknowledge that progress while continuing to press for further reform. Any campaign, activity, joint initiative or expenditure arising from this motion must be authorised through the Finance & General Purposes Committee in line with Rule 3. The CEC will continue to pursue removal of the 50% turn-out threshold alongside the introduction of secure workplace and electronic balloting, recognising that legislative exigencies may affect implementation.

Congress should also recognise that the long-term structural reform, particularly the expansion of sectoral collective bargaining, represents a transformative objective for the trade union movement and may deliver more sustainable gains than piecemeal repeal alone.

Subject to these qualifications, the CEC supports the motion's call for continued engagement with sister unions, TULO and the TUC to secure further strengthening of trade union rights.

On Motion 236, the CEC supports the motion with a qualification. The qualification is that any work to develop, communicate or review expectations of GMB-supported councillors is more appropriately delivered at regional level. Regions already undertake this work in a variety of forms tailored to the local political context and political educational arrangements. The CEC therefore supports the intent of the motion but qualifies that:

1. Any framework or guidance must be developed through existing regional political structures;
2. Oversight and review of councillor conduct will continue to be managed regionally rather than through a new national process. This ensures that support for councillors remains responsive to regional political landscapes while maintaining consistency with GMB values and strategy and potentially the conflict of the practical realities of elected representatives operating across large constituencies or parliamentary responsibilities. Political endorsements and support decisions must remain subject to the union's rules, Congress, political strategy and the democratic process within regions. While the CEC

supports the strengthening of the accountability and engagement between representatives and branches, this must be achieved through guidance and political organisation rather than rigid mandatory criteria.

For these reasons, the CEC asks that motions -- that one's gone. Listen, therefore, the CEC is supporting with qualification 230 and 236. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Dean. It has been a long day. Does London accept the qualification on Motion 230. (*Accepted*) Does Humber accept the qualification on motion 236? You have got to be louder than that, North East, Yorkshire & Humber. I am taking that as a yes. (*Accepted*) All those in favour of Motion 230, please show. All those against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 236, please show. Thank you. All those against? That is also carried.

*Motion 230 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 236 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 237 was **WITHDRAWN**.*

POLITICAL: DEMOCRACY & CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

THE PRESIDENT: Moving on to Political: Democracy & Constitutional Reform, can I have the mover of Motion 241, please.?

MOTION 241

APPOINTMENT OF A NEW DISABILITY MINISTER

241. APPOINTMENT OF A NEW DISABILITY MINISTER

This Congress calls on the Government to appoint a new Disability Minister.

The Government appointed Sir Stephen Timms as Minister of Social Security and Disability, this Minister's sole purpose is directed at social security, making cuts to the most in need. These proposals reduce disability choice and autonomy and will create more poverty and isolation.

The Government has ignored evidence from disabled people's advocacy organisations of the damage this will cause and has instead adopted the same blame narrative as the Tories.

We call on Congress to put pressure on the Government to appoint a Minister who will focus solely on the needs of disabled people and the services they rely on, who will find solutions to the issues facing them rather than attacking social welfare.

WIGAN W79 BRANCH NORTH WEST & IRISH REGION

(Carried)

JOE SMITH (North West & Irish): Speaking on Motion 241. Congress, people with disabilities are among the most vulnerable in the population due to societal, environmental and systemic barriers that limit their access to health, education, employment and social participation.

Congress, the UK Government has faced increased criticism for its approach to disability issues. One of the major points of contention is the absence of a full-time Disability Minister for England. Currently the role is part time, which many disability officers argue is insufficient given the scale and complexity of the challenges faced by disabled individual across the country. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland each have different systems for addressing disability matters. This further highlights the need for a coherent full-time position in England.

Congress, having an appointed Disability Minister in government who is totally dedicated to matters that affect the day-to-day lives of affected individuals will mean:

- Effective government representation. A dedicated Minister can effectively represent the best interests of disabled people across government, across government departments, ensuring their voices are heard and considered in policy making.
- Comprehensive policy development. A full-time Minister can develop and oversee comprehensive policies and address the unique challenges faced by disabled individuals such as healthcare, employment, education and social services.
- Improved benefits systems. A Disabilities Minister can help improve the benefits system, making it more transparent and accessible, which is crucial for disabled individuals navigating a complex system such as personal independence payments.
- Champion accessibility. A full-time Minister can champion accessibility initiatives, ensuring that disabled individuals can fully participate in society, whether it is housing, transport or public services.
- Address inequalities. A Disabilities Minister can work on addressing inequalities and barriers faced by disabled individuals, ensuring that they are not left behind in the progress of society.

These benefits highlight the importance of having a dedicated Minister for Disabled People in UK Government as it can lead to significant improvements in the lives of disabled individuals and overall inclusivity of the UK.

Congress, I am aware that the General Secretary cannot knock on the Prime Minister's door and appoint a Minister, but there has never been a more important time in addressing the appointment of a Disabilities Minister with over 16 million people disabled. The time has come for the GMB to put pressure on the Government to appoint a disabled Minister, a Minister who can solely focus on the disabled's needs. Please support, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Joe. Secunder?

CONOR PARKINSON (North West & Irish): Congress, I am seconding Motion 241. As you can tell, this motion is very close to Joe's heart. In reality it should be close to everybody's heart. Everybody here will know someone who is within the disabled community who may be voiceless. As GMB members, branch secretaries, reps, we are often the voice of the voiceless and as a union we should be advocating for the Labour Government to be the same. In a time where people are more vulnerable than ever, and where times are more uncertain than ever, we need to make sure that there is a voice with the best interests of the disabled community at heart. As before with Motion 12, everything that my predecessor said is absolutely true. I do not think any more information needs to added. Joe spoke very eloquently and I would like to second this Motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Conor. Mover of Motion 242

COST OF LIVING CRISIS

MOTION 242

242. COST OF LIVING CRISIS

This Congress notes, the UK continues to face an ongoing cost of living crisis, with inflation, housing costs, childcare expenses, and energy bills placing unbearable pressure on working people and their families. Millions of households are struggling to make ends meet, while local authorities and charities face rising demand for support with fewer resources.

Congress believes, this crisis cannot be left to patchwork responses across government departments. Working people deserve a dedicated, high-level champion within government to drive coordinated action and ensure that policy decisions put affordability, fairness, and living standards at their core.

GMB commends the Labour government's work so far to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, but without central leadership, efforts to tackle inequality and insecurity will remain fragmented and slow.

Congress resolves to call on the UK Government to create the position of a Cost-of-Living Crisis — a senior, cross-departmental role reporting directly to the Prime Minister. This role should be responsible for coordinating national strategy on affordability, overseeing inter-departmental collaboration, monitoring the impact of policy on low- and middle-income households, and ensuring accountability across government for improving living standards. To lobby for the Czar to be supported by a national advisory panel including representatives from trade unions, local government, consumer organisations, and anti-poverty charities.

Congress further resolves that GMB will raise this demand publicly, campaign with allies to build support across civil society and Parliament and hold the government to account for real progress in tackling the cost-of-living crisis.

X12 BRANCH WALES & SOUTH WEST REGION

(Carried)

MARGARET LEWIS (Wales & South West): First-time delegate, first-time speaker.

(Applause) Moving Motion 242. Congress, I move this motion on the cost-of-living crisis because for millions of working people this isn't an abstract issue: it is daily life. It is a choice between heating and eating. It is parents skipping meals so their children don't go hungry. It is workers doing everything right, working hard, paying their bills and still falling behind. Across our communities we are seeing the same story- rents rising faster than wages, energy bills eating into household budgets, childcare simply unaffordable for many families. When people turn for help our councils and charities, already stretched thin, are being asked to do more with less.

Congress, this situation is not inevitable. It is the result of choices and it demands action. We recognise that there has been progress but the reality is this: the response to this crisis is still too fragmented, too slow and too disconnected from the lived experiences of working people, different departments working in isolation, policies that don't always join up and too many people slipping through the cracks. Working people deserve better than a patchwork approach. They deserve leadership. That is why this motion calls for a senior figure at the very top of government, with the authority and responsibility to bring everything together. Someone whose job day in and day out is to ask a simple question: how does this decision affect the cost of living for ordinary people. Someone who can co-ordinate across departments, challenge policies that don't deliver and ensure that improving living standards isn't an afterthought but a priority at the heart of government. Because right now accountability is too easy to lose, responsibility is too easy to pass around and the people who pay the price are our members, their families and the communities we serve.

Congress, this role must not exist in isolation. That is why we are also calling for a National Advisory Panel, bringing people together, trade unions, local government, consumer voices and anti-poverty organisations because the best solutions come from listening and from working together. And let's be honest trade unions like ours already see the reality to the ground. We hear it every day from our members. We know where the pressure points are. We must be part of shaping the response. This motion is not just about creating a job title. It is about creating focus. It is about creating accountability and, most importantly, it is about delivering results: real improvements

in people's lives, real relief for struggling households and real progress in tackling inequality.

Congress, our members cannot wait. They cannot wait for departments to align themselves. They cannot wait for incremental change. They need action that is co-ordinated, urgent and effective. So, let us send a clear message from this Congress that the cost-of-living crisis demands the highest level of attention, that working people must be at the centre of decision making and that we will campaign, organise and hold the Government to account until real change is delivered. I urge Congress to support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Margaret. Spot on with your timing. Secunder please, for Motion 242.

JOANNE SMALL (Wales & South West): I am seconding Motion 242. Thank you, Margaret, for speaking on that, you were brilliant. I am going to be repeating a lot of what you said but not all. I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker at Congress. (*Applause*) I wasn't nervous but now I am! Last time I was in this hall, it was at a Labour Party Young Socialist Conference, when I was 19 and three stone lighter!

Congress, I am proud to second this motion because the cost-of-living crisis is not abstract: it is a daily reality for our members. It is choosing between heating and eating, dealing with rising rents and facing the high cost of childcare. Working people are being pushed to their limits. While there has been some progress, this motion highlights a clear gap. Responsibility is spread across departments with no single point of

leadership, leading to delays and missed opportunities. That is why a cost-of-living czar matters. Not more bureaucracy but clear accountability to drive joined-up action on housing, energy, wages and support. national advisory panel also will ensure the voices of working people help shape solutions. The motion is practical, necessary and focused on real change. Congress, if we are serious about supporting our members and tackling inequality, we must support it. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Joanne. Does anybody want to speak in opposition to any of these motions? (*No response*) In that case, can I ask Simon from the CEC to respond, please?

SIMON DAY (CEC, Midland): President, a wonderful glorious first day of Congress, we are almost there. Responding on behalf of the CEC to Motions 241 and 242.

On Motion 241, CEC supports the Motion with qualifications. The qualifications are that:

1. The motion refers to “Minister’s sole purpose” being to make cuts and adopt slanguage that may not accurately reflect the full scope of the ministerial role. While the CEC shares concerns about aspects of current policy, we must ensure our representations remain factually robust and strategically framed.
2. The appointment of Ministers is a matter for the Prime Minister. The GMB’s role is to influence policy outcomes rather than dictate specific appointments. Our campaigning should focus on securing policy change that protects disabled people’s right and services.

On Motion 42, the CEC supports the motion with qualification. The qualifications are: the creation of specific ministerial or advisory roles is a matter for the Prime Minister. GMB's focus should be on securing co-ordinated policy outcomes rather than prescribing particular titles or structures. Where existing cross-departmental structures already address aspects of affordability and living standards, GMB should seek to influence and strengthen those mechanisms as well as advocating for improved co-ordination.

Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking that Motions 241 and 242 be supported with the qualifications outlined. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Simon. Does North West & Irish Region accept the qualification on Motion 242? (*Accepted*) Does Wales & South West accept the qualification on Motion 242? (*Accepted*) I will put that the vote. All those in favour of Motion 241, please show. Anyone against? That is carried. All those in favour of Motion 242, please show. Anyone against? That is also carried.

*Motion 241 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 242 was **CARRIED**.*

THE PRESIDENT: We are on to the last motion or composite of the day, Composite 11. Can I ask the speaker from Midlands and then London to come up to the rostrum, please.

POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL PROCEDURES.

COMPOSITE 11

C11. POLITICAL AND ELECTION PROCEDURES

This Congress notes that we see many times MPs crossing the floor to join other party's which is grossly unfair to their constituents.

This motion is asking GMB to campaign for change. Any MP who crosses over to another political party, it should generate a by-election in that area.

This Congress asks that the Labour government makes it law that if any elected MP or councillor defects to another political party from that which they were selected into, then a by election is triggered.

Moving Region: Midlands

Seconding Region: London

(Referred)

NATHAN KEIGHTLEY (Midlands): Hello Blackpool, hello. I am from the C36 Coalville branch for the Lidl region over there, the Midlands. *(Shouts of "Hooray"!)*

Composite 11 MPs: Crossing the floor, Crossing the line. The law states we vote for the individual. The reality is we vote for the party. This Congress calls on the GMB to campaign to change. If an individual moves over to different party, whether MP or councillor, we believe a by-election of some kind should be instigated.

My ex-MP, Mr Bridgen, God love him, four different parties in less than 18 months - Reclaim, Labour, Conservative, Reform. What's going on? I don't get how you can change your views so broadly. We need to know where people stand when we are voting for them. People vote for manifesto commitments, not manifesto betrayals. It creates uncertainty for the constituents. The voting public need protections from extremism when it comes to the far right. If those duly elected believe their voters have

shifted with them, they should have no fear of putting it to the test and putting the ballot paper out there. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nathan. Secunder.

DEE WALKER (London): First-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am here supporting Composite 11. Congress, when you stand at the polling booth, you vote for the political party that aligns with your own principles and values, not the MP's personal principles and values, yet when they decided they do not want to continue with their current political party's direction, they cross the floor to join another party and their constituents have no choice in the matter. It should not be an automatic right that as a voter you have to follow suit. Voters should be given the chance to make that decision for themselves. We see this happen all too many times and it is grossly unfair to the voters.

Congress, this motion is asking for the Labour Government to make it law that if an elected MP defects to another political party, it should generate a by-election in that area, giving democracy back to the constituents: our members. Congress, please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dee. It is not easy having to wait until end of the day to do your first speech. Well done. Anybody wish to speak in opposition to the Composite? (*No response*) In that case, can I ask CEC's Maxine Barker to come to the stage, please.

MAXINE BARKER (CEC, Wales & South West): President, Congress, responding on behalf of the CEC to Composite 11. The CEC is asking that Composite 11 be referred. The CEC understands the frustration expressed in this composite regarding Members of Parliament crossing the floor and changing their party affiliation during the Parliament. However, the Composite calls on the GMB to campaign for changes to electoral law to mandate automatic by-elections in such circumstances.

This is a constitutional matter relating to parliamentary procedure and electoral law which sits outside GMB's scope in its industrial and workplace remit. Adopting this position would:

1. Require detailed legal and political analysis beyond the scope of the motion;
2. Potentially divert focus and resources from advancing workers' rights and industrial priorities.

For these reasons the CEC asks that the composite be referred to the CEC's Political, European and International Committee for further discussion and consideration.

The CEC remains committed to promoting democratic accountability and high standards in public life through policies that directly advance the interests of working people. Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking that Composite 11 be referred. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Maxine. Do Midlands and London Regions agree to refer on Composite 11? Yes? I am taking that as a yes. (*Agreed*) In that case we do not need to take a vote so that is the end of business today. (*Applause*)

Just before you go let me finish up. Thank you, Congress, for what has been a really great first day. We have had some fantastic debates and fantastic speakers. I have counted 19 first-time speakers. (*Applause*) Sonya and I hope to see you at the welcome event tonight which is being held here in the Floral Lounge from 9 o'clock. Please come through the Church Street entrance. The doors will be open at 8.45. There will not be food provided so please make sure you get some food beforehand. Then Congress will be starting at 9 o'clock tomorrow so please get to the hall in good time.

Congress adjourned.