

FIFTH DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY 15TH JUNE 2006 MORNING SESSION

(Congress assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE PRESIDENT: I have an announcement to make, colleagues. Colin Worthington became a granddad for the first time at 3.30 a.m. this morning, and he was still in the bath. *(Applause)* Congratulations, Colin. Regards to mother and child.

BRO. W. HUGHES (Northern): President, you know that I would never come to this rostrum with a frivolous complaint, but exercising my right under rule to approach our worthy President and Congress.

This week, worthy President, you have had many accolades on your integrity and honesty ----

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, my God! What's changed?

BRO. HUGHES: Wait for it. It gets better. ---- from the Prime Minister, from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland & Wales and from our real General Secretary, but I think, being serious now, your real peers are these delegates in this room. Make no mistake about it. I am really sorry to say that from information I have received this morning, myself and the Northern Region would like that same honesty and integrity answered. If you like, I can name names

when I asked these questions. Make no doubt about it, I can name names.

THE PRESIDENT: Are the press in here?

BRO. HUGHES: The question is – I want an honest answer – this: Is it or is it not your birthday today? *(Cheers and applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Guilty.

BRO. HUGHES: Congress, please be upstanding. On the count of three – are we ready: *(Congress delegates sang 'Happy Birthday')*

SIS. J. SMITH (London): Madam President, before you sit down, we cannot let you get away. We do not have a red flag but we have got a red balloon. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: If you think you are getting out of here by 11 o'clock by bribing me, you will come unstuck. Let me say, humbly, yes, Billy, *these* are my peers. These are the people I look to. It is nice to get accolades, but the friendship and comradeship from everyone here in Congress, believe you me, fills me with great joy. It is our Union. From yesterday, it is our Union and it is a great Union. You are great people. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I open Congress. I ask that the safety announcement be given.

(Safety video shown)

CLOTHING & TEXTILES SECTION REPORT

Introduction

The Section continues to decline because of the employers move to low cost countries such as China and Indonesia. The international community has protested about the terms and conditions of workers employed but so far the response from the public is to buy at the lowest possible price.

Since the last Congress the industry has been hit by a number of closures. The GMB still has around 12,500 members within the Section and this provides an annual income of around £1.3m an amount to be used to maintain our members within the Clothing & Textiles Section and to improve other parts of the GMB.

The new leadership at National Office has allowed for open and transparent governance of the union and as National Secretary along with other colleagues we have been encouraged to breathe new life into all the Sections and the Clothing & Textiles Section will play its role in developing a new section structure.

It was disappointing that after all the considerable work done by our European office on public procurement that the industry does not appear to be ready for the introduction of the new Public Procurement Directive. The British textile industry could be revitalised overnight if all the nurses, fire fighters, armed forces, police and prison officers' uniforms were made here in the UK. What is wrong with asking for British soldiers to wear products made by British workers. Most of the European community manufacture at home for their essential services.

After full consultation with the Clothing & Textiles Section President, Brenda Fraser we decided that the 2006 National Section Conference should be postponed. We made this decision on the basis that there were only 18 nominated delegates and bearing in mind that you always receive one or two cancellations we could not in all honesty hold a Section Conference where the delegates were outnumbered by the speakers and visitors. It is however our intention to hold an industrial conference probably in one of our GMB Regional Offices.

At the time of writing this report the Section Committee has agreed to meet to look at a way forward for the Section.

1. National Negotiations

The 2005 pay negotiations resulted in months of deadlock. As a professional negotiator it is hard to accept that any negotiations are subject to the government's minimum wage. It was nearly 7 months before we signed the agreement.

The 2006 pay negotiations conducted with both sides reducing their negotiating teams at my request started in a more realistic manner and we concluded far quicker because the final offer was above inflation. The full offer is as follows:

As from 1st January 2006

All earnings of all workers, including learners, will be increased by 2.75%.

The Minimum Weekly Payment for all workers, including learners, covered by the BCIA/GMB Clothing and Textile Section National Agreement will be increased to those set out in the attached schedule.

The rates applicable to under 18 years in Table A and Table B of the National Agreement and to learners should be amalgamated to cover "trainees under 18" and the other separate rates will be abolished.

General Minimum Time Rates All Sectors

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| 18 years and over | £505.00 |
| Trainee under 18 years | £446.42 |

Minimum weekly payment for all workers for 39 hours' attendance

| | |
|------------------------|--------|
| 18 years and over | 196.95 |
| Trainee under 18 years | 174.10 |

2. International Activity

The Section is affiliated to the International Textile Garment and Leather Workers Federation. The ITGLWF works hard for the affiliates by conducting campaigns against child labour and exploitation and works with global companies to try to improve pay and conditions.

Recently Neil Kearney the General Secretary pointed to China where British as well as world corporations are falling over themselves to invest or source. The information we have received from the ITGLWF is that the labour legislation in China is good but never enforced. In textiles and clothing 12-14 hours a day are a normal working day but this length of working day is illegal, health and safety laws are never enforced.

The ITGLWF has helped with the improvements in the industry in Vietnam and Sri Lanka where conditions are safer and where paid holidays and proper rates of pay exist. These countries are no longer the threat they were 10 years ago. Now all roads lead to China and there are real problems of unfair competition. We will continue to work with the ITGLWF to ensure protection for all textile and clothing workers.

There are serious issues ahead for the Clothing & Textiles Section Committee but working for the best interest of the GMB members working within the industry these issues can be overcome.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the President of the Section, Brenda Fraser, Section Committee members, Regional Officers and Shop Stewards for all their hard work.

(Adopted)

BRO. P. DAVIES (National Secretary, Clothing & Textile): Congress and President, I move the Clothing and Textiles Section Report contained at pages 46-47 of the General Secretary's Report. Before I start my report, President, let me thank Congress for the tremendous support that you have shown this week to our Remploy shop stewards who have now gone back to work full of confidence to continue the fight to stop the closures. *(Applause)*

I will start by thanking the members of the sectional committee for their support throughout the last year and for the work which they have done for the clothing and textile member. Our shop stewards and officers in the section have worked hard in very difficult circumstances. The industry continues to decline but the new UK Public Procurement Directive should enable the Government and local authorities to revitalise the industry.

Congress, it is nothing short of a national disgrace that our armed forces clothing needs, uniforms and protection, are provided in the main by countries which have no human rights for their workers. In China young women of 15 and 16 work 16 hours a day with very few rest days, little food and pay as low as 10 pence an hour. Disciplinary action against these workers for not reaching their targets includes beatings and dismissals. You might ask yourself who owns these new modern sweatshops? They are the same multi-national companies which have closed UK clothing factories. The UK retail clothing industry has blood on its hands because of High Street stores like Marks & Spencer, who we have let off the hook. Production has been switched and moved offshore. If this Government is serious about manufacturing, it will bring back into the UK textile industry all Government clothing contracts to be made in the UK, not offshore.

The move to three sections presents more opportunities by our members within the section, to

recruit and reorganise textile workers throughout the UK. Our section has kept links within the international community and we have played our part in offering solidarity with the workers in India, Pakistan and China who have been abused by British multi-nationals.

Congress, it would be wrong to write-off our textile members who are loyal GMB members. It would also be a mistake to write-off the UK's textile industry. We will continue to support our 11,000 members and continue to lobby Government to use the Public Procurement Directive to improve the employment prospects of British workers. I move my report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to speak on page 46?

BRO. G. WELLS (Lancashire): I am speaking on page 46, Clothing & Textiles Section. Congress, here we are, meeting in Lancashire, years ago what was the home of King Cotton. Now the only king we have got is Burger King. It is sad and a disgrace that this great clothing and textile industry is now on its knees due to greedy employers, high profits and exploitation of workers both poor and young, not only abroad but at home as well. What is wrong with local councils, government departments and trade unions using unionised local workers in clothing and textiles whenever possible before the industries dies out altogether? If this industries dies altogether the sharks will be coming and looking at all the other industries. Please support your local clothing and textile workers.

THE PRESIDENT: Page 47. Does Congress agree to accept the Report?

(The Clothing & Textiles Section Report was adopted)

REGIONAL SECRETARY'S REPORT - LONDON REGION

1. Membership and Recruitment

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Total membership | 89,714 |
| Women membership | 40,777 |
| Section membership (by each Section): | |
| Clothing & Textile | 458 |
| Commercial Services | 18,818 |
| CFTA | 5,976 |
| Energy & Utilities | 5,338 |
| Engineering | 2,983 |
| Food & Leisure | 9,991 |
| Process | 2,211 |
| Public Services | 43,939 |
| Grade 1 members | 55,864 |
| Grade 2 members | 19,746 |
| Sick, retired & unemployed members | 8,018 |

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total number recruited 1.1.2005 – 31.12.2005 | 12,674 |
| Gross increase/decrease 1.1.2005 – 31.12.2005 | 1,484 |
| Net increase/decrease 1.1.2005 – 31.12.2005 | 38 |
| Membership on Check-off | 55,743 |
| Membership on Direct Debit | 26,495 |
| Financial membership | 83,628 |

RESPONSE TO ORGANISING AGENDA

The GMB London Region has sought over the last year to ensure that our levels of recruitment and organisational activity continue to increase. Our membership has risen by 1484 since January 2005 and our focus continues to be on developing our membership in four specific sectors, Public Services (in particular schools), Aviation (with particular emphasis on Airlines' Handling Agents and Cleaning companies), Security Companies (with particular focus on G4S), and the Food Processing Industry. All of these sectors have seen tackled major membership increases across the board.

ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

The economic and employment position in the London Region continues to contain many contradictions. Many thousands of jobs have been lost in manufacturing and heavy, whilst jobs have been created in the Public Sector, and the Services sector.

Our task as a Region is to respond nimbly and flexibly to these changes to ensure that we are able to recruit members in the growing parts of the economy. This allows for growth in membership even when jobs in industries which we have traditionally organised heavily are being destroyed.

2. General Organisation

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Regional Senior Organisers | 4 |
| Membership Development Officers | 4 |
| Regional Organisers | 20 |
| Recruitment and Organisation Officers | NIL |
| Regional Recruitment Officers | 5 |
| No. of Branches | 149 |
| BAOs | 118 |
| New branches | NIL |
| Branch Equality Officers | 28 |

3. Benefits

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Dispute | 0 |
| Total Disablement | 0 |
| Working Accident | £3,373.65 |
| Occupational Fatal Accident | 0 |
| Non-occupational Fatal Accident | 0 |
| Funeral | £13,816.50 |

4. Journals & Publicity

PRESS

The work of the GMB London Region has been reported to the national, London and East Anglian media via press releases. Official statistics on the performance levels of local councils have also been used to illustrate the work of GMB members in the Public Services and to highlight the contribution they make to their communities and society in general.

Employment issues at Heathrow, Stansted and City airports are a constant source of publicity for GMB. ASDA too keeps cropping up with disciplinary action and bad employment practise that, by bring it to the attention of the public, can be more easily resolve. The construction of major prestigious projects such as Heathrow Terminal 5 and the new Wembley stadium also provide a lot of press material and help keep GMB in the headlines as we work with members to improve their pay and conditions and fight unfair or dangerous actions by employers.

The CEC entrusted GMB London Region with the campaign to maximise the potential membership growth in the gaming industry following the government relaxation of the gaming industry legislation. By

publicising the members in Stanley Casinos and Gala Casinos GMB is now known as the union for casino workers.

We have also highlighted workplace issues such as GMB policy for a total ban on smoking in every workplace in the England and Wales.

CANDID

Three editions of the GMB London Region members' magazine CANDID were produced since Congress 2005. Its format has been altered to 12 pages from 16 pages and its frequency will be raised to four times a year starting in January 2006. The content too has been altered to report more clearly the industrial agenda and work of the Region. Major issues such as public service members' ballots and equal pay audit forms have been included in the mailing of the magazine to inform and consult the members. Each edition is mailed directly to members' homes and also included in new members' welcome packs.

5. Legal Services

(a) Occupational Accidents and Diseases (including Criminal Injuries)

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Applications for Legal Assistance | 849 |
| Legal Assistance Granted | 847 |
| Cases in which Outcome became known | |
| Total | 1,034 |
| Withdrawn | 451 |
| Lost in Court | 2 |
| Settled | £6,994,190.17 |
| Won in Court | 5 (£2,098,257.05) |
| Total Compensation | £6,994,190.17 |
| Cases outstanding at 31.12.2005 | 1,693 |

(b) Employment Tribunals (notified to Legal Department)

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Claims supported by Union | 298 |
| Cases in which Outcome became known | |
| Total | 398 |
| Withdrawn | 42 |
| Lost in Tribunal | 58 |
| Settled | 235 |
| Won in Court | 63 |
| Total Compensation | £1,204,311.40 |
| Cases outstanding at 31.12.2005 | 224 |

(c) Other Employment Law Cases

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Supported by Union | 211 |
| Unsuccessful | - |
| Damages/Compensation | £42,508.34 |
| Cases outstanding at 31.12.2005 | 172 |

(d) Social Security Cases

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Supported by Union | 14 |
| Successful | 5 |
| Cases outstanding at 31.12.2005 | 32 |

The GMB Legal Department has seen some changes in the last few months of 2005. Barbara Casher the Legal Executive Officer was seconded to work with the Acting General Secretary at the new Edgware Office. Carol Sears has now taken over this role as part of her duties as Head of Education, Legal and Administration.

Since December 2005 it has now been possible for members to lodge their personal injury and road traffic accident claims on line through the London Region website. This over time will reduce the amount of paper work and make it easier and faster for members to access services. Other legal services will be added on line over the next few months.

Careful monitoring of the legal resources and budgets will continue to ensure that members receive value for money thus aiding retention of existing members and encouraging new membership growth.

6. Equal Rights

The London Region Race and Equal Rights Committee has been involved in numerous dynamic and exciting actions over the last 12 months. As always the Committee remains focused on finding ways to recruit diverse members of the community as well as staying abreast of current events as they relate to race and equality issues. This report outlines, first of all, the various actions with which the Committee has been recently involved.

RISE FESTIVAL: In July of 2005 the Committee celebrated diversity at the Rise Festival (formerly known as the 'Respect Festival') in conjunction with Southern Region. The focus of the festival was to celebrate the contribution that migrant workers bring to London. The GMB had a stall, which was used to disseminate information to migrants about workers rights and the need for organising working people. Hundreds of people attended.

STOP THE BNP CAMPAIGN: The Committee is ever vigilant against the dangers posed by the BNP. The Committee has been involved in working with Searchlight and the ARA (Anti Racist Action) and has achieved good election results for Labour against the BNP. The GMB Race Committee commends the results in the East End and the hard work put in by our GMB Branch's at Barking and Dagenham. We watch with concern the setting up of "Solidarity – The Union for British Workers" racist front and will do our best to expose their anti-union aims.

AIDING RESEARCHERS: The Committee has been working closely with several PhD students at Queen Mary (University of London), in their studies of migrant workers and further assisting Working Lives Research Institute in their research on Hotel & Catering workers in the hospitality industry at London Metropolitan University. It is our hope to disseminate their work once it is completed, so to assist our campaigns.

7/7 REPERCUSSIONS: Since the July 7 bombings in central London, the amount of racial anger directed towards minority communities – and in particular Muslims – has multiplied dramatically. The Committee has been working closely with the communities suffering the fallout of the attacks.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH (29/10/2005): At the end of October last year the Committee organised a day to celebrate Black History Month. This was part of events being organised at regional and national level. This was a success story, with Ed Blissett, GMB London Regional Secretary, in attendance.

REGIONAL RACE AND EQUAL RIGHTS CONFERENCE: This conference was held in November. It produced good discussion and was addressed by Ed Blissett, GMB London Region Secretary. The Committee plans to produce a plan of action for 2006, communicate better with all Branches and encourage more participation.

GMB SHOUT

GMB Shout! is a group of lesbians, gay men, bisexual, and transgender members (LGBT) of the GMB London Region. We support LGBT GMB members who may experience problems at work surrounding their sexuality.

The group also aim to provide a safe forum where LGBT members can come together to talk about issues of concern and to network with other LGBT GMB members. The group also challenge negative attitudes towards LGBT people and lobby for, promote, progress, and publicise LGBT rights in the workplace and in local, regional, national, and international campaigns and matters. The group have already had successes in campaigning, in recruitment, and in assisting a number of other LGBT organisations.

GMB Shout! is expanding throughout the GMB Regions. Most of the activities over the previous year have concentrated on raising the profile of GMB Shout! both within the wider GMB, and also within the community, by ensuring a high profile for GMB Shout! at Pride events. This has resulted in our being able to recruit members to the GMB and also to the Shout! network.

ORGANISATION

Given the continuing growth of GMB Shout! it was decided to draw up a formal structure for the Regional network, which could also be recommended to other Regions. The constitution formalised objectives and set out roles of the members – Chair, Vice-chair, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and Treasurer – and also how the meetings be conducted.

MEMBERSHIP

This year GMB Shout! recruited 51 new members. This is a growth rate of over 500% from the same period last year. Our most significant recruitment occurred at the various Pride festivities. Other significant members have joined after seeing regular articles in the GMB London quarterly magazine *Candid*, through finding us through the internet, and via word of mouth. All our members' details are kept confidential in a password-protected database, which only a couple of officers have access to.

COMMUNICATIONS

Following key campaigns and events, newly designed members and Branch briefs have all been issued to members. To open up communications a confidential helpline and an e-mail address was set up and widely advertised. These are both regularly accessed by officers to deal with any inquiries, suggestions and contributions. All members have been invited to members' meetings and socials, which take place every two months. Where members are unable to attend, they are invited to submit contributions by e-mail and phone. Minutes are circulated to all members. Socials are held immediately following members' meetings with funds raised for the various campaigns.

TUC ACTIVITIES

TUC LBT Conference 2005: Members of the GMB Shout! in the London Region were part of the GMB Delegation to the 2005 TUC LGBT Conference. Speakers included the Deputy Minister for Women & Equality, the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, and the Chair of Broken Rainbow (the UK's only charity supporting LGBT victims of domestic violence).

The highlight of the Conference was a very moving speech from a member of J Flag, the Jamaican forum for LGBT people. The TUC and its affiliates have continued in their support for J Flag through lobbying the Jamaican Government, sending messages of support to their Confederation of Trade Unions, and sending donations. GMB London Region has also affiliated to J Flag.

BROKEN RAINBOW

GMB has brought the issue of domestic violence for straight couples to the attention of members and given Branches practical advice as to where to go in such circumstances, in the past. At this year's TUC LGBT Conference presentation was given by Britain's only charity to offer support for LGBT people suffering domestic violence, Broken Rainbow. It was revealed that:

- *At least 1 in 4 LGBT experience domestic violence (1.5 million people)*
- *It accounts for more than 16% of violent crime*
- *It has more repeat victims than any other crime*
- *It claims the lives of at least 150 people each year – mainly women*

Mainstream refuge services are largely unavailable to LGBT people. The group have worked hard this year in raising the profile of Broken Rainbow. GMB London Region has affiliated to Broken Rainbow and made a donation of £100.

7. Youth

A survey of GMB London Region young members in 2005 revealed that the most common problems faced by young workers in London and East Anglia is that of bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace. They are also subject to many abuses of working conditions simply because they are inexperienced in what their rights at work are.

50% of the members who responded to the survey reported that they take part in GMB activity in the workplace being well aware of work of the Union in representing the workforce.

Fortunately most GMB London Region young members work in well organised workplaces such as Local Authorities and the privatised utilities. An increasing number are being recruited at Heathrow and Stansted airports.

A team of six GMB London Region young members earned £621 towards their campaigns when they volunteered to work as a server team at Glastonbury festival as part of the 1,500 strong Workers Beer Company crew. This activity doubles as a team building exercise so that the young members get to know each other and share their work and trade union experiences and expertise. It also lets them see that the GMB can deliver not only workplace organisation and protection for their rights at work, but also can get them into the world famous festival for free!

Young members (under 27 years of age) make up approximately 6% of the Region's membership.

8. Training

| | No. of Courses | Male | Female | Total | Total Student Days |
|---|----------------|------|--------|-------|--------------------|
| (a) GMB Courses Basic Training | | | | | |
| Introduction to GMB (3 days) | 20 | 151 | 74 | 225 | 675 |
| GMB Follow On (5 days) | 16 | 121 | 41 | 162 | 810 |
| 3 Day Advanced Negotiation Skills | 4 | 32 | 3 | 35 | 105 |
| 2 Day Put it in Writing | 6 | 36 | 19 | 55 | 110 |
| (b) On Site Courses | | | | | |
| 5 day Health and safety for Anglian Windows | 1 | 12 | | 12 | 60 |
| (c) Health & Safety Courses | | | | | |
| 5 Day Health & Safety Courses | 15 | 102 | 52 | 154 | 746 |
| 2 day Safety Inspection | 5 | 39 | 9 | 48 | 96 |
| (d) Other Courses <i>(All weekday courses)</i> | | | | | |
| ULR courses | 12 | 26 | 15 | 41 | 123 |
| Individual Learning Plans | 90 | n/a | n/a | 748 | |
| Literacy/Numeracy ESOL | 75 | n/a | n/a | 580 | |
| Skills for Life screenings | 110 | n/a | n/a | 934 | |
| Other accredited Opps | 35 | n/a | n/a | 269 | |
| National Literacy level 1 quals | 10 | n/a | n/a | 87 | |
| National Lit level 2 | 3 | n/a | n/a | 22 | |
| National Numeracy level 1 | 2 | n/a | n/a | 20 | |
| National Numeracy level 2 | 2 | n/a | n/a | 12 | |
| E learning Learners | | n/a | n/a | 328 | |
| Learners doing FE courses | 10 | n/a | n/a | 77 | |
| NVQ level 1 | 30 | n/a | n/a | 249 | |
| NVQ level 2 | 11 | n/a | n/a | 86 | |
| NVQ level 3 | 1 | n/a | n/a | 1 | |
| Information, Advice & Guidance sessions | 27 | n/a | n/a | 215 | |
| Basic ULR course | 14 | n/a | n/a | 109 | |
| ULR Follow On courses | 24 | n/a | n/a | 198 | |
| ESOL | 2 | n/a | n/a | 20 | |
| Target BNP | 1 | 4 | 7 | 11 | 33 |
| Disciplinary Course for Ealing Council | 1 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 22 |
| (e) TUC (STUC & ICTU) Courses | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 3 |

9. Health & Safety

The Region continues to show a high level of commitment to Health, Safety and Welfare as an organising and recruiting tool by investing in a dedicated Regional Health & Safety officer. This enables both action and information to be accessible to officers, branch secretaries, safety reps and the membership in a rapid, professional and efficient manner.

It is obvious that even with an evolving national workforce health, safety and welfare problems are not diminishing. Indeed in some areas, workplace welfare for example, they are actually increasing. With the GMB needing to sustain its profile in many, varied workplaces it is important this commitment remains.

The Region believes that well trained safety reps are fundamental to both recruitment and organisation. This applies to workplaces where recognition already exists and where health and safety concerns can be used to maintain, and grow, membership levels, and in newly recognised workplaces where health and safety can directly aid recruitment and retention. Consequently safety reps in the London Region undergo a full programme of training. This training is constantly evaluated to take into account of any changes in health and safety legislation.

In workplaces where recognition has already been established or in organisations where the relationship between the employer and the GMB have deteriorated, joint training for managers and reps has proven to be advantageous. The training programme is based on the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 ("The Brown Book") and this approach has proved very successful in a number of ventures within the Region.

We are also looking to develop, with the Education Department, specialist courses in an attempt to empower our safety reps with knowledge and the ability to be confident in the workplace dealing with the members and management. These are to include Stress and Bullying in the near future, and the successful course on how to prepare to undertake practical Health and safety Workplace Inspections.

In response to suggestions from officers and activists, or changes in legislation, the Health and Safety Department continues to produce easy to use (A4) bulletins and news services on a wide range of health, safety and welfare topics. The region also played a major role in developing the guide on Driver Competencies.

The department also acts in an advisory capacity for officers, safety reps and individual members. Often problems can be sorted out over the telephone, though this needs to be followed up by supporting literature. Increasingly advice is sought and answered by electronic means. In more serious situations there will sometimes be a request for a site/workplace visit with a follow-up written report. Again the presence of a specialised officer can raise the profile of the GMB and help the safety reps maintain, and demonstrate the benefits of GMB membership.

Perhaps what continues to be the most interesting development has been the bid by the region to the Health and Safety Executive – Worker Safety Advisor (WSA) fund. Our bid involved targeting small and medium enterprises working in the food industry, by offering Health and Safety advice, literature and training in 9 different languages, (5 Asian and 4 European).

The project and the WSA, Hiten Vaidya, have exceeded expectations and our bid has been extended for another two years and will expand into other industrial sectors within the Park Royal Industrial site, located in West London. Recruitment will initially be slow but over time and with raised awareness among employers and workers there will be an opportunity for serious recruitment.

In conclusion, during the last year, the Region has been able to maintain the high standards of health & safety services for all our officers, reps, activists and GMB members that were set by John McClean. We have taken the lead, where other unions *'feared to tread'*, by championing campaigns such as the workplace ban on exposure to environmental smoking. This included events outside the Gala Casino in London, and a successful lobby of MP's from all parties by regional activists and officers, which resulted in Parliament voting by a significant majority of 200 for a total workplace smoking ban in England from the summer of 2007.

(Adopted)

BRO. E. BLISSETT (Regional Secretary, London): Formally moved.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Page 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121 and 122? Does Congress agree to accept?

(Regional Secretary's Report - London Region was adopted)

INTERNATIONAL

UK INVOLVEMENT IN CONFLICTS ABROAD

MOTION 261

Congress instructs the present Labour Government not to become involved in any future conflicts abroad in support of the United States or any other power. The present involvement in Iraq was avoidable and has resulted in the death of many UK service personnel.

SOUTHEND BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. T. WALL (London): I move Motion 261 – UK Involvement in Conflicts Abroad. President and Congress, this Congress urges the Labour Government not to become involved in any future conflicts abroad in support of its allies within the G8 countries.

We supported the United States in the invasion of Iraq on the assumption that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction. This assumption was investigated by the UN inspectors and found to be totally untrue. The invasion has resulted in the deaths of more than 100 UK service personnel and injuries to many more.

We have now seen how unpopular this invasion has been by the public in the UK and its increasing unpopularity in the United States. We have also become involved in a conflict in Afghanistan, which is also proving to be unpopular. The death of one UK service personnel is one death too many. I ask this Congress to urge the Government not to support any incursions into any other country. I move.

BRO. D. RIGBY (London): I second Motion 261. Congress, before I start, I would like to wish the English all the best for the game tonight. So we had best ourselves be on the ball then we can finish early.

Congress, I served for 12 years in the forces all over the world, including Northern Ireland, The Falklands, Cyprus and a peace-keeping post in the Sinai. All the people who join the Forces know that when they take the King or Queen's Shilling they could be sent anywhere in the world, but the last three conflicts had no British connections or

interests, i.e. Bosnia/Croatia, Afghanistan and Iraq. Wherever British and Commonwealth Service personnel get sent they do a brilliant job, but they must not get used as pawns in other people's conflicts. I second.

VENEZUELA

MOTION 262

Congress welcomes the social achievements of the Chavez government in Venezuela, especially in the areas of health, education, job training and land distribution, in an effort to reverse the poverty that so many have endured for so long. We applaud the use of oil revenues to benefit working people and the poor of Venezuela and the assistance that Chavez is offering to neighbouring countries by providing an alternative to the US's neo-liberal policies which have only brought privatisation and poverty to the rest of Latin America.

Congress deplores the attempts of the US Administration to intervene in the internal affairs of Venezuela – including the Washington backed coup against Chavez in 2002, US involvement in the lockout in the oil industry and the direct funding, (through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and USAID) of opposition groups in Venezuela; a policy reminiscent of the US tactics used in the 1970's against the Allende government in Chile and the 1980's against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Congress is deeply concerned that in the coming year, in the run-up to the December 2006 presidential elections in Venezuela, the US administration will redouble its attempts to subvert the democratically elected government using all the means at their disposal, including military attacks if necessary, to undermine and destroy it.

Congress recognises that there is an urgent need to build solidarity with the people of Venezuela, as witnessed by the unanimous vote at last year's TUC, where Conference voted to welcome the social achievements of the Chavez government in Venezuela and to condemn US intervention.

To this end Congress resolves to:

- Affiliate to and work with the Venezuela Information Centre, which campaigns to defend Venezuela's right to national sovereignty and self-determination.

- Support the defence of Venezuelan national sovereignty.
- Oppose US intervention in Venezuela's internal affairs including the threat of military intervention and to lobby the British government to use its influence to prevent any such intervention or aggression.

182 BRANCH

Liverpool, North Wales & Irish Region

(Carried)

(The motion was formally moved and formally seconded)

TORTURE

MOTION 263

Conference is outraged that this Government has and is allowing the United States to use British airports to ferry suspects to torture chambers in European countries.

Conference demands that this barbaric practice is exposed to the general public and insists that the Government withdraw permission to the United States to use our airports and airspace that helps foster this vile practice.

16 BLACKBURN BRANCH

Lancashire Region

(Carried)

SIS. E. GREENWOOD (Lancashire): President and Comrades, the current debate about torture is an astonishing symptom of how civilisation can regress morally and politically despite the technological advances it may make. For the enlightenment of the 18th Century, torture was one of the barbarities of the old absolutist regimes that the great bourgeois revolutions were to sweep away.

The Eighth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, adopted in 1791, which forbid "cruel and unusual punishments" was a product of that era. Yet now we have Dick Cheney, the Vice-President of the US under the same Constitution, mounting a fierce battle in the Senate in defence of the right of the CIA to use torture. George Bush says that the US doesn't do torture", but in August 2002 his satirically named Department of Justice issued a legal opinion which said: "Interrogation methods just short of those that might cause organ failure, impairment of bodily function or even death could be allowable without being considered torture."

Charles Krauthammer, a leading US neo-Conservative commentator, was less mealy mouthed. He argued in the *Weekly Standard* in December that, "There are very real cases in which we are morally permitted – indeed, morally compelled – to torture terrorist suspects". He also gloated over the torture

meted out to Khalid Sheik Mohammed, an Al Qaida leader. There is water-boarding, which is a terrifying and deeply shocking torture technique in which the prisoner has his face exposed to water in a way that gives the feeling of drowning. According to CIA sources, Khalid Sheik Mohammed lasted between 2-2 and-a-half minutes before begging to confess.

In December last year, revelations that the CIA had been using airports around Europe as stop-offs for flights carrying prisoners for torture in so-called "black sites", which are secret prisons in central and eastern Europe and the Middle East, could not have come at a worse time for the Bush Administration. They came as Condoleezza Rice was setting off on a European tour. This was intended as a continuation of the efforts that Bush and Rice have been making to woo European Governments since his re-election.

The torture flights revelations threatened to re-open and deepen the divide between the US and the EU. Rice initially said, "The US respects the sovereignty of its allies", implying that European agencies had known what was going on, but she was forced to beat a retreat by issuing a statement in The Ukraine in December that US personnel were bound by the UN Convention Against Torture, whether they were based at home or abroad. The US State Department spun this as a policy shift because previously the Bush Administration had claimed that the UN did not govern its activities outside the United States. The White House seemed to be ditching Cheney and trying to do a deal with Senator John McCain because he had proposed legislation imposing an absolute ban on torture. But the shift was more symbolic than real. Rice's statement implied that the Administration still believes itself not to be legally bound by the Convention Against Torture but merely chooses to observe it as a matter of policy.

The whole point of extraordinary rendition is to sub-contract torture by flying prisoners to dictatorships where pain is inflicted by non-US personnel, anyway. Torture is an instrument of imperial rule, used by the US and its clients to maintain global domination. We in the UK are totally opposed to methods of torture as was proved last Christmas when protestors gathered outside three major Scottish airports to make their voices heard against the US's extraordinary renditions of terrorist suspects.

Congress, please support this motion which calls for the abolition of this vile practice. I move.

SIS. L. HOLMES (Lancashire): I speak seconding Motion 263. President and Congress, Craig Murray, the former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan campaigned against torture and human rights abuses. He defied a Foreign Office order to hand over documents which exposed the British Government's complicity with torture. His actions

will add to the embarrassment for new Labour.

Jack Straw repeated the same, that he had no knowledge of British authorities using information obtained through torture. But through the new documents, their posture and feigned ignorance, the Foreign Office is trying to block the publication of a new book about Murray's time spent in Uzbekistan. In particular, they demanded that he remove all references to two government documents and hand over all copies of those documents. One contained a series of letters to the Foreign Office from Murray warning that intelligence being passed to the Uzbekistan security services has been obtained through torture.

The second document is a legal opinion from Foreign Office lawyers which Michael Woods seeks to justify the Government using obtained information by the torture process saying that the use of such information does not break the UN Convention on Torture. However, in March 2003 Murray was summoned back to London specifically for a meeting at which he was told it was perfectly legal for us to obtain and use such information from the Uzbek torture chambers.

Matthew Kydd, an intelligence official, who was present at the meeting, said: "We found some of the materials very useful indeed, with a direct bearing on the war on terror."

Murray described the Michael Woods minute as, perhaps, "the most important document which has ever become public about extraordinary rendition". It is irrefutable evidence of this Government's use of torture material.

The British Government have come under increasing pressure during the past few months, as detailed on the routine use of torture sanctions by US authorities have come to light.

The CIA practice of extraordinary rendition, kidnapping subjects and shipping them out to secret prisons both for torture and interrogation has come under threat.

Please support this motion.

THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES – MOUNTING DEBT

MOTION 266

Congress entreats the present Labour Government to instigate, among the G8 countries, the removal of all existing third world debt. This will enable these countries to start anew and make serious attempts to stand on their own in the future world market

SOUTHEND BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. M. YUNIS (London): I am speaking on Motion

266. President and Congress, the subject of the Third World countries' mounting debt is, without doubt, huge and complex and requires urgent attention and action from all of us.

As someone who was born and bred in a Third World country, I was touched and moved by the effort and energy invested by my fellow countrymen here in campaigning for *Making Poverty History* by 2005. On behalf of the poor people in the Third World countries, I give a big "Thank you" to you all.
(Applause)

Congress, while many of us living in the so-called 'developed world' have the luxury of making choice in terms of what we want to eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner, what kind of medical cover we want to subscribe to and when and where we want to go for holidays, the majority of people living in the Third World countries live below the poverty line and have nothing to eat, maybe, for days. Thousands of people are dying of hunger and starvation because of poverty, whilst others are dying of HIV-Aids, TB and Cholera due to a lack of hospitals and doctors. We have so many children not going to school because the parents cannot afford to pay school fees or for school uniforms.

Congress, I ask you to join me in requesting our CEC to step up its effort in lobbying the Labour Government and in exacting pressure on the G8 Member States in order to make an urgent decision in cancelling all debts owed by Third World countries, both large and small, without any condition. I move.

BRO. R. SLADE (London): President and Congress, five years ago at National College, when we had it, I was asked, as part of a course, to write a speech on this very subject. I later discovered that that speech was also used at Congress. I am now seconding a motion on the same subject, so it is obvious that the situation has not changed significantly in those five years.

Major world governments have not made many concessions, if any, to Third World countries who were in debt to them. If this debt was cancelled, it would enable these countries to support themselves. They would not require aid. It would give them back their pride and self-respect. They would no longer be reliant and dependent on major governments. They might even be able to support themselves. Give them the ability to move forward in the world and not be dictated to by other countries. Free these countries from their burdens. We are in a position to do this at no damage to ourselves. I leave you with this comment: "A caring heart, a listening ear, a thoughtful world, a gentle tear will help to lift the heavy load of weary souls along the road". I second.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Bob. Just to remind Congress, that Motion 264 has been withdrawn, as you have been advised by Standing Orders. Does

anyone else wish to come in on the debate?

BRO. J. McDONNELL (Lancashire): I would like to make a point for the soldiers and women soldiers who are out in Iraq and any conflict that people have served in. As an ex-soldier myself I was called up in 1956 for the invasion of Suez and that fiasco. The point I am trying to make is that for the male and female soldiers, although I and I think everyone else is against the war, who were in these conflicts, there is nothing worse -- I was a young man who had just got married -- when you hear of demonstrations at home when you are out there trying to do a job. The reason for many of the people who go out there is because they cannot get a job. I am fully against any war, but I would like our men and women out *there* to know that at least they have the support of people at home while they are out *there*.

THE PRESIDENT: Are there any other speakers? (*No response*) In that case, I call Ed Blissett.

BRO. E. BLISSETT (Regional Secretary, London): I am Ed Blissett, London Region, and for those of you with a long memory, Westminster TUPS branch. I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. The CEC is supporting Motion 261 with a qualification and it is supporting Motions 262, 263 and 266.

Sisters and Brothers, before moving on to the qualification on Motion 261, I would like, first, to say why the CEC is supporting this motion. It is clear that Great Britain and the United States went to war with Iraq on the basis of a falsehood; that is, that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. It is quite clear now that they did not. It is also clear to us all that it was based upon the judgment of a President of the United States, George W. Bush, who, frankly, seems to have less grasp of foreign affairs than the cartoon character Homer Simpson. (*Laughter and Applause*) The war was undertaken without the authority of the United Nations and, Sisters and Brothers, was quite simply illegal. The consequence of this war is there for all of us to see in the destruction which continues to this day in Iraq and also in the destabilisation of the Middle East, which is causing such turbulence across our world.

Sisters and Brothers, I ask you to support the motion but with this formal qualification. The GMB is clear that the war in Iraq was illegal. We are also aware of the mounting fear in that the US has made veiled threats to invade the so-called 'rogue States' which have been identified by the US as the 'Axis of Evil' -- Cuba, Libya, Syria, Iraq, North Korea, Iran and, latterly, Venezuela.

Whilst we do not want to see another Iraq, which has caused so much death and human misery and, categorically, we do not want to see the British Government support US wars of imperialism, we ultimately cannot commit to ruling out any future

conflict as we do not know what the future holds. We are, however, opposed to any military action that does not have the full support of the United Nations. Therefore, Congress, the CEC asks you to support Motion 261 with qualification. Thank you, President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ed. Does London Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*)

(*Motion 261 was carried*)

(*Motion 262 was carried*)

(*Motion 263 was carried*)

(*Motion 266 was carried*)

PRESIDENT: Colleagues, I have received a note from the Remploy shop stewards. It says: "Remploy workers have asked me" -- that is Phil Davies -- "to thank Peter Hain for his support which will give a huge boost to the Trade Union Consortium Campaign to keep the factories open and the jobs in place. They say, "Thank you, Peter". (*Applause*)

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

MOTION 267

Congress, it is an unfortunate truth that, after a year of the "Make Poverty History" campaign, more than 1.2 billion people still live on less than \$1 a day. It is also undeniable that the perpetuation of global poverty has been in a large part due to the increasing role of the multinational corporation. By influencing politicians and even Government, companies often fuel conflict for their own ends. By driving down wages and working conditions in order to maximise profits the multinationals have created a race to the bottom where the poor always lose.

Therefore this union must lobby UK Government to state its support for a binding framework of corporate accountability to regulate the activities of multinational companies.

LONDON STORES GENERAL BRANCH
London Region

(*Carried*)

BRO. R. SLADE (London): I am speaking on Motion 267. It is an unfortunate truth that after a year of the *Make Poverty History* Campaign that more than 1.2 billion still live on less than \$1 a day. It is understandable that the perpetual global poverty has been, in large part, due to the increasing role of the multi-nationals and corporations. By influencing politicians and even governments, companies often fuel conflicts for their own ends by driving down wages and working conditions in order to minimise

costs and maximise profits. The multi-nationals have created a race to the bottom where the poor always lose.

In the UK, for example, supermarket giant Asda, which is part of the US-owned Wal-Mart empire, planned a series of anti-union and cost-cutting schemes. Asda management has stated that they do not want collective bargaining on issues such as pay and conditions. Tesco controls 30% of the grocery market in the UK with profits announced in 2005 of more than £2 billion, yet it is supplying goods from South Africa by workers who work long hours for poverty wages. In one area workers went without pay for two months and 20 women and children were forced to share one double bed on a rota basis. Look at your hotel rooms.

Caterpillar is the largest UK employer in the earth-moving and construction industry. It is known in the High Street for its rugged range of fashion accessories. As a company, Caterpillar claims to maintain a strong focus on social responsibility, while its code of worldwide business conduct boasts high ethical standards. Yet Caterpillar's armoured bulldozers have been responsible for the destruction of thousands of Palestinian homes, schools, wells and olive groves. They have also been used in the construction of the separation wall that Israel has built on Palestinian land, which has been ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice.

To answer some of their critics, some of the major multi-national corporations have signed up to a voluntary code, a process which has been known as "corporation social responsibility", the CSR. At best this code has been ineffectual and, at worst, the CSR has served as a mask behind which corporations hide unpopular policies. Too often multi-nationals have successfully used this policy to block genuine corporate regulation. Whereas in the UK a legal framework restricts what companies can do, globally, no such regulations exist. If corporate power is to be harnessed so that globalisation stands a chance of benefiting more than just a few, we need an essential framework. During the next year, the UK Government will be making the biggest changes to UK company law in decades by taking the Company Law Reform Bill through Parliament. This represents a great opportunity to make company law more appropriate for the 21st Century and ensure that business is accountable for its impact on both human and natural environments. However, as it stands, the Bill is fundamentally flawed because there remains insufficient compulsion on company directors to take responsibility for their companies' actions.

I believe that companies must be made accountable for their actions around the world.

I call upon this Conference to accept this motion and endorse it. I move.

BRO. R. GILL (London): President and Congress, in

seconding this motion, I would like to say that in the past the military juntas of these governments, including eastern Europe, openly collaborated with the multi-nationals for their own interest and profit. In supporting this motion, it is important that organisations such as the GMB or the trade union Movement should monitor and ask the Government to be accountable for the activities that multi-nationals are involved in driving down poverty where young men, women or children are faced with having to work for a pittance. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Raj.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

COMPOSITE MOTION 35

(Covering Motions 268, 269 and 270)

268 - Corporate Accountability (Southern Region)

269 - Corporate Accountability/Fairtrade (Southern Region)

270 - Company Law Reform Bill (Southern Region)

It is an unfortunate truth that after a year of the Make Poverty History campaign, more than 1.2 billion people still live on less than \$1 a day. It is also undeniable that the perpetuation of global poverty has been in large part due to the increasing role of the multinational corporation. By influencing politicians and even governments, companies often fuel conflict for their own ends. By driving down wages and working conditions in order to maximise profits, the multinationals have created a race to the bottom where the poor always lose.

In the UK for example, bosses at supermarket giant Asda, part of the US-owned Wal-Mart empire planned a series of anti-union and cost-cutting schemes. Asda management have stated that they do not want collective bargaining on issues such as pay and conditions. Tesco, which controls 30% of the grocery market in the UK with profits announced in 2005 of more than £2 billion, is supplied goods from South Africa by workers who work long hours for poverty wages. In one area, workers went without pay for four months, and twenty women and children were forced to share one double bed on a rota basis.

Caterpillar is the largest UK employer in the earth moving and construction industry, and is known on the high street for its range of rugged boots and fashion accessories. As a company, Caterpillar claims to maintain "a strong focus on social responsibility", while its Code of

Worldwide Business Conduct boasts “high ethical standards”. Yet Caterpillar’s armoured bulldozers have been responsible for the destruction of thousands of Palestinian homes, schools, wells and olive groves. They have also been used in the construction of the Separation Wall that Israel has built on Palestinian land and which has been ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice.

To answer their critics, some of the major multinational corporations have signed up to the voluntary process that has become known as corporate social responsibility (CSR). At best, this has been ineffectual and at worst, CSR has served as a mask behind which corporation hide unpopular policies. Too often, multinationals have successfully used CSR to block genuine corporate regulation.

Whereas in the UK there exists a legal framework that restricts what companies can do, globally no such regulation exists. If corporate power is to be harnessed so that globalisation stands a chance of benefiting more than just the few, the establishment of such a **global** regulatory framework is essential.

Over the next year, the UK government will be making the biggest changes to UK Company Law in decades, by taking the Company Law Reform Bill through Parliament. This presents a great opportunity to make company law more appropriate for the 21st century and ensure that business is accountable for its impacts on both the human and the natural environment. However, as it stands the Bill is fundamentally flawed because there remains insufficient compulsion on Company Directors to take responsibility for their Company’s actions.

This conference believes that companies **must** be made accountable for their actions around the world

This Congress calls upon the CEC

- To support Fairtrade which at least guarantees the producers a fair price for their goods
- To offer solidarity to sister trade unions around the world, whose members are working in the supply chain producing goods for such multinational companies and to build partnerships with other campaigning organizations.
- To support the work of War on Want
- To lobby our union-sponsored MPs to support the amendments to the Company

Law Reform Bill called for by War on Want and the CORE coalition

- To lobby the UK government to state its support for a binding framework of corporate accountability to regulate the activities of multinational companies

(Carried)

SIS. A. PRICE (Southern): I move Composite 35 on Corporate Accountability. There have been many very good fringe meetings at Congress this week, but I want, briefly, to mention one of them. The fringe meeting about the supermarket stranglehold was arranged by Bananalink and War on Want. One of the speakers, Ian King, had visited the banana plantations in Ecuador and described the real cost behind our cheap bananas. He described one of the jobs that a flagman has to do, which is to stand at the end of a row of bananas with two flags in order to guide the plane in which would then proceed to douse both him and the bananas with chemicals. He also described families who are starving, so in order to earn enough to eat they take their 12 year olds out of school to work for these big supermarkets. He also went on to describe about children working 14 – 16 hours a day with chemicals which make them sterile all for less than \$1 a day.

Comrades, at the heart of this motion is our on-going fight against capitalism. Capitalism can be described in many ways but the one which I feel fits this situation is that it is an insatiable, many-headed beast which has to be constantly fed with profit. At the moment we have firms like Wal-Mart, Asda, Caterpillar and Tesco’s. When we defeat them, as we must, other manifestations will pop up hydra-like. This is why we need a strong and effective Company Law Reform Bill so that we can attack many of the hydra heads at once as this is the only way the beast will wither and die. So I urge you all to support this motion to end this appalling exploitation. I move.

BRO. K. ROBERTS (Southern): I second Composite 35. My colleague has just described some of the appalling situations and conditions of our colleagues around the world. I fully echo and support the words she has spoken, but it is not just in the so-called Third World countries that this behaviour occurs. How many of you have walked around town this week? How many small retail outlets are closed with dusty and flyblown windows? How many small clothing outlets have closed around your town? Prime Mark is a Third World sweatshop employer and it is opening a superstore in town. The prices are low, the wages they pay are even lower. Our friend Asda, and Tesco’s, Sainsbury’s and Morrison’s all offer Fair Trade goods for sale. Next time you go into some of these stores, compare the prices of some of the Fair Trade goods to the ones which they want you to buy. They are

not all cheaper. Morrison's have an advertising slogan, which you have probably all heard. I say to you: How many more reasons do we need to act?

A GLOBAL ALLIANCE AGAINST FORCED LABOUR

MOTION 271

Congress calls on worldwide action to end this evil where it is estimated that 12.3million people across the globe are trapped in forced labour.

R35 ROCESTER JCB BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

BRO. G. RICHARDSON (Birmingham & West Midlands): I move Motion 271. President and Congress, a recent study undertaken by the ILO estimated that 12 million people across this globe are trapped into forced labour, and half of these are children. The study, *A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour*, is intended as a worldwide action to end this evil. So much of the global economy is hooked on low wages that it violates the basic rights of millions of people through debt bondage, as much as any cruel change of slavery.

The definition of "forced labour" involves toiling for hard hours, long hours under harsh conditions for very little reward, but two conditions have to prevail. The work must be undertaken involuntarily and under the threat of penalties such as torture and beatings.

Congress, some of the industries where this takes place – we have just mentioned the banana growers in agriculture – are construction, domestic working and the sex industry. Colleagues, yes, it happens in every continent, in every economy and in every country, even in the UK. It is the most hidden problem of our times.

Last year we supported the motion *Make Poverty History*, which was very hip and trendy. Colleagues, I believe that by eradicating poverty we can then start to see an end to this forced labour. Low paid jobs offer very little. They are mentally tedious, emotionally humiliating and physically exhausting. They are a treadmill of never-ending deprivation and debt bondage, which is not just confined to developing countries. Forced labour is the most widespread abuse of the most disadvantaged and least protected people in the world today, and it is nothing less than a colossal failure of the labour markets, institutions and regulations, but can it be abolished? The answer is "Yes" where countries are confronting a forced labour situation, adopting strong legal and development programmes to tackle the root causes, such as poverty, by helping victims to rebuild their lives.

This Congress, therefore, calls on all governments, employers, unions and development and financial agencies who are concerned about

poverty to form an action plan against forced labour over the next five years. Colleagues, all of us have a part to play. With political will and global commitment, forced labour could be eliminated. Thank you.

(The Motion was formally seconded)

AIDS – FREE DRUGS

MOTION 272

Congress urges the present Labour Government to initiate, among the G8 nations, for the provision of free drugs to the aids crisis which is reaching epidemic levels in Africa and Asia.

SOUTHEND BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

SIS. L. ELVIN (London): President and Congress, I move Motion 272. We are all well-aware of the ever-increasing threat of Aids within our world. It has now reached epidemic levels in Africa and Asia. In some countries in Africa more than 50% of the population are now affected, and the same levels are now being approached in many Asian countries. It is down to the G8 countries to place this terrible disease at the top of their agendas in order to try and control this horrendous situation. Pressure must be put on the pharmaceutical companies of the world by the G8 nations to provide free drugs for the sufferers of this disease in those countries worst affected. A concerted effort is required by all concerned in order that we can make inroads to halt the disease in these areas and provide improved education. We must ensure the provision of free condoms to promote the idea of safe sex.

It is, of course, not going to happen overnight but at least it is a start and it will give hope to millions and millions of those infected individuals. Thank you.

SIS. S. VINCENT (London): I second Motion 272. Since the 1970s more than 23 million people have lost their lives to Aids. By 2010 the toll is expected to rise to 45 million people. At the close of 2002, 42 million people were living with Aids-HIV. In the past two decades, Aids-HIV have been causing untold human suffering. In South Africa the number of children heading their families has increased beyond any normality due to the epidemic. By 2010, in four years time, without action, infant and child mortality rates will have doubled. Countries like Africa will have no stabilising future.

As the epidemic grows their future growth reduces as would-be teachers, doctors and those in all walks of life die. Life expectancy in South Africa is likely to be cut from 66 years of age to 33 years of age by 2010. In relation to mother to child

transmission, one in three babies born to HIV Positive mothers will be dead before they are ten years old. One in three 15 year olds will be orphaned by 2010. I have give you many figures but, quite simply, since last night 125 children in South Africa have died.

As *that* piece of paper hits the floor, ten children in poor countries have died from HIV Positive. Simple steps can reduce the risk. Drugs can cut down the risk of infection but are just too expensive for the poor countries. In July 2005 the G8 pledged support. As of May this year, no targets or action plans have been formulated. The political will appears to have evaporated.

Our brothers and sisters are dying in another country. It is not somebody else's problem. It is our problem as well. It is their money. Let us give it to them for free drugs. I support.

ZIMBABWE

MOTION 273

We call upon the CEC to express deep concern at both the desperate political and economic situation in Zimbabwe and utterly condemn the most recent repressions committed by the Zanu – PF regime led by President Robert Mugabe. We were particularly disturbed by the shocking abuses reported in 2005 during the so-called "drive out rubbish" campaign to evict hundreds of destitute squatters from Harare. Zimbabwean workers have been forced to take to the streets in protest at government policies, which have led to a dramatic deterioration of living standards and widespread hunger. The response is often a violent backlash in which courageous activists have been subjected to the most brutal and degrading treatment.

January 2006 has seen the most recent police raids on the offices of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and the arrest of its leading officials.

The long-suffering people of Zimbabwe deserve better alternatives than continuing repression and possible famine. We call on the GMB and the Labour movement to campaign alongside our International affiliates such as COSATU of South Africa in showing solidarity by applying full pressure to defeat President Mugabe and restore full and free democratic rights and prosperity to Zimbabwe.

113 MANCHESTER BRANCH
Lancashire Region

(Carried)

BRO. D. WILSON (Lancashire): I move Motion 273 – Zimbabwe. President and Congress, we think that bringing the situation in Zimbabwe to the attention

of this Union and the labour Movement in the UK is long overdue. We need to pay attention to the mounting crisis brought on by the policies of President Mugabe, which have brought the Zimbabwean people to the brink of utter destitution and possible famine. The country is now described as "running on empty". Any goodwill, high hopes and optimism that the people would find peace and prosperity after the end of white rule in 1980 have been squandered by the rotten cronyism and corruption at the top of the ZANU Popular Front Party leadership. Their only objective seems to be that of staying in power to protect their own privileges.

The economy, putting it mildly, is in total freefall. Inflation now stands at 1,000 per cent, farming produce and harvests have plummeted due to Mugabe's fast-track and chaotic land redistribution programme which has disrupted farm production. The only beneficiaries seem to have been the top officials of ZANU PF and their family members, who were given the best farm land. The latest examples of such institutional cronyism have been the plans to give free Toyota Land Cruisers, which are £47,000 each, to leading MPs to ensure that Mugabe can carry on his current presidential term beyond 2008. Meanwhile, the suffering of the people goes on.

A figure of 1,000 per cent inflation means that those lucky enough to be in work have to be paid in money in plastic bags. A \$100,000 note is equivalent to about £1, which might just buy you a bowl of maize porridge. Many exist on just one bowl a day.

Unemployment is estimated at more than 80 per cent and many thousands exist on patchy food supplied by outside agencies. Three million of the population have had to flee abroad. Life expectancy is now official recorded at 37 years for males and only 34 years for women. That is the lowest in the world. The death rate totals around 3,000 a week due to Aids accelerated by hunger. Such facts and figures are denounced by ZANU PF as propaganda saying that critics are either in the pay of either white racists or colonialists if you speak out. However, the facts speak for themselves. The Zimbabwean people have had to take to the streets in mass protests, many of them in stay-away-from-work protests, which have taken place over several years. The police and the ZANU PF militia reaction is usually one of thuggishness and violence. The leadership of the Zimbabwean trade unions have been regularly imprisoned and the offices ransacked. Friendly support and solidarity by COSATU, which is a South African trade union, has been camped down and South African trade unionists have either been deported or denied access to Zimbabwe.

The political opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change, is divided on how to react. However, a so-called "Winter of Discontent" has been promised by the Zimbabwean trade unions.

Political observers have reported that the Zimbabwean people are too exhausted and hungry to mount effective opposition. However, as was the case in France in 1789 and Rumania in 1989, the people can eventually be provoked into revolt, as the rulers found out to their costs. Why should history be any different in Zimbabwe?

Congress, we know that the GMB has a fantastic record in international support and solidarity. We ask that the GMB adds its voice to the mounting campaign of protest against the excesses of President Mugabe's rule, that the GMB takes the lead in the trade union and labour Movement in helping restore democracy to Zimbabwe. Thank you.

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (Lancashire): I second Motion 273 on Zimbabwe. I am not going to make any jokes. This is not a laughing matter. Thousands of working people are treated like pure garbage, their homes destroyed by bulldozers and these were already the poorest of the poor. There is nothing to laugh at in Zimbabwe.

I will not give you a song because there are no songs except the weeping and crying of families, the malnutrition of babes as they beg for a scrap of rice or a meal, as they try to suckle their mothers who are also under-nourished and cannot feed. There are no songs in Zimbabwe. There are only songs of sorrow and the sound of pain and hurt.

Mugabe, you have declared war not on the world but on your own people. Mugabe and ZANU PF are political thugs and we know how thugs should be treated. It is time you went. Mugabe, there is no hiding place from this Movement or from any movement. You do not want free speech because you do not want the speech to be told. Well, we are watching. We are not watching, we are acting. I call upon the international order and the wider trade union Movement to take action now, because to do otherwise is to be silent while genocide takes place. We cannot be party to genocide. At this rate, we will come back next year and there will be silence because they will have died. I second.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kevin. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? *(No response)* In that case, I call Mick Laws.

BRO. M. LAWS (CEC, Engineering): I speak on behalf of the CEC. Brothers, Sisters and President, the CEC is supporting Composite 35 with qualifications, which I will explain. These motions emanated from War on Want, to seek support for their work on the Company Law Reform Bill, which we support.

The motion also calls for a global regulatory framework. Whilst we support the central argument of the motion, we believe that the best way of achieving our aim is by working with our global union federations. The TUC and the ICFTU, in campaigning

for international framework agreements where multi-nationals and their sub-contractors have to abide by minimum standards in relation to terms and conditions, know that such a global economic framework requires clear, global rules with effective punitive measures. What is needed is legislation with teeth.

We also do not agree, wholly, with the analysis by War on Want on multi-nationals. We appreciate that multi-nationals are responsible, in part, for lowering wages and standards globally, examples of which exist in the developing countries. Although the wages might seem low, they are in fact higher than the local rate and the workers work under better conditions. Multi-nationals have also brought many women into the formal economy. An example given is of the poor living and working conditions of agricultural workers in South Africa. However, South Africa has strong labour laws and the trade unions believe, in this case, that it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that their own laws are enforced.

Further, War on Want has joined a campaign to boycott Caterpillar products. However, the motion does not call for us to support the boycott per se, but such a public condemnation of Caterpillar is tantamount to endorsement. We have members in Caterpillar whose livelihoods would be affected if such a boycott was successful.

Therefore, Congress, the CEC is asking you to support Composite 35 with that qualification.

THE PRESIDENT: Does London Region accept the qualification?

BRO. E. BLISSETT: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Does Southern Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)*

(Motion 267 was carried)

(Composite Motion 35 was carried)

(Motion 271 was carried)

(Motion 272 was carried)

(Motion 273 was carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, you will be aware that Motion 274, Hurricane Katrina, has been withdrawn.

MOROCCAN INVASION OF WESTERN SAHARA

MOTION 275

This year marks the 30-year anniversary of the occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco. In

violation of United Nation resolutions, Western Sahara remains the last colony in Africa.

In 1975 Morocco invaded, occupied and imposed its repressive rule in Western Sahara, undermining Saharawi aspirations for independence, dividing a nation and forcing almost 200,000 Saharawi people to live in exile, mostly in tents in southwest Algeria near the border with Western Sahara. Tens of thousands more remain in the Occupied Territories of Western Sahara, under military occupation, unable to advocate independence for their country or show their flag. 500 people are still 'disappeared' and there are over 30 political prisoners in Moroccan jails.

The response of the Moroccan authorities to the widespread and growing numbers of peaceful Saharawi demonstrations has been to savagely beat, rape, torture, imprison, abduct and disappear scores upon scores of participants.

In spite of the political repression, the refugees, many of them women, have built schools, hospitals and developed democratic structures of governance in these camps.

Although the United Nations negotiated a ceasefire in 1991, promising to organise a referendum for the self-determination of the Saharawi people, the referendum has still not been held, and Morocco continues to resist the latest referendum proposal.

The European Union has recently signed a Fisheries Agreement with Morocco which will allow European ships to fish in the Occupied waters of Western Sahara.

The Saharawi in the camps are denied even the most basic right – the right to work – while workers in the Occupied Territory are denied representation by independent unions. For this reason, trade unions across Europe have provided one of the central elements in the solidarity campaign for Saharawi rights over the last 30 years.

In 2006, Sandblast, a cultural event aimed at raising awareness of the Saharawi plight through a series of seminars, lectures and workshops, will take place in various venues across the UK. For the first time British audiences will have the chance to experience Saharawi music, dance, theatre, poetry, art and photography at first hand.

This conference believes that:

- 🌐 The UN Security Council has consistently

failed in its responsibility to Western Sahara, believing that good relations with Morocco are more important than international law.

- 🌐 The 30-year anniversary of the Occupation is an excellent time to re-energise campaigning on Western Sahara.
- 🌐 The EU Fisheries Agreement is illegal, and will certainly encourage Morocco in its obstruction of the referendum process.

This conference demands that the NEC (or appropriate body):

- 🌐 Joins War on Want, Western Sahara Campaign, Sandblast, FBU, Unison, Amicus and the CWU in their "30 Years is Enough" campaign on Western Sahara – including distributing leaflets in the union, publicising the campaign in the journal and inviting a speaker to address conference.
- 🌐 Participates in the TUC delegation to the Western Sahara in 2006.
- 🌐 Lobbies the UK government, through letters and meetings, to raise concerns on Western Sahara.
- 🌐 Lobbies the European Commission and Parliament to amend the Fisheries Agreement to explicitly exclude Saharawi waters from the Treaty.
- 🌐 Raises the issue at the TUC, the appropriate global union federations and the wider international trade union movement.
- 🌐 Actively supports and publicises the Sandblast project.

LFEPA X98 BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. R. REEVES (Southern): I am proposing Motion 275 – Moroccan Invasion of Western Sahara.

President and Congress, my introduction to the plight of the Saharawi people several years ago was through Michael Palin's television travel series, where he journey's around North Africa. In one programme he came across a refugee camp in the Sahara Desert. You may have seen it. It made an impression on me as this motion has. The details of their plight is in the motion, as is what we can do to help.

Please support this motion. They have suffered long enough.

(The motion was formally seconded)

MIDDLE EAST

MOTION 276

This congress calls on Hamas to renounce their campaign of terrorism and accept that Israel has a right to exist in peace and security. With the recent unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, it appears that a significant step towards peace has been taken. Hamas should recognise that peace is necessary for stability in the Middle East. With this in mind, we ask all those who have campaigned vigorously for the Palestinian cause to focus on the changes that Hamas need to make to allow for the creation of a Palestinian state.

HOUNSLOW BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. D. LINDSAY (London): I move Motion 276 with a CEC qualification.

This motion calls for Hamas, the elected government of the Palestinian people, to recognise the State of Israel and its right to exist. This is the most basic call for recognition. As trade unionists, recognition is what we value most as we know it is the key to every successful negotiation. I do not think there is one delegate who has not been involved in a recognition dispute at some time. Recognition is the key to a peaceful settlement between the Palestinians and Israel. The most important advantage for the Palestinian people is a properly funded State and a secure future for its workers and their families. For Israel, it is the long hoped for security and safety for its citizens. Recognition will enable peace talks to start. There will be full international involvement which will give confidence to both sides.

If you do not support this motion and we are unable to influence the spiral of violence affecting both sides, it is important that we, as a union, do not stand by and make no comment and allow those to continuously emphasise violence, rather than the benefits of recognition. Therefore, I ask every delegate to vote for recognition and to support the CEC in its efforts to secure your wish for a successful peace between Palestine and Israel.

The passing of this motion will indicate that our GMB and its members care deeply about peace and security for all workers and their families in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Recognition must be our greatest aim. I move.

(The motion was formally seconded)

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate?

BRO. H. RAJCH (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I

speak in opposition to Motion 276 – Middle East. I think we need to put things into perspective and be clear that Palestine is a country which is occupied by Israel against United Nations' resolutions. Hamas is the Palestinian Government, elected by the Palestinian people. Tony Blair has said that his justification for the invasion of Iraq is to establish democracy. The Palestinian people have exercised their right to democracy and have voted Hamas into power.

A wall is being built to separate the Palestinian people from their land. Again, that is without the support of the United Nations. Wages for Palestinian workers have been denied as a result of the sanctions that Israel has imposed for more than three months. Israel is trying to starve the Palestinian people. Palestinian people are arrested regularly for no reason and tortured by the Israeli State.

At the fringe meeting on Palestine earlier this week, the Palestinian speaker said that he had been arrested 26 times for no justification. Somebody else said that the situation is actually worse for Palestinians now in Palestine than it was for black South Africans during the apartheid years.

I will conclude by saying that I think, rather than putting demands on Hamas, we need to continue condemning Israel's treatment of Palestinian people. The reality is that Israel is a State which terrorises the Palestinian people. We need to get them to denounce their terror and to accept Palestine's right to exist.

SIS. D. WALKER (Liverpool, North Wales & Irish): I speak against Motion 276. Congress and President, on the face of it, this motion looks like one that we should all be willing to support. However, on an examination of it, it is one-sided and completely biased. We all want to see a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, but this motion, if we agree to it, seeks to blame Palestinians and their supporters for the violence in the Middle East, and where is the justification for that?

Last weekend we saw Israeli forces shelling a beach in Gaza killing eight Palestinian civilians, including a young baby and five other family members. Nine more civilians were murdered this week when an Israeli air strike targeted a main road in Gaza City. The motion refers to the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Big deal! They should never have been there in the first place. *(Applause)*

The motion does not speak of the illegal annexation of Palestinian land and the construction of the Wall by Israel, the flouting of UN resolutions, the denial of basic human rights to the Palestinian people, the daily humiliation meted out to Palestinians at checkpoints and road blocks, not even of Palestinian refugees who are still denied their right to return, whilst Israel continues to slice up the West Bank. Nor does the motion speak of the setting

up of Israeli industrial zones on stolen Palestinian land.

This motion does not call on Israel or its supporters to do anything, therefore implying that Hamas and the Palestinian people are the only people who have to make any movement. Congress, this is wrong. As with all negotiation for peace, compromise must come from both sides for a lasting settlement to work.

I ask you to reject this motion as it is tantamount to supporting the illegal acts and violence carried out by Israel and support of their gross abuse of human rights.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Denise.

BRO. J. McDONNELL (Lancashire): I speak against Resolution 276. We heard from a speaker yesterday who spoke against apartheid in South Africa and that is what is happening now in Palestine. It is apartheid, and we should be having resolutions that say we should boycott Israel because two of its prime ministers were terrorists. As a result, we should be moving resolutions to put a boycott and sanctions on them, because they are the terrorists and they have always been terrorists. Thank you.

BRO. P. STACK (Southern): I speak opposing Motion 276. The reason why I am opposing it is because I do not believe it gets to grips with the complexities of the situation in the Middle East. Of course, I do not want to see the Palestinian people involved in more violence and terrorism and I do not want to see their elected Government, Hamas, involved in it, either. However, to achieve peace in the region we need to campaign on all sides of the conflict. Israel has imposed sanctions on Hamas, built walls around its territory and this motion does not get to grips with any of those complexities.

By focusing on Hamas alone, the motion does not address what is really going on in the region. Please oppose the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone else wish to speak? (*No response*) In that case, I call Silvia Burton.

SIS. S. BURTON (CEC, Clothing & Textile): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. The CEC is supporting Motions 275 and 276 both with qualifications. On Motion 275 we have been involved in advancing the case of the Saharawi people, most particularly on Fisheries Partnership Agreements. We agree with the central tenets of this motion. However, the qualification on Motion 275 is that we will not be able to commit to some of the demands, including inviting a speaker to address Congress and actively supporting Sandblast. These demands have finance and resource implications and, as tragic as the situation is, it is not one of our main priorities.

However, we agree to continue lobbying the Government and the European Commission and to publicise the campaign.

Motion 276 is like the calls on Hamas to denounce violence. The qualification is that Hamas has to recognise the State of Israel. If there is to be any future peace settlement, in turn, we should seek assurances that Israel will end its policy of illegal targeted assassinations of Palestinians, which it does with impunity.

Further, whilst we welcome the evacuation of illegal Jewish settlements in Gaza, we recognise that this comprises only 2 per cent of the entire illegal Jewish settlement population. We also deplore the continued expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank and the building of the illegal separation wall on Palestinian land.

Therefore, Congress, we are asking you to support Motions 275 and 276 with the qualifications. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Does Southern Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*)

(*Motion 275 was carried*)

THE PRESIDENT: Does London Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*)

(*Motion 276 was carried*)

THE PRESIDENT: I have been joined on the platform, as you can see, by Gilberth Bermúdez Umaña, General Secretary of the Costa Rican Agricultural and Plantation Workers Trade Union, SITRAP. After seeing his brothers and sisters mistreated, he committed his life to the struggle for social justice. Gilberth is Deputy Coordinator of the Latin American Coordination of Banana Workers' Union, COLSIBA. SITRAP and GMB are partners in a government co-funded project managed by Banana Link, building solidarity links between Latin American banana workers' unions and the British trade unions. Gilberth is the Latin American coordinator of this project and London Region has funded a training centre for SITRAP. Gilberth is also national and international relations secretary of the new Juanito Social Confederation, founded in Costa Rica in 2005. Congress, I would like you to show a warm welcome to Gilberth. Gilberth, welcome. (*Applause*) It would be a great honour if you address Congress, Gilberth.

SR. UMAÑA: Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, we are going to scroll Gilberth's speech on the screen.

SR. UMAÑA: Good morning. Sorry, I do not speak English. Sorry, I only speak Spanish.

(Gilberth Bermúdez Umaña then delivered his speech to Congress in Spanish)

PRESENTATION

by

**GILBERTH BERMUDEZ UMANA
TO GMB CONGRESS, 15th JUNE**

Compañeros and compañeras, delegates to this great national congress

- Before anything else, allow me to thank you for the invitation to participate in such an important event – both for you and for the whole British trade union movement. For the Agricultural and Plantation Workers' Union SITRAP it is a real honour to be here.
- We wish it every success, and are convinced that the discussions that you have and the resolutions you make at this Congress are based on the defence of rights which were won historically through great sacrifices and struggles by your members, by the working class of this country and worldwide.
- SITRAP is the plantation workers' union, especially banana plantation workers. But we are now also organising in Costa Rican plantations producing, amongst other things, pineapples and ornamental plants for export.
- Our organisation was founded in 1972 out of the needs of banana and, at that time, cocoa plantation workers. Between 1972 and 1986, SITRAP signed more than forty collective bargaining agreements with different multinational and national companies such as Dole, Del Monte, Chiquita and CORBANA. These negotiations contributed significantly to thousands of families who worked in the plantations of our country being able to lead a dignified life.

Cooperation between GMB and SITRAP

- For several years GMB and SITRAP have been building excellent relations based on cooperation and friendship; it is a relationship founded on mutual respect, because we share a similar identity and similar ideas about the trade union struggle, the same concept of solidarity and a similar vision of the current state of the world.
- The practical trade union solidarity shown by your organisation – because we have already received both this material and moral support – is so needed in our poor countries. It make us feel that we are not alone in our own struggles.
- It was a great pleasure to have received British trade union delegations in our country. GMB was one of the important players in those delegations. These visits have allowed us to exchange opinions and experiences of struggle of our respective organisations. For this reason we believe that our compañeros and compañeras from the GMB have a better idea than most of the difficulties that we face.
- We want to thank the GMB London Region for the very important financial solidarity which you have provided. This has enabled us to strengthen our union's presence in the banana and pineapple plantations.
- The support has also meant we could complete the construction and refurbishment of our trade union training centre in Siquirres, Costa Rica. The main conference hall is dedicated to the memory of compañero Brian Weller, member of your great union. With great respect and pride we honour his memory every day in our organisation's union and political struggles.
- More recently, we have been able to buy two new motorbikes, we have two organisers (a man and a woman) and have strengthened both our education and training programmes and our legal defence work
- We have also better integrated the work of our women compañeras into our organising work.
- We live in a country – one of the “Banana Republics” of Central America as the North Americans named us at the beginning of last century when we were colonised for the second time by Chiquita Brands – which presents itself to the world as a democracy which respects all the basic human rights, including the freedom to organise trade unions.

- But it is necessary to be clear that for over 20 years now, the big corporations, notably Chiquita, Dole and Del Monte, with the complicity of successive governments, have been applying a coordinated policy of repression and harassment against trade unions and our members.

This anti-union environment is typified by the company's support for the **Solidarismo** movement, which has nothing to do with solidarity with workers. No, it is about solidarity with the companies themselves! Solidarismo is the instrument the corporations use to do their dirty work against the genuine, democratic and independent trade unions that belong to us workers.

Some of the realities which we face in Costa Rican plantations today are:

- electronic 'black lists' for union members (circulated throughout the industry)
- long working days of to 12 or 14 hours a day
- low wages
- a total lack of occupational health and safety measures
- the accelerated elimination of social housing programmes in the plantations (a very important issue for us)
- the rapid loss of all healthcare, schooling, training and leisure facilities.

Healthcare and education in particular are increasingly under the control of private companies linked to international capital.

Trade union freedom and collective bargaining

- We operate in a country whose reality is no different to the rest of our Latin America. The top agenda item in our struggle remains to get the transnational and national corporations to respect trade union freedom and the right to collective bargaining, other workers' and union rights – our social, environmental and human rights in general; the right of all working women and men to a life of dignity.
- In Costa Rica our organisations are also currently engaged in a struggle to prevent the implementation of a free trade agreement with the United States of America (Central American Free Trade Agreement - CAFTA). They are trying to impose this Agreement on us.
- Through our organised resistance in the trade and union and popular movement we have been able to prevent this dangerous Agreement from being put in place for the last four years or so. The CAFTA is dangerous for both workers and our national sovereignty. We are the only country that has not ratified it, although unfortunately all the countries of Central America have signed and ratified it.

The fight against neoliberalism

- The fight against neoliberalism and “capitalism gone wild” continues to be another crucial part of our agenda. We know that this model is doing enormous damage to our societies regardless of which part of the world we are in.
- Our trade union has had to face and deal with the consequences of this system in a country that was one of the cradles of neoliberalism, a country that today demonstrates to what extent this model has run out of steam. The model has been shown up to be dehumanising, warlike, predatory of the planet's natural resources.
- This model and its owners, the big corporations, are taking ownership of the Earth, turning her into a private company, and her inhabitants into saleable goods. This is why we have to fight and win this battle; it is a battle for humanity. Only all together in international solidarity can we win this battle - regardless of language, nationality, colour, race or gender. This is our mission and our reason for living and struggling.

The truth is clear and we have to tell it like it is:

- across the world poverty, unemployment and under-employment have increased;
- epidemic diseases have spread;
- food is more scarce for many;

- the poor lack healthcare;
- energy resources are concentrated in the hands of big corporations;
- wars are invented against impoverished and humble peoples...

.... whilst, at the same time, wealth is concentrated in few hands and the pillage of entire countries and peoples is the norm of this model of inequality.

- For this reason we are making the effort to deepen our unity and solidarity, starting with the authentic, democratic and independent trade union organisations which practice that solidarity. This is the path which brought us into touch sister trade union organisations like the GMB.
- We would like to take this opportunity to once again invite a GMB delegation to visit our country and our plantations. We will be waiting over there with open arms and ready to help you get to know our reality at first hand.
- We want to finish by repeating our fraternal greetings and express our solidarity with this great organisation, with this great national congress, with all the women and men who belong to the GMB.

LONG LIVE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY!

LONG LIVE UNITY!

HASTA LA VICTORIA SIEMPRE!

(Standing ovation)

SR. UMAÑA (via interpreter): Just to repeat how amazing it has been to be invited and thank you very much for inviting me to this great Congress. It has been an amazing experience for me. It is the first time I have been to a British Trade Union Congress of this nature and, yes, it has been amazing. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I do not want to forget to repeat the sincere thanks from all our members and the communities they live in for the solidarity that you have shown so far. Thank you. And to link it, obviously, we are all part of the same continent, Latin America, and we are well aware that you are supporting struggles in Venezuela, in Cuba, Colombia, etc. We are very much aware and grateful for that solidarity. We are part of the same solidarity. We are totally convinced in our country, and well beyond, that another world is possible. *(Applause)*

Because we have had some special times together with people who are here and people who are not here from this union I just want to take this opportunity to hand you something. With all humility I would like to hand you over something that has been gathered together from the men and women who work on banana plantations involved in our

union. It is a photo album; it is not completely finished, it is half full, and there is more to go in there yet but we would like to hand it formally over to the GMB. Just to clarify, it is about half full. There is more to come so we are looking forward to long relations and more photographs. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Now I would like to present to you, Gilberth, with something made by our members. *(Presentation amid applause)*

SR. UMAÑA: Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT: And to put the whiskey in did you notice just two glasses, one for you and one for me! *(Presentation amid applause)*

SR. UMAÑA: Thank you very much. Thank you. Do not forget the invitation to come and visit the banana plantations. Come and see us on the ground, please. I can officially say that Paul has, and I am very happy to say so, accepted an invitation. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Isn't solidarity a wonderful thing! I wish there was more of it throughout the world.

REGIONAL SECRETARY'S REPORT - LANCASHIRE REGION

1. Membership and Recruitment

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Total membership | 58,290 |
| Women membership | 20,086 |
| Section membership (by each Section): | |

| | |
|---|--------|
| Clothing & Textile | 3,041 |
| Commercial Services | 6,346 |
| CFTA | 5,344 |
| Energy & Utilities | 2,713 |
| Engineering | 5,887 |
| Food & Leisure | 9,325 |
| Process | 8,518 |
| Public Services | 17,116 |
| Grade 1 members | 44,793 |
| Grade 2 members | 8,925 |
| Sick, retired & unemployed members | 4,572 |
| Total number recruited 1.1.2005 – 31.12.2005 | 5,199 |
| Gross increase/decrease 1.1.2005 – 31.12.2005 | -8,917 |
| Net increase/decrease 1.1.2005 – 31.12.2005 | -2,716 |
| Membership on Check-off | 36,601 |
| Membership on Direct Debit | 11,606 |
| Financial membership | 54,653 |

RESPONSE TO CULTURE CHANGE

There have been a number of difficulties within the Region which have meant, at times, the focus of the Region, i.e. growth and development of the membership, has not been prioritised in the way it could, and should, have been.

Nevertheless, there has not been quite the dramatic fall in levels seen in some areas and our female membership was virtually stable, which in itself, is a considerable accomplishment.

The focus within Lancashire Region has to be re-targeted to look at a branch structure that serves the whole membership rather than individuals and builds a vibrant network of able workplace representation whose priority is the growth of the Union.

To that end the Region will be looking to more workplace branches in the structure, rather than the current large general branches which often have little or no relevance to individual groups of workers, whichever sector they are in.

Also, for the first time in many years, officers are undertaking a number of training courses to increase their levels of proficiency and build their confidence which in turn will empower them to build strong workplace networks.

RECRUITMENT TARGETS AND CAMPAIGNS

With the establishment of the NOT all Regions now have not only National Targets which are reviewed every 3 months but also Regional Targets which are reviewed every 6 months.

At the time of compiling this report it is difficult to gauge the success so far, however, it is encouraging to see recruitment figures, in general, showing an increase, however small it may be, given the restrictions we currently operate under; it is a credit to all our Activists, Officers and Staff.

Our Officers are now in recruitment teams with a balance of skills and experience which should provide good all round support and we now enjoy inter -regional exchanges of information and best practice which can only be seen as a positive development.

OVERVIEW OF THE REGION'S ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

As in all Regions, we are seeing a large growth in migrant workers and all the difficulties that it entails. However, ignoring or scapegoating these groups is not acceptable. Workers are workers and need protection from Unions whatever their nationality. There is an enormous amount of education to be done amongst our own workforces to create a supported environment that will enhance the opportunities for all groups of workers. The Region's second highest sectional membership is within Food and Leisure which is also the focus of not only a National, but a Regional recruitment target i.e. Asda, both stores and distribution.

The Region is currently involved in tripartite discussions with ACAS to establish full collective bargaining at Skelmersdale DC.

There is huge scope for expansion within service industries, particularly with the regeneration programmes still under way in East Manchester and at Manchester Airport, where good recruitment figures are consistent at the time of compiling this report.

2. General Organisation

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Regional Senior Organisers | 4 |
| Membership Development Officers | 0 |
| Regional Organisers | 13 |
| Recruitment and Organisation Officers | 4 |
| Regional Recruitment Officers | 0 |
| No. of Branches | 122 |
| BAOs | 0 |
| New branches | 2 |
| Branch Equality Officers | 38 |

3. Benefits

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Dispute | |
| Total Disablement – 1 member | £4,000.00 |
| Working Accident | £7,998.88 |
| Occupational Fatal Accident | Nil |
| Non-occupational Fatal Accident – 1 member | £970.00 |
| Funeral | £18006.00 |

4. Journals & Publicity

Since the last report to Congress the Region has resurrected the Regional magazine which is much improved. The website also growing and we have now established web pages in a number of local authority Intranets. We are undertaking a joint venture with SPARC who help individuals with learning difficulties to lead fulfilling lives in their communities and work closely with Warrington Collegiate and Cath Mannion.

We are also currently in the final year of a 3 years sponsorship deal with Salford Reds Rugby Club

5. Legal Services

(a) Occupational Accidents and Diseases (including Criminal Injuries)

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Applications for Legal Assistance | 1,118 |
| Legal Assistance Granted | 1,118 |
| Cases in which Outcome became known | |
| Total | 1,332 |
| Withdrawn | 446 |
| Lost in Court | -- |
| Settled | 886 (£6,054,437.06) |
| Won in Court | |
| Total Compensation | £6,054,437.06 |
| Cases outstanding at 31.12.2005 | 1,961 |

(b) Employment Tribunals (notified to Legal Department)

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Claims supported by Union | 95 |
| Cases in which Outcome became known | |
| Total | 176 |
| Withdrawn | 45 |
| Lost in Tribunal | 7 |
| Settled | 112 (£469,317.92) |
| Won in Court | £ |
| Total Compensation | £469,317.92 |
| Cases outstanding at 31.12.2005 | 172 |

(c) Other Employment Law Cases

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Supported by Union | 0 |
| Unsuccessful | |
| Damages/Compensation | £ |
| Cases outstanding at 31.12.2005 | |

(d) Social Security Cases

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Supported by Union | 0 |
| Successful | |
| Cases outstanding at 31.12.2005 | |

The Lancashire Region has yet again enjoyed high profile wins during 2005. A large case was won recently for Plural Plaque, without taking it to the High Court, which is good news for the Region and will of course assist in our aims for recruitment.

However, the whole legal proceedings in the Lancashire Region are currently under review to provide a more holistic approach to Solicitors. We currently hold regular Employment Day Surgeries on sites to assist our members and their representatives. This will form part of the Tender which will be put out this year.

6. Equal Rights

The Equal Rights Committee appointed an LGBT delegate, David Hope, who is pro-active in taking the gay and lesbian rights forward.

The Committee were involved in the Refuge fund, raising much needed funds for victims of domestic violence and obtaining literature for partially and blind members.

Over £500 was raised for Breast Cancer Awareness.

RRAC

The GMB Lancashire Region does not stop representing and advising people at the factory gate. We are working outside the workplaces and helping and strengthening the communities to develop.

In recognition of our work in the Asian community The GMB Union was nominated, and won, the Community Skills award. This is a fantastic achievement for the Union.

BNP is still a threat to our Region and we will have to carry on campaigning until they go away.

Lancashire Region participated in many job fairs together with community and cultural events held in the North West which included TUC Black Worker Network, Manchester Pride, Inside Out job fair in HM Prison Warrington, Blackburn, Burnley, Manchester Melas, European Summer School, and Black History Month Event.

7. Youth

The benefits of the "MASSIVE" experience have had to be closely reviewed to see what, if any, overall benefit the Region gained.

It has to be acknowledged that other Regions' Young Members' structure has worked every bit as well, if not, in a number of Regions, better, and to that end, if we look at what added value MASSIVE has given the Region it would have to be acknowledged as minimal.

8. Training

| | No. of Courses | Male | Female | Total | Total Student Days |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|------|--------|-------|--------------------|
| (a) GMB Courses Basic Training | | | | | |
| Introduction to GMB (3 days) | 16 | 116 | 14 | 130 | 390 |
| Shop Steward Induction | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|---------------|---------------|-------|-----|
| (b) On Site Courses | | | | | |
| REEMPLOY | 1 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 9 |
| (c) Health & Safety Courses | | | | | |
| Health & Safety Advanced 3 day | 1 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 18 |
| Health & Safety 5 day | 1 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 40 |
| (d) Other Courses | | | | | |
| Ind. Relations 5 day | 1 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 30 |
| Communication Skills 3 day | 1 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 15 |
| Managing Meetings 1 day | 1 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Northern College | 10 | 51 | 1 | 52 | 520 |
| (e) TUC (STUC & ICTU) Courses | | | | | |
| TUC Courses | 214 | Not available | Not available | 1,246 | |

9. Health and Safety

The Lancashire Region has continued to carry out the Union's policy with regard to Health & Safety. We continue to promote Health & Safety as a primary recruitment issue with great emphasis to safety representative's rights and GMB involvement in the process of risk assessments.

The RHSO has intervened with many employers on a wide range of issues, giving advice, information and generally supporting our members and reps in the workplace.

In addition the Health & Safety department has participated in partnership presentations with employers promoting an emphasis of working together to achieve a reduction in workplace accidents; in some cases having a real effect on the organisations safety culture, driving home the Union's policy on preventative measures rather than reactionary.

Sector specific courses have been delivered in house where possible thus raising the profile of GMB support for reps and members.

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY 2005

The GMB unveiled a Worker's Memorial Stone previously located at the National College and relocated it to the Peace Gardens in Manchester city centre. The theme was around asbestos with speakers from TU's, MP's, lawyers and bereaved family members. The memorial ended with a service from Manchester Church for Industry. A successful day achieving our objectives in raising the awareness of Worker's Memorial Day and a joint commitment from other Trade Unions and TUC in working together on a joint initiative to build on what we have achieved over the years. We look towards a North West Joint Union Event in Manchester for 2006.

We now have over 350 people signed up to our Asbestos Register and have generated much interest – especially around the danger of asbestos in buildings.

Organisers and Branches made frequent use of the Regional Health & Safety services during 2005, particularly where recruitment activity was planned.

The Health & Safety department of the Lancashire Region is committed to its "hands on" approach in supporting and advising our reps and members in the workplace.

(Adopted)

(The Regional Secretary's Report was formally moved)

(Regional Secretary's Report - Lancashire Region was adopted)

THE PRESIDENT: Pages 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, and 105? Does Congress accept?

UNION ORGANISATION: EDUCATION & TRAINING

GMB APPROACH TO TRAINING FOR REPRESENTATIVES

COMPOSITE MOTION 4

(Covering Motions 59, 62, and 63)

59 - GMB Approach to Representatives Education (London Region)

62 - Training for Representatives (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region)

63 - Single Status (Lancashire Region)

Congress acknowledges the need to close GMB National College in view of the financial situation. However, there now needs to be a consistent delivery of education and training across all Regions and at a National level in order that GMB policies and objectives can be applied consistently to all Reps.

Congress agrees that Shop Stewards' Induction Courses should be completed for all newly elected representatives, and that all should attend at least one training course per year, in order that our activists are educated in the basics that they all need to support our members within the workplace.

We believe that in light of the closure of National College that there has been little visible progress in the implementation of a comprehensive stewards' training programme (particularly) in those areas that affect GMB members employed within Local Government, i.e. Single Status, Job Evaluation and Outsourcing to name but three.

We believe the lack of such a programme is seriously affecting our objectives in terms of recruiting new members not to mention retaining and servicing our existing members at both local and regional level.

We therefore call upon Congress to:

- reintroduce comprehensive in-house training for its activists.
- charge the CEC to authorise the introduction of a bespoke programme to address the current shortfall in stewards' training particularly within Public Services.

(Carried)

BRO. L. STIRLING (Lancashire): This motion calls for a national training programme of single status for all

public service shop stewards that have found themselves to be the GMB negotiators on this DIY national agreement. The only training that took place was around 10 years ago at the national college. Unfortunately, this training was to show you how to fill out a job description questionnaire. What the GMB did not offer was any guidance on the way the employer can manipulate the scoring or use the job evaluation exercise to remove in some cases thousands of pounds from our members' pay packets, and also make considerable changes to jobs under job redesign.

Mick, if you are out there, hang your head in shame for the legacy you left the public services activists to try and sort out. GMB, hang your head in shame that you have allowed a national agreement to be entered into without making any provision for the shop floor activists who are going in unarmed.

Congress, considering that the public services is now the largest make-up of the GMB union we believe that lack of such training for our shop stewards seriously affects our objectives in terms of recruiting new members, not to mention retaining and servicing our existing members both at national and local level. We therefore call on Congress to charge the CEC to authorise the introduction of a training programme to address the current shortfall in shop steward training, particularly in public services. Finally, we are aware that officers have indemnity against equal pay claims. What about branch secretaries and shop stewards? Congress, I move.

BRO. A. RULE (London): The GMB was rightly proud of its national college. Whilst accepting the need for that facility to close, we must not let slip the vital role it played in training our activists. We must ensure all our representatives receive the appropriate training to enable them to represent, recruit, negotiate, and campaign on behalf of all our members. All our branch officers, branch secretaries, the equalities officer, and youth officers, should receive the relevant training as soon as possible after being elected into the post. If the relevant training course is not available in the region, it should be available in another region. All our sections should have the appropriate training available for the stewards in those sections to fulfil their role.

Congress, our representatives are some of the best in the country and we must ensure that all of them receive the quality training we have been used to, to fully service our members. We call upon the CEC to address this issue with the introduction of a comprehensive and consistent training programme for all our GMB reps. Please support this motion.

BRO. J. STRIBLEY (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Before I talk on Composite 4 I would just like to echo what Phil Davies has said, that £280 has been raised.

Congress, when members take on the role of shop steward or safety rep it needs to be mandatory when taking on the role to do the training stages, the basic two-day, three-day health and safety, and five-day courses run by the region, depending on the employer, but the “not bothered”, inflexible attitude is not good enough or not accepted. This is so that representation can be given in the workplace. Thank you.

TRAINING FOR REPRESENTATIVES

MOTION 60

Congress would like to ensure that all Representatives of the Union are correctly trained. However, following the closure of the National College, all courses are now held within the Region. Due to this change in policy, Regions are finding it difficult to get sufficient numbers to attend courses and as a result have to cancel courses. In turn this means that representatives are not sufficiently trained to do their job. We call upon each Region to offer undersubscribed courses to other Regions so courses can go ahead and ensure the Stewards/Health & Safety Representatives can effectively undertake their duties.

BRAINTREE & BOCKING BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. D. RIGBY (London): Brothers, sisters, Congress, I class myself as very lucky to have gone to the college, as was, in Manchester. For my brothers and sisters who have never had that privilege, trust me, it was a privilege to attend training there. GMB reps from all over the country met up and exchanged their stories; foremost was the high level of training we all received. When the college closed we were all told the training was and would be at the forefront, number two to recruitment. We were also told the training across the different regions would be advertised and all reps would and could be eligible; the local reps first and foremost. This would also enable reps from other regions to fill spaces from other regions to make sure all courses were full or nearly full. I put myself in for a course in my region three times only to be told with a few days' notice it was cancelled due to not enough people coming forward for the course.

We were promised when the college closed that all reps would be eligible to attend courses running in other regions but to my knowledge this is happening few and far between. Please, Congress, let us get training back as number two to recruitment. Congress, I move.

BRO. J. HIOM (London): I was one of the fortunate to

attend the national college and I miss it. The meeting of new and old friends from other regions, those days have gone. I can understand why. When reps' training is cancelled for whatever reason, it leaves a vacuum in our organisation which serves nobody. The courses also become very difficult to fill. Joint regional training could be one of the answers; combining two or three regional training structures could go some way to removing the vacuum in our organisation. I second.

EDUCATION

MOTION 61

Congress calls on the CEC to ensure that when funding is being acquired to resource education that it is supported by all Regions. This will maximise the funding received to the benefit of all areas, especially those that are specified in the National Strategy.

B10 BANBURY BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region
(Carried)

SIS. S. TANNER (Birmingham & West Midlands): In the CEC Special Report, GMB at Work, we are told that GMB stewards in the workplace must be seen as the front line of our efforts to grow the union and that they must be trained to do this job. We all know the value of an effective education system, not only for stewards but also for officers, a system for stewards that, firstly, includes knowledge of how to represent their members, organise their workplace, and basic health and safety. After this has been achieved, stewards can then carry their training on further to include wider issues on health and safety, negotiating skills, pensions, and law at work; these should also include all new equality and diversity issues. For these courses the use of one provider would enable us to run them as we would wish, and for them to be standardised for use in all regions.

Access to training must be available for all but there are many difficulties being faced by stewards, including arranging time off work and also the fact that we often cannot help those with certain physical disabilities and those where English is not their first language. Courses, especially for many in the public service sector, need to be arranged over weekends and maybe even in the school holidays.

In order to implement all of the above and to provide the resources needed, there may be funding available from sources outside the union. To maximise this funding, we must work together as one unit to obtain the best deals available and therefore the best system we can obtain. I move.

BRO. S. HORTON (Birmingham & West Midlands): Congress, the national strategy supported with

government funding must be grabbed with both hands by the GMB, expanded on, and used to the advantage of our members. As a newly trained Union Learning Rep I feel the coordinators post should be made permanent and rolled out regionally. This will support the few ULRs the GMB has and hopefully encourage more activists to take on this rewarding and important role. Approximately 7 million adults have basic literacy and numeracy difficulties; some of these are our members but, more importantly, most are not. Educating our members will not only benefit our members but will also be a great recruitment and retention tool. Any funding to support education must be a good thing as long as it is shared out so that every member can benefit from it. We support this motion.

MIGRANT WORKERS

MOTION 64

This Congress congratulates CEC in their efforts to combat the exploitation of migrant workers and would urge Congress to set up an education programme for GMB activists to assist them in involving migrant workers in the GMB

SOLO BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. P. MEDDES (London): President, Congress, brothers and sisters, this Congress congratulates the CEC in its efforts to combat exploitation of migrant workers and has set up an education programme for GMB activists to assist them in their work. Fair treatment, dignity, and respect, are the right of all workers. When you join the GMB you join a powerful organisation that stands up and fights for all its workers. The GMB can help you fight back. Many migrant workers join the GMB, which is growing and delivering for its members. The GMB does not tolerate bad bosses and the abuse that migrant workers suffer. More and more migrant workers are suffering injustice either by bad treatment, discrimination, racism, or broken promises on pay and conditions in their workplace. What has happened to the laws and customs in the UK? European citizens are not receiving the rights they deserve to work in the UK. I move. Thank you.

BRO. R. GILL (London): Congress, in seconding this motion I would just like to say it is important in terms of training possibly to identify how we can assist the migrant workers and the union education department to look at ways to assist the activists, whether they are in the construction industry, hospitality industry, or whatever industry. We need to have some kind of programme in place perhaps beyond just the normal union shop stewards' courses

and health and safety courses; perhaps we can assist them with language courses. There needs to be the effort and the programme. I call on Congress to support this motion. Thank you.

BRANCH INFORMATION

MOTION 65

Congress, where a branch exceeds 2,000 members, the branch is to be provided with access to the retrieval of branch information, including membership records from the union computer.

Congress instructs the CEC to provide training in all Regions on full financial and day to day branch administration.

This training to include all type of cash returns.

This training to be made a prerequisite for all Branch Secretaries, Branch Presidents and Branch Auditors.

W50 WELLINGTON BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region
(Referred)

BRO. J. STOKES (Birmingham & West Midlands): Chair, Congress, our branch welcomes the organisation strategy now being implemented across the regions. We welcome the emphasis on workplace organisation becoming the focus of the branch. However, for large branches to be successful and to enable the growth and quality of service demanded by our members, the GMB representatives on the ground need to be able to access up-to-date quality information on the make-up of the workplace. The key to a successful trade union is the ability to communicate with our members, which enables them to become an active part of the organisation and achieve the goal of becoming the major trade union in this country.

We therefore request that where any branch exceeds 2,000 members the branch secretary has access to and is able to retrieve up-to-date membership information from the trade union's computer system. We are not requesting the ability to add, remove, or change any of the information stored on these systems but simply to be able to draw on that information to enable the branch to operate successfully.

Many of our branch secretaries coming into positions have little or no experience of how to manipulate electronic information or have little basic skills required to be able to function fully on the admin side of the branch. Many branch secretaries will tell you the horror they felt when the first financial reports arrived on their doorsteps. We are

therefore requesting that all branch secretaries, branch presidents, and branch auditors, are provided with comprehensive training which will give them the skills to provide the service and the information that our members deserve. Congress, we ask you to support this motion. Thank you.

(Motion 65 was formally seconded)

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to join in the debate? While you are coming to the rostrum, colleagues, we have been joined in the hall today by Ann Casey from WEA, who is working with us to develop activists training programmes, and we have just signed a national agreement with WEA to deliver an officers training programme. Ann, I would like to say welcome to you. I also have to make this comment. As you know, I have been involved with yourselves in the Liverpool, North Wales & Irish Region, that has been delivering, with your help, some of the greatest training for women I have seen for a long time in this union. I congratulate Liverpool, North Wales & Irish Region for the foresight. We are back in October. Thank you for your support.

BRO. D. SUTCLIFFE (Liverpool, North Wales & Irish): Again, I support our education officer who gives the Liverpool, North Wales & Irish Region one of the best education plans that I feel we have. On Motion 65, while I totally agree with the contents and the sentiments, I believe all branches where they feel or they wish to, and want to, should have that access. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Anyone else?

BRO. J. DOLAN (Scotland): Earlier this week I spoke just after Paul Kenny had given his report on training and the necessity and need for the national college. We said that changes had to be made. If we could organise a congress like this then maybe quarterly we could organise training for reps; whether it be in middle England or Scotland we should be doing that. We have to get together again. Training and mixed training is the best education that you can get, believe me. Training has done that much for me I am going to be supporting England today! I hope they win the World Cup because we can beat them again as we did in 1967. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: After I have finished today I will have a job supporting myself. Thanks, colleague. Can I call Brian Jackson?

BRO. B. JACKSON (CEC, Public Services): The CEC is seeking to refer Motion 65. The motion is asking for branches with over 2,000 members to be granted access to the GMB membership database and for

training to be provided on branch finance and administration. If I can first turn to the question of access to the membership database, the infrastructure that would allow branches access to the database is already in place. However, there are a number of issues that have to be addressed concerning computer hardware, security, and the GMB's obligations under the Data Protection Act.

The CEC is recommending that this is referred to the senior management team and the IT steering group to enable them to undertake a survey of branch secretaries to determine how many have access to a suitable PC and to investigate further the issues relating to security and the Data Protection Act.

Turning now to the question of training for branch officials, the CEC is again asking that this matter be referred to the senior management team. Training the branch secretaries already does take place but does vary from region to region. The CEC would wish to ensure that a comprehensive training programme covering all areas of branch finance and administration is developed and implemented not only for new branch officials but for existing branch officials. This would ensure consistency of training in best practice across all regions. Congress, it is for these reasons that the CEC is recommending that Motion 65 is referred. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Brian, thank you very much. We will now move to the vote. The CEC is supporting Composite 4 and Motions 60, 61, and 64.

(Composite 4 was carried)

(Motion 60 was carried)

(Motion 61 was carried)

(Motion 64 was carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Does Birmingham & West Midlands accept reference back? *(Agreed)* Thank you.

(Motion 65 was referred)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE PRESIDENT: I have a couple of announcements to make, colleagues. The raffle result for GMB Shout Group: they raised £235. The winning raffle tickets are: first prize, a DVD player - yellow tickets, 921-925. Second prize, a selection of wine - winning numbers, green 86-90. Third prize, whiskey gift set - winning numbers yellow tickets 626-630. Fourth prize, something or other set - 646-650. Fifth prize, feather boa - 541-545. Colleagues, they would like to thank you very much for all your contributions last night.

To those who bought tickets from the Retired Members stall, the raffle has been drawn so would they like to go along and pick up their prizes.

Pellacraft – the winning ticket for £250 prize draw was Mr. Keith Mills, Midland & East Coast Region, Accrington Number 1, Wagstaff Lane, Jaksdale. I think Keith is up in the balcony; I saw him earlier. Keith and Dorothy, go to the Pellacraft stall, you have won the raffle, or I will get there before you! Well done.

The other issue is this. Colleagues, on your tables this week was the Colombian Computer Appeal. I would just say to everyone, please give generously in the name of solidarity and comradeship, and affiliate through your branches.

It gives me great pleasure, Congress, to announce that one of our CEC members will be 50 years old on Saturday. Her name is June Minnery. She has flown! I will leave it till she comes back.

I have a notice here from the regional secretaries of all regions, will their delegations meet this afternoon at 4.15, and for the CEC to meet at a quarter to five in the bar upstairs for an emergency executive meeting. Agreed? *(Laughter)* I told you we do not have card votes in here, we have tellers in. Right, Mr. Coote? I am joking. I am not!

POLITICAL: LABOUR PARTY

STRENGTHENING THE LINK BETWEEN THE GMB AND THE LABOUR PARTY

MOTION 190

Congress should strengthen its campaign to encourage all GMB members to join the Labour Party. The re-branding of the Tory party will confuse young working voters and Congress must ensure that they understand the true agenda of the Tory party and its impact on young working families.

HOUNSLOW BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. T. BAILLIE (London): With Mary's kind permission I would like to thank Mary, Paul, and especially Congress, and a special thanks to Ed Blissett, and Ed knows what that is about, for your help in the sale of draw tickets on behalf of Leukaemia Buses. We actually made £4,148 which was donated to Leukaemia Buses on 6th May. All those who won prizes have had a phone call from me, so if you have not had a phone call, "You ain't won nutten!" So, to every last one of you, thank you for buying the tickets and God bless everyone, especially from Leukaemia Buses.

One last thing, to all England supporters, best of luck tonight. That was actually written two days ago so I am not following somebody else. I do wish you

the best of luck from the bottom of my heart, honest! *(Laughter)* I can say that with a straight face, actually!

THE PRESIDENT: Don't push your luck!

BRO. T. BAILLIE: Congress, I have great pleasure in moving Motion 190 but may I first clear up a small point. As many of you know, my own branch, Barking B10, submitted Motion 198. I am not going to go into the motion but some people actually thought there was a conflict of interest here. Not so, comrades. Let us see what 198 actually says. I am only going to be taking a few words from it. It says: "This new Labour Government, not the Labour Party," and there is a distinction here. More than anything it is a most positive reason, that distinction, for adopting Motion 190 as GMB policy. We need to take back what is ours by right as it was the Trade Union Movement that gave birth to a Labour Party all those years ago. It was the Trade Union Movement that nurtured and developed a Labour Party and now we see it slowly slipping away from us.

In Barking and Dagenham when trade unionists were not fully involved in the Party we saw what damage could be done with a few ill-advised and a few ill-timed comments to our BNP councillors. Thank you, Margaret Hodge, you undid in a few mad moments months of hard work by hardworking activists, who, up until then, had contained the BNP and had rubbished their lies. We asked, how can we – I have actually put "control" down and I have also put "advise" down – assist these ministers or backbenchers as when in government they think they are the Party, our party.

One positive note came out of Barking and Dagenham. GMB sponsored 11 candidates in a local election and ten of those candidates were elected. That is the power our members have. Even in Barking and Dagenham the GMB has shown on a positive note what can be done. Congress, never mind the re-launch of the new Tory party, the LibDems, or even the (I will not say what I have actually put down there but I will just call them) BNP rascals, we control our own destiny. So, Congress, I implore you, support Motion 190.

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Tom. Is this the dynamic duo this morning?

BRO. J. HIOM (London): Strengthening the links between the GMB and the Labour Party to encourage all GMB members to join the Labour Party. We have heard all this week from delegates that the Government is not doing this and it is not doing that. We have heard from Tony Blair; you may believe what he says, you may not. The membership of the party is dropping like a stone, and it has to stop. Why should we encourage our members to join the party? We all

know the Labour Party is founded/formed by the unions and it is our mouthpiece in parliament. The answer is not to come out of the party and complain, it is to join the Labour Party, complain, and change it within. I second.

WARWICK AGREEMENT

COMPOSITE MOTION 27

(Covering Motions 191 and 192)

191 – Warwick Agreement (Northern Region)

192 – Warwick Agreement (London Region)

Congress calls for the full implementation of the Warwick Agreement a watered down version is not acceptable.

Furthermore this Congress instructs CEC to pursue with vigour the implementation of the Warwick Agreement in its entirety.

(Carried)

SIS. E. ROLPH (London): Congress, they say it takes two to tango. It also takes two to make an agreement and it takes two to keep an agreement. This composite calls for the Government, who are the other party to the Warwick Agreement with the trade unions, to do just that. So far, of the 62 commitments made only nine have been completed, whilst there has been no progress on up to 14 of the others. We must never underestimate Warwick. We need to address and readdress the many problems faced by working people, many of them our members, on a day-to-day basis: problems in industry affecting the lowest paid and the most disadvantaged, problems with the continuing gender gap, problems connected with pensions, corporate manslaughter, domestic violence, the two-tier workforce, and problems in manufacturing, transport, and so on.

In recognising these problems and the need to address them, the Warwick Agreement averted the very real possibility of trade unions, ourselves included, disaffiliating from the Labour Party resulting in a severe breach to the Labour Movement. We should not lose sight of the fact that these problems stem from the Thatcher era: the weakening of workers' rights, the decimation of industry, wholesale privatisation which was a direct attack on local government and the health service and which created the two-tier workforce, and undermined our principal stance on stable employment and the rate for the job.

Apart from these issues, colleagues, Warwick also addresses other concerns such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor, age and gender, discrimination and the need for training and investment. As I said earlier, 14 of the 62

commitments are yet to be started on. The purpose of this composite is to ensure these commitments are carried through to fruition and in their entirety. Congress, I move, and so must the Government. Thank you.

BRO. B. TAYLOR (Northern): I think it is quite significant that the Warwick Agreement has been mentioned at least half a dozen times over the week, starting with the Prime Minister, our own General Secretary, and a fair number of delegates. As Edna has pointed out, job security is obviously an issue, as well as full employment, as well as ending unequal pay, and also rights for temporary workers.

Pensions are a major issue and have been discussed here this week. We need an increase in pensions, especially for women, to alleviate poverty and also greater protection for pensioners when companies offer pension schemes and then go bust.

The Prime Minister did make a commitment to paid holidays this week, that as well as having four weeks paid holiday we would also have eight public holidays for all workers.

We have also discussed an increase in equality and diversity through improved childcare schemes, mandatory equal pay audits, and same sex pension rights.

Skills again has been a big issue and was mentioned quite a few times this week, and the erosion of apprenticeships. We must have more apprentices if we mean to keep our manufacturing base going.

Safety and corporate manslaughter legislation is also high on the agenda for this organisation.

So, let us not forget that the Government asked for our support for their third term, we delivered that, and we now need them to deliver Warwick in full. I second the motion.

LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE VOTING

MOTION 193

Congress deplores the suggestion by Alan Johnson that union voting at party conference is influencing party policy and should be slashed. It is up to individuals how they vote whether they are personally or by trade union on behalf of their members.

**R35 ROCESTER JCB BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region**

(Carried)

BRO. G. RICHARDSON (Birmingham & West Midlands): Congress, do politicians have short memories? I think we know the answer to that. It is, yes. In November of last year the then Trade & Industry Secretary, Alan Johnson, had the affront to suggest when being interviewed by the Times that the unions'

influence on Labour Party policy should be slashed. I did not hear him complaining when the trade union influence helped him get the party back to a third term of office. Has he forgotten the great work that the network of key EC coordinators did bringing together several hundred volunteers to work on the marginal seats; short memories indeed.

The report states that Johnson wants a radical shake-up of power structure at the Party Conference because unions were abusing their power by voting together and commanding policy. He suggested unions' voting strength at conference be cut from 50% to nearer 15%, the proportion they said commanded a full policy forum.

Colleagues, over the coming months we have to be on guard and totally alert to any dilution and any input or decision making on policy our party tried to put through. By the way, it is our party, not theirs; perhaps they are concerned about a possible merger. We were.

Colleagues, this interview took place over six months ago. At the weekend Lord Bill Morris said exactly the same ----

THE PRESIDENT: Hypocrite.

BRO. G. RICHARDSON: - in interview with GMTV. Short memories, indeed. This motion goes before Congress today for your full support and endorsement that if there is any watering down of trade union voting on any agenda, then the GMB will oppose it in the strongest possible way. I move.

(Motion 193 was formally seconded)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I find it offensive when ex general secretaries of unions insult their colleagues and comrades. They are only where they are today because of positions they held by their membership and with the support of our membership. I do find it an insult to ordinary working people. *(Applause)*

FUNDING OF LABOUR MPs AND CANDIDATES

COMPOSITE MOTION 28

(Covering Motions 194, 195, and 196)

194 – Labour MP's Adherence to Policy (London Region)

195 – Funding of GMB-sponsored MPs and Local Government Candidates (London Region)

196 – Financial and Political Support for MPs (London Region)

Congress expresses its concern that our Union still appears to be sponsoring Labour MP's and/or their constituencies despite the apparent

anomaly that they are voting and acting in opposition to GMB policy.

This is clearly against the agreed policy of Congress to only give financial backing to those MP's who vote and act in line with the policies of our Union.

Congress calls upon the NEC to ensure that the appropriate action is taken to correct this situation.

Congress instructs

1. All Regions to withdraw any funding for any MP's, or Local Government candidates, who refuse to support all motions and policies adopted by the GMB Congress.
2. The CEC to ensure that GMB's political and financial support is only given to those labour MP's who support the general aims of the union.

(Carried)

BRO. S. MCKENZIE (London): A few years ago Congress agreed a policy only to give financial backing for those MPs who vote and act in line with GMB policy. As we have heard at this Congress, there are over 100 MPs we give our backing to. As time went on and the Government provoked rebellions with their pursuit of policies like foundation hospitals and tuition fees, you looked at the size of the rebellions by Labour MPs who were loyal to true labour principles and you could not help thinking that there are only 50 or 60 of them; and even if all of them were GMB-backed MPs that means there are 40 or 50 of them who are going against union policy.

At that initial stage it was a bit vague but anyone prepared to give a bit of thought knew that there was something dramatically wrong. In the end, our branch secretary got me a list of the 102 MPs our union backed and for a while it was put on the back burner because of work, local union commitments, etc. Then one day the good old Morning Star published a list of MPs who had signed an Early Day Motion put forward by a CWU-backed MP calling for the Post Office not to be privatised. There were about 150 of them who had signed it. It is a basic trade union demand every MP backed by any union should support.

On comparing that list with the list of GMB-backed MPs there turned out to be only 46 out the 102 who supported. That prompted me to give a closer look at a subject closer to home, that is, the Trade Union Freedom Bill that we debated earlier this week. Early Day Motion 1170 supporting that bill, which was supported by the TUC, had the support, at

that stage, of about 160 MPs. Again, I went through the same process of counting up and comparing and I was horrified to discover that only 26 out of the 102 on my list had supported EDM 1170; that was a quarter.

At around this time the Government's attempt to dismantle the comprehensive education system by handing schools over to big business and religious organisations, otherwise known as the Education Bill, had been pushed through at the latest stage in parliament in the face of a very sizable rebellion. Putting your hand up on principle when you know you are in a minority appears to be even more difficult than signing an Early Day Motion. I discovered that there were only 14 – yes, 1-4 – out of that 102 had actually backed the rebellion against something that was so obviously detrimental to the interests of GMB members the length and breadth of this country.

I would be the first to admit that my perception is not always reality, as we were told earlier in the week, and that my figures might be a little bit out, but comrades, brothers and sisters, they are not that far out. There are arguments that there are certain MPs, ministers, and others, who may have been out of the country and what have you, but even if you give them the benefit of the doubt there is a dramatic contempt being shown here by a lot of people towards the GMB and towards our members.

Last year our then Acting General Secretary said in closing the Congress that in the GMB there is no more time for vested self-interest and that if people are not prepared to put their back into building this union, then they might as well go now. I think, comrades, that that applies to the political side as well as the industrial side. If we are not pulling our weight, then we should not be here and we should not be a representative of the GMB. As far as I am concerned, that applies to the political as well, if they cannot do the business let us pull our support for them and redirect it to MPs who can.

BRO. D. RIGBY (London): Congress, this union is the best; that is why we are all in it. I can only assume that all MPs and local government candidates we sponsor think the same way as we do. Now, as we know, our then Acting General Secretary, now General Secretary, has worked magic in regards to turning our once black hole deficit around. We must applaud him for this. But if we have MPs who we sponsor but who do not agree to support our GMB motions and values, then we should drop them like hot potatoes and let them find their own sponsors elsewhere. We will no doubt find MPs who do share our views, and also our money. Congress, I second Composite 28.

BRO. E. MARNELL (Liverpool, North Wales & Irish): I am feeling absolutely crap!

THE PRESIDENT: Oooh! On the right resolutions,

then, aren't you!

BRO. E. MARNELL: Those who seek sponsorship from our union are expected to pay a price. The price is set down in the rule book. We expect them to support the policies of the union and our aims and objectives. Sadly, as the Labour Party moves further to the right many policies being followed are in the opposite direction to our union's policies. The union has been a staunch supporter of the Labour Party. We sponsor over 100 MPs. How do we hold them to account? Decisions on who to support are made by the regions yet there seems to be no system in place to monitor how they represent our interests. For too long sponsored MPs have taken the money without the responsibilities that go with it. That has to stop. Regional committees must take steps to monitor the performance of sponsored MPs and Labour councillors. Congress, I second.

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks, Eddie. You blame me and Lois for that. Tell him I know who should have been seconding it. Anyone wish to take part in the debate? Sing now or for ever hold your peace.

BRO. T. OWEN (Midland & East Coast): When Tony Blair addressed us the other day I was impressed, to a point, and that point was when he was responding to a question that our members are losing faith in the party. His response was, and I quote, "You say losing faith, well, it's better than a Tory government." I interpret that as, "like it or lump it". If our employers say that, we do something about it. I suggest when the Labour Party drop "Two Jags" they put Tony in the other Jag because if he says it again we will do something about it and, unlike the Labour Party, when we make a promise we deliver. If we cannot deliver, we do not promise. Our members pay for representation, they deserve it, and they should get it, not be told, "like it or lump it". Thank you.

BRO. A. HUTCHINGS (Southern): As I said before, I have been a Labour councillor for 24 years but I have only been in the GMB since 1997. I am very proud that when I had my election address I put on there, "membership of the GMB", and I have an obligation to the GMB to make sure that I adhere to the policies of the GMB. I am not going to take GMB money unless I carry out that pledge. The pledge is that all the time I have been on the council I fought privatisation left, right, and centre. I will not have any part of privatisation of local services. I will continue to do this, so when I continue to put on my election address "membership of the GMB", I mean it. As far as I am concerned, I am taking GMB money and I am very proud of it. Thank you.

BRO. M. DOMINGUEZ (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I am really proud to be a GMB member and

I am extremely honoured to be here participating in the debates and having discussions with you in the bar, and whatnot, but I do oppose the Labour link.

Congress, much has been said about, if we do not vote Labour then the Tories will get in, but I cannot find any difference with either. In fact, the majority of workers believe that the established parties are all rubbish because they lie to us and only listen to their big business friends. Labour has continued to erode our living standards and cut benefits, allowed low pay, signed off our public services such as health and education, and pensions. Of course, there is Iraq too.

Congress, the anger against Labour has been reflected in the discussion with the Prime Minister in his Question Time. Blair declared that a return to old Labour would deem the Labour Party unelectable, but this is not true. People of Liverpool did not seem to think so during the period of 1983 to 1987 when Labour councillors carried out socialist policies. Millions of people are pissed off with Labour as the local elections demonstrated and it is Labour's anti-working class policies that have provided an opportunity for the BNP, who describe themselves as a part of the white workers. Brown will not be much better, so what is the alternative?

THE PRESIDENT: Colleague, would you wind up, please?

BRO. M. DOMINGUEZ: Yes, can I just finish off? I think that the ----

THE PRESIDENT: I said wind up.

BRO. M. DOMINGUEZ: I think if the union decides to cut its ties with Labour, especially its political fund, it will free us to support other candidates who would be more ----

THE PRESIDENT: Please, colleague, wind up.

BRO. M. DOMINGUEZ: -- in opposing cuts and privatisation, such as the successful campaign for the NHS ----

THE PRESIDENT: Please wind up.

BRO. M. DOMINGUEZ: -- in Huddersfield. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Anyone else? No? I call Gary Doolan. I understand some members are having difficulty in hearing when the delegates are on the mike. I wonder if it is because it is Thursday! Will you adjust your mikes and speak into them, and then there will be no difficulty. Gary?

BRO. G. DOOLAN (CEC, Public Services): President, Congress, Councillor Gary Doolan speaking on behalf of the CEC ----

THE PRESIDENT: Hurray! *(Applause)*

BRO. G. DOOLAN: Thank you. -- on Motion 193 and Composite 28 covering Motions 194, 195, and 196. The CEC is supporting Composite 28 and Motion 193, with a qualification I am about to give.

Congress, I introduced myself as a councillor because I am proud to have been elected as a Labour councillor in this year's local elections in Islington. Thanks to the GMB. *(Applause)* To put this in context, many political parties have attempted to win this ward over the last 25 years. We did it in six months.

Motion 193 deplores the suggestion by Alan Johnson that the trade union block vote should be reduced. This kind of public statement does not do the party or the Movement any favours whatsoever. The qualification is that the percentage of each block vote is decided by the Labour Party Conference where we have a vote and will therefore influence any decisions about the role of trade unions in setting Labour Party policy.

Composite 28 calls for the GMB funds to be directed at elected officials who share our aims and values, and this is existing policy. However, this motion goes further. I would like to outline the CEC qualification to this motion. The Motion states all regions to withdraw any funding for any MPs or local government candidates who refuse to support all motions and policies adopted by the GMB Congress.

Colleagues, the CEC does not believe that we can take an absolute stance on this matter as from time to time and with the utmost integrity an individual holding elective office may have issues of conscience or genuine conflicting views from various groups he or she represents, and issues with which not all GMB members necessarily agree. There are also issues of collective responsibility and binding agreements on MPs in government.

Taking these issues into consideration but reiterating our belief that GMB-sponsored MPs and councillors do have some responsibilities, the CEC believes that our current policy, that elected officials should share the aims and values of the GMB, is sensible and workable. If the letter of this motion is followed rather than the spirit, we would be denying ourselves the opportunity of supporting many GMB MPs who may privately support our position or have been helpful to us.

Therefore, Congress, with the above qualification the CEC is asking you to support Motion 193 and Composite 28. Thank you, President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gary. Colleagues, Gary made very light of his win in May. LibDems run Islington Council. He knocked out a terrible LibDem leader of that council. That was no easy task. When you knock the governor out, you have hope to knock the rest. Well done, Gary. *(Applause)*

Okay, colleagues, can we now move to the vote on 190. We are asking you to support Composite 27.

(Motion 190 was carried)

(Composite 27 was carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 193, Labour Party Conference, does Birmingham accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Composite 28, does London Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)*

(Motion 193 was carried)

(Composite 28 was carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Shaune, Midland & East Coast, you have lost, wherever you are. You had a second run, though. Now, back to the business we had a little earlier. June Minnery, where are you? Would you stand up for a second, please? June, I understand it is your birthday on Saturday and I understand you are 50. Happy Birthday. Big celebrations tonight. We will be thinking of you. Have a great time. Good Luck. *(Applause)* It is all these Geminis!

I will now move to an amended page 5. Motion 199, as Congress is aware, has been withdrawn. Motion 201, Political Affiliation, Southern Region to move? It has what I thought was a kiss, John. Sit down, John, it has gone. Sorry about that.

(Motion 199 was withdrawn)

(Motion 201 was withdrawn)

CANDIDATES STANDING FOR ELECTION TO LABOUR PARTY MUST BE MEMBERS OF A TRADE UNION

MOTION 203

Congress

Any person standing as a candidate for election to the Labour Party at the moment does not technically have to be a Trade Union member. The wording is “should also be”. This is a permissive statement and not mandatory. It should be changed to “must be a member of a Trade Union, whether they are employed, unemployed, or retired. This would then make it mandatory for them to be tied in to paying political fund contributions within their Trade Union.

The Labour Party needs to enforce its own rules!
GRIMSBY FOOD & LEISURE BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

BRO. T. OWEN (Midland & East Coast): Congress, any person standing as a Labour candidate for election at this moment in time does not technically have to be a trade union member. The wording is, “should also be”. This is a permissive statement and not mandatory. This should be changed to “must be a member of a trade union”, whether they are unemployed, employed, or retired. This would make it mandatory for them to be tied into paying a political fund contribution within their trade union.

Since 2002, the Labour Party has received in the region of £24m from the TUC affiliated trade unions, and £4.3m of that from the GMB, the third largest contributor. Out of 352 Labour MPs, 279 are members of a trade union. That is not bad but that still leaves in the region of 70 who have for some reason forgotten that it is the unions’ political levy that has supported them to three victories and not the bribes or donations, or “loans”, from wannabe Labour peers. At least we are not asking for our contributions back.

Day after day I hear my fellow workers call the union and say, “£2.25, what do we get for that? It’s better off in my own pocket.” I do not agree with them or I would not be here, but why should they help fund a party whose leadership ignores the plight of the low-paid in favour of big business and the middle-classes, eroding their civil liberties, and inviting any war the Americans feel is justified. It is about time the Labour Party once again showed solidarity with the people they have been elected to represent and enforce its own rules. They should not forget that their party was born out of the blood, sweat, and tears of ordinary working folk. We are not asking for blood, sweat, and tears, only £2.25 a week for our continued support. President, Congress, I move Motion 203. Thank you.

SIS. C. CLARKSON (Midland & East Coast): Congress, the trade unions and the Labour Party were believed by most until recently to have a relationship that went together like fish and chips, or bread and butter. Yes, the unions were the economical wing of the Labour and Trade Union Movement, and the Labour Party was the political wing.

Leading union activists and lay officials were predominantly Labour Party activists, if not also constituency office holders and elected councillors, and at a higher level a good proportion of Labour MPs until the late 1990s were former paid union officials and lay officials. What happened to that relationship? When did we allow the party to be taken from us? We need to take our party back. We have to take it back. We can only do that by being a member and making sure that the words “should also be” means “will be”. I second.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Anyone wish to come in on the debate? The CEC is supporting.

(Motion 203 was carried)

POLITICAL: DEMOCRACY & CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

MOTION 205

Congress acknowledges that the Trade Unions and the Labour Movement as a whole have been the driving force for constitutional reform over the past 20 years.

Congress notes and applauds the efforts made to reform the House of Lords and to have a fully elected Second Chamber.

Congress realizes that there is still inequality within our society; there are still those who are more equal than others; why do the working classes still suffer discrimination from the state? Why do we still have the “boss and the worker” mentality? Why do we still suffer under the *master* and the *servant* regime?

Congress looks forward to a democracy fit for the 21st century; this will mean the completion of Constitutional Reform.

This Motion asks the GMB Union to be the catalyst for change. This Motion asks that we move to fulfill the dreams of our forbears and call for a constitutional monarchy that belongs to the history books. Why do we pay homage to an unelected Head of State?

Congress demands we become full citizens and not just subjects. We demand to have true freedom and equality under a new constitution with a new Bill of Rights.

Congress calls for a movement of the people to force change for the future betterment of the British people with a full republic.

SOUTHAMPTON CFTA S61 BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. B. HULLEY (Southern): Worthy President, Congress, the Trade Union and Labour Movement have been the driving force for constitutional reform over the past 20 years. We applaud the efforts to reform the House of Lords to have a fully elected second chamber, but there is still inequality within our society. There are still those who are more equal than others. Why do the working-classes still suffer discrimination from the state? Why do we still have the boss and worker mentality? Why do we still suffer

under the master and servant regime? We need a democracy fit for the 21st century; this will mean the completion of constitutional reform.

This motion asks the GMB to be the catalyst for change so that we move to fulfil the dreams of our forebears and call for a constitutional monarchy that belongs in the history books. Why do we still pay homage to an unelected head of state? We demand that we become full citizens and not just subjects. We demand true freedom and equality under a new constitution with a new bill of rights. Congress, I move.

(Motion 205 was formally seconded)

PARLIAMENTARY SALARIES – PENSIONS – EXPENSES AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT UPON LOSING THEIR CONSTITUENCY SEAT FOLLOWING AN ELECTION

MOTION 206

Congress condemns and is outraged to learn that this present Parliament has awarded themselves a financial package that secures salaries – pensions – expenses and assures themselves of financial support should they lose their Constituency seat following an election. This at a time knowing the plight it leaves millions of workers with no chance of securing a decent overall package for their retirement.

GUILDFORD G38 BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. K. ROBERTS (Southern): Congress, parliamentary salaries, pension expenses, and financial support upon losing their constituency seat following an election, where are these people from? Planet Thatcher? Have they been living in a time warp? Congress, I was employed as a school caretaker. In January 2005 while working on the footpath on the school site I was hit by a van driven by a parent dropping a child off to school. I received serious leg injuries. Three weeks ago my right leg was surgically dislocated and relocated so that the bottom half of my leg faced in the same direction as the rest of the front of me. It hurts like hell but at least I do not do right-hand circles any more!

Because of the injuries I was dismissed from my job via a capability procedure and was moved out of my tied school site home. Immediately on leaving my post on 18th April 2006 my local government pension was frozen. My salary was stopped. I did not receive expenses anyway but I am sure they would have been stopped as well. Oh, and I did not receive any financial support either. Just to add insult to my injuries, the local authority charged me an additional 24 days' rent for a home they moved me out of whilst

also immediately charging me rent on occupying my new home. The first one I expected, the second one I did not.

Congress, that is a personal input on this issue in stark contrast to the other side of the gold coin being given to poor jobless ex-MPs. This is of course a much wider-ranging issue than my personal situation and in order to get this outrageously unfair and obscene financial package firmly fixed in all of our minds I would ask you to indulge me just for a few seconds.

I have some role play for you. It will take a few seconds. It is painless. It is not embarrassing and you can stay sitting. Colleagues, please turn if you would to your Congress programme. Please indulge me. It is most important in relation to this issue. Look at the picture on the front cover. How do you think Bimla, who coincidentally is a teaching assistant - remember teacher supply agencies - will feel when she finds out that when her local MP loses his/her seat following an election that that jobless ex-MP will be able to dip into her purse to maintain his/her lifestyle? Congress, I move.

(Motion 206 was formally seconded)

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? *(No response)* I call Brian Farr. They are the caring heads that were going to handle our education system and to look after our members.

BRO. B. FARR (CEC, Process): Mary, before I give the qualification to Motion 206 I would like to pay my own tribute to you. On Monday Paul paid his tribute to you, in his words, "pound for pound is simply the best". Even Tony Blair thanked you on Tuesday, Peter Hain on Wednesday, and even our good Billie Hughes this morning. Mary, what you have had to put up with over the last few years from scurrilous people and, yes, you know who, and yet you battled on because you knew you were in the right, and you had the support not only of the CEC but friends of the CEC, and your family. Mary, throughout that time you still had time for others, and for that I thank you.

Paul also spoke on Monday of the justice for the Cammell Laird workers, and quite rightly so. Let me tell you that there was a lot of us miners put in gaol in 1984 also. You know who was in power then; the Tories. Let us not forget it. Right, where was I?

The CEC is supporting Motion 206 but with a qualification. Motion 206 calls on Congress to condemn the financial packages that MPs receive following the loss of their seats at elections. We do believe the pensions they get are not fair in comparison to our members working in the public services and believe this should be highlighted. The qualification is that the monies received on losing their seats are to give them time to find a new position. They also receive six months' worth of

monies which they do not benefit from directly as these are paid to cover their staff redundancies and office expenditure. Therefore, Congress, with that qualification we are asking you to support Motion 206. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks very much, Brian. Thank you for your words.

POLITICAL: RACISM & FASCISM

UNITE AGAINST FASCISM

COMPOSITE MOTION 29

(Covering Motions 207 and 208)

207 – Unite Against Fascism (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region)

208 – Unite Against Fascism (Birmingham & West Midlands Region)

This GMB Congress notes that the BNP:

- is a fascist, racist organisation that stands for an all white Britain, the destruction of trade unions and the elimination of basic democratic rights
- tries to present itself as a 'respectable' political party
- seeks to attract votes on the basis of racism, homophobia, Islamophobia and the vilification of refugees and asylum seekers

Trade unions play a crucial role in defending fascism in Britain. We welcome the position taken by several unions to expel members of the BNP from trade unions.

This Congress further notes:

- Unite Against Fascism is a broad national campaign formed to defeat the BNP, uniting trade unions, anti-racists, MPs, MEPs, faith groups and all those opposed to the BNP
- that the TUC has fully supported Unite Against Fascism since it was set up in November 2003.
- 17 national trade unions have affiliated to Unite Against Fascism and 21 General Secretaries have signed the campaign statement including: Derek Simpson AMICUS, Dave Prentis UNISON, Tony Woodley TGWU, Billy Hayes CWU, Steve Sinnott NUT, Mark Serwotka PCS and Paul Mackney NATFHE
- Unite Against Fascism has been actively campaigning against the British National

Party in particular and other fascist organisations

- the Unite Against Fascism strategy is to raise the turnout and mobilise the anti-BNP vote nationally, whilst actively challenging BNP's racism and ensuring a central role in the campaign for those who are particularly targeted by the BNP.

This GMB Congress resolves:

- to affiliate to Unite Against Fascism
- to circulate Unite Against Fascism leaflets and other materials
- to send a significant financial donation to Unite Against Fascism
- to encourage the union's members the take up of individual membership.

Congress calls for all branches within the GMB

- to support this organisation to defeat all the BNP objectives
- to affiliate to UAF and encourage membership individually to both circulate leaflets and donate as appropriate to the above organisation.

(Referred)

BRO. H. RAJCH (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I move Composite 29. As everybody knows the BNP are racist Fascist scum. The GMB, rightly, encourages activists to oppose the Fascists, and we say "Don't Vote Nazi". However, the BNP is gaining some support, and in some areas, with Margaret Hodge giving them a helping hand, we saw them do particularly well in parts of her constituency.

As Billy Bragg said very clearly yesterday, the problem is that many people are voting BNP because of the failures of New Labour to deliver, particularly on social housing. That is why we support the fourth option and support councils building their own homes. I think that is a very important issue.

However, the fight for improvements for all working people is so important. We need to give people hope that things can improve, that is why we say "Hope not Hate".

In Barnsley, where I come from, the BNP stood in 11 wards. *Unite Against Fascism* was able to get 8,000 leaflets out exposing them as the violent thugs that they really are. Fortunately, they did not win a seat in Barnsley. I know that the CEC recommendation on this composite is to refer. I have spoken to Birmingham, and we are prepared to accept that in the interest of unity because the Fascist threat is so real. We cannot afford to be divided in any way in our

opposition to the Nazis. We all need to unite against Fascism.

SIS. S. BIRCH (Birmingham & West Midlands): I second Composite 29. President and Congress, the May elections have just taken place, so let us ask ourselves how well did the Fascist and racist organisation, the BNP, fair? Colleagues, the fact is that they once again made gains in some areas of the country. The realities of the situation were, in the areas where the trade union campaigned vigorously with an organised and strategic approach, that the BNP candidates were not successful.

Unite Against Fascism is a broad national campaign formed to defeat the BNP, and we urge the GMB at the national, regional and local levels to support this campaign by means of affiliation, donations and whenever and wherever possible for members to assist locally with distribution of campaign material.

I believe that the GMB affiliates to the organisation *Searchlight*, and to reinforce the opportunity to attack the BNP from whatever flank can only add to the demise of this organisation which believes in an all white Britain, the destruction of the trade unions and the elimination of democratic rights. We have had enough of these so-called peddlers of filth and evil. Let us go from this Congress with a commitment to vigorously campaign wherever against any BNP candidate who stands in any future election. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? While the next speaker is coming to the platform, I think it is only right that this Congress thanks Billy Bragg for the work that he has done with the GMB. *(Applause)*

SIS. E. GREENWOOD (Lancashire): President and Congress, I think it is a shame that Yorkshire Region is having this composite referred back. Two years ago I founded Pendle United Against Fascism, and I will tell you this. The MP was standing in eight wards then. The first meeting had 140 people, and at the follow-up meetings we had 40 people who offered to come out and join Pendle United Against Fascism. If it had not been for them and for *Searchlight*, we would have had a BNP councillor. That year we kept them out. This year, unluckily, we did get a BNP councillor. At that meeting we had Liberals and Tories. We pigeon holed all the councillors, and not one Labour councillor came out and very few trade unionists came. But Pendle United Against Fascism and *Searchlight* kept the BNP out. I note that that composite might, sadly, be referred. I would fetch it back again and demand that we affiliate to *Unite Against Fascism*.

THE PRESIDENT: That is next year's Agenda, Edna. I

am trying to get through this year's. Does anyone else wish to speak to the composite? *(No response)*
In that case, I call Elaine Daley.

SIS. E. DALEY (CEC, Commercial Services): President, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. The CEC is calling for the movers of Composite 29 to remit this motion for reasons I will outline. The GMB national *Target BNP Campaign* has developed an anti-Fascist programme of activity with many campaigns based around organising and campaigning in the workplace and the community.

The CEC adopted this strategy arising from previous conference decisions, and the CEC report last autumn. We have put in place a budget and detailed work programme. Resources have been put into the GMB *Target BNP Campaign* on training officers and activists. Training has also been provided on election campaigning. This motion is not a resolution from a branch, but a model motion sent out by the UAF to a very large list of people last autumn, asking them to get this motion adopted through their union conferences. Despite not being affiliated to UAF, we hold common views on Fascism and racism. We have already worked jointly with the UAF and receive, display and distribute their information. They were invited to be a co-sponsor of our initiative, the Billy Bragg "Hope not Hate" tour, and to speak on GMB organised platforms.

The composite suggests giving a significant financial donation, but there is no indication as to what our members' money will be spent on and what accountability there will be. The composite is not in line with either GMB or TUC policies in that we believe that the best way to defeat the BNP is to organise locally in communities. We do not need to give money to another organisation to repeat what we are already doing.

The CEC wishes to examine all of these matters, taking account of the success of the *Target BNP Campaign*, the link-up with the TUC, other unions and *Searchlight*. The CEC will develop a detailed policy for Congress 2007 to which we hope branches and regions will contribute their views. The CEC is asking for Composite 29 to be referred.

THE PRESIDENT: Henry, you did say that you were prepared to refer?

BRO. H. RAJCH: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Does Congress agree? *(Agreed)*

I will not go back and take the vote Motion 205. Does Southern Region accept the qualification on Motion 206? *(Agreed)* Thank you very much.

(Motion 205 was carried)

(Motion 206 was carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, it says on my agenda: "Adjourned for lunch". The choice is for Congress. We can continue and finish early. Are you prepared to work through to finish? *(Calls of "Yes")*

SOCIAL POLICY: GENERAL

CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY

MOTION 227

Congress supports a full review of the CSA, but is concerned if not a complete overall of the system takes place then it could leave our members disadvantaged.

It therefore calls on the CEC to work pro-actively and lobby where necessary to create a fairer system for all.

R35 ROCESTER JCB BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

SIS. M. INGRAM (Birmingham & West Midlands): President and Congress, the Child Support Agency. Congress supports a full review of the CSA, the Child Support Agency, but it is very concerned that if a complete overhaul of the system does not take place it could well leave our members, men and women, disadvantaged. It calls upon the CEC to work pro-actively and lobby where necessary to create a fair system of child payments. These payments are, after all, for the benefit of the child.

The CSA grew in 1993 following the Child Support Act of 1991 to take away the onus from the courts into government departments. In principle, this system was okay but in practice it failed dismally with amendments in 1995, 1996, 2000, 2003 and now. The system is so flawed that no one knows exactly who is right or wrong with further complications with what is known as "Migration 93" or "Conversion".

To complicate things even further are the two, three and sometimes four family splits. On top of that, is a computer glitch which puts the whole lot into one big mess. A colleague of mine recently resigned from work to join a new job in what is known as the "black economy". His deductions at source left him unable to support his present family, with his second wife. The CSA took out payments for his two children by his first wife, one of who actually lived with his own mother and father, and a child by her second husband, who was unemployed and could not provide.

The CSA spokesman said that the computer was unable to differentiate at that moment and used his wages as the highest common denominator. What is that supposed to mean? After working 60 hours, he was left with a pittance for his own family. Similarly, ex-wives, who are married to self-employed men, who

are able to cook the books and drive brand new cars, are sending in less and less money, always just under a month late. There is no quick answer. However, the new system needs to be a lot more friendly to allow what it should be about – supporting children at home and estranged. That is what is right. Nothing else matters. I move.

(The motion was formally seconded)

CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY

MOTION 228

Congress calls on the Labour Government to abolish the CSA and replace it with a locally enforced Court based system that takes more account of the personal details of both parents. The system should allow both parents to have their say, then the Court's decision to be enforced through the Inland Revenue's PAYE system.

Despite reviews, revamps, restructuring and hundreds of millions spent on computer systems, the Child Support Agency (CSA) is the most failed of all Government Departments.

LOWESTOFT BRANCH
London Region

(Referred)

SIS. J. SMITH (London): I move Motion 228. Congress, since the introduction of the CSA there has been one cock-up after another. On the introduction of the CSA from the court system it was intended to pursue all claims, more so the absent parent who had slipped through the net and disappeared, either by moving away or leaving their places of work. The CSA has only pursued the easy targets, and they are the ones which were already within the old system and the ones who the absent parents want to do right by their children.

On speaking with knowledge from within my own Family Panel Court, I have witnessed and listened to parents turning up at court with reams and reams of paperwork to prove the efforts the parents have tried in wanting to co-operate with the CSA. The frustration that they have been caused by the CSA in not answering their telephone calls, correspondence unanswered, given the wrong calculations and no response when a change of circumstances has been reported is enormous. It goes on and on.

It is not until a liability order is requested by the CSA that nine out of ten – yes, Congress – do the CSA recognise their shortfalls to this parent.

Under the old court system, including the ones which are still within the court system, I can again assure Congress that the means of both parents are looked at. Both parents are allowed to put their case

and, should we need more information, the case is adjourned to another date for fairness and what is in the best interests of the children. We do not treat these cases lightly, and only what is considered fair and right for the child's needs is always at the forefront.

Congress, there were those who slipped through the net and there still are cases which have slipped through the net under the CSA regime. We all have National Insurance numbers and pay taxes. The current system should be returned to the court system with the Inland Revenue and the Department of Works & Pensions able to pass on the whereabouts of the absent parent to allow all parents to be treated equally. We do not need another change with the CSA system which, at the moment, is undergoing restructuring. The CAS is no more successful than the court system was. There will always be one who tries to avoid their responsibilities. Please support this motion. I move.

BRO. T. BAILLIE (London): I am seconding Motion 228 – Child Support Agency.

I would like to ask a point of clarification about supporting England. I have been asked to ask how can we support England as a Union when we have Italians who are taking away jobs from our members? I thought it was being directed at me because I had said I was supporting England. I cannot answer for the Union. I actually spoke as an individual. Good on you, England, today.

Moving back to Motion 228, I spoke to my eldest boy about this motion last night. My oldest boy has three children, one with his wife and two with his two girlfriends. So we have a few strays about. *(Chuckling)* When I said I was speaking on this subject, I will not tell you what his answer was. It was unrepeatable. However, the closest I could get to it is that we should close down the CSA.

However, we are seeing another government agency going haywire. It has had many years and many millions spent on it to get the situation right. It is not just the fault of the Child Support Agency, but the system is totally useless. Everything is blamed on the latest failed computer system which was put in a few weeks ago. They say, "It is unable to deal with complex issues". Complex issues! Such as the total breakdown of a family unit. It does not matter whether it is a married unit or not. It is a family unit and they break down. These things happen. At the same time, a family is a fragile unit which has been disassembled and who will end up paying the price. They are the ones who will end up suffering.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, the CEC is asking for reference on Motion 228, so I will call Evelyn Martin.

SIS. E. MARTIN (CEC, Public Services): I am speaking

on behalf of the CEC. The CEC is asking Congress to refer motion 228. The Child Support Agency has demonstrably failed to provide for children and those parents with care but, Congress, it was the local law courts' failure to deliver an adequate level of maintenance and then enforce judgment that led to the creation of the Child Support Agency. The CEC takes the view that further work is needed to investigate the feasibility of a nationally applied system that is fair to all parties, especially children.

The CEC, therefore, asks Congress to refer Motion 228.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, the CEC is supporting Motion 227.

(Motion 227 was carried)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Does London Region agree to refer Motion 228? *(Agreed)* Thank you.

(Motion 228 was referred)

STATUTORY PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

MOTION 229

It is the policy of the GMB to campaign for three additional public holiday's, to align the UK with the average number of national holiday's enjoyed in the former fifteen member states of the EU.

Congress instructs the General Secretary and our Labour National Executive members, to campaign with the TUC to create a 'Trafalgar Day' public holiday in October and a public holiday to recognise 'Armistice Day' in November.

The Trafalgar Day holiday would recognise the maritime heritage of Great Britain and a historic victory against European despotism.

The UK is unique amongst the major European nations in not having a public holiday in tribute to the fallen heroes of two world wars and other conflicts. As the war survivors grow old and less in number, we should be permanently reminded of the sacrifices made, by having an annual national day to celebrate the global victory against fascism and other tyranny.

DOVER FERRIES X23 BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. P. GOODACRE (Southern): I move Motion 229 – Statutory Public Holidays. Congress, we recognise our Union's efforts to achieve an additional three Bank Holidays. Anticipating holiday parity with our

European co-workers, Congress instructs our Union to campaign with the TUC to create an annual Trafalgar Day Bank Holiday in October and a public holiday in November to mark Armistice Day.

The timing of a Trafalgar Bank Holiday presents a compelling reason for its addition to the current Bank Holiday calendar. There is currently no Bank Holiday between August and Christmas. It coincides with Autumn half-term, allowing families more time off together. This holiday would serve as a celebration of our nation's maritime history and mark an event of overwhelming significance in British and world history.

The absence of a Bank Holiday to mark the Armistice is conspicuous by its absence. Britain is unique among the combatant nation of Europe in not having a holiday to commemorate and honour the fallen of the two major global and other conflicts.

As survivors of World War II become less numerous, it becomes more important that the nation remembers and honours them in the manner suggested. The overwhelming argument to include these dates in the Bank Holiday calendar is to honour and bear testament to the sacrifices the working people of these islands have made in defeating the forces of despotism and tyranny, thereby safeguarding the freedoms we enjoy today. I move.

(The motion was formally seconded)

OVER-PRICED HOLIDAYS

MOTION 230

Congress calls upon the CEC to lobby the government on behalf of parents, members who are being taken advantage of by holiday companies and tour operators. When children break up for half term holidays why should the price of a holiday nearly double the previous weeks and then drop back down when the children go back to school.

This is very noticeable February and October weeks.

C80 DUDLEY BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

BRO. S. HORTON (Birmingham & West Midlands): I move Motion 230. Congress, our members and their families deserve a well-earned holiday to get away from the daily grind of work and school. Many find that when the children break-up from school the price of a holiday goes through the roof. This is very noticeable in the February and October half-term weeks, as well as Easter and Whitsun.

Using October '06 as an example, the same resort based on an average family of two adults and two children to Grand Canaria, on the week commencing

16th – 22nd, is £1,322. If you take the week commencing the 22nd – 29th October, the cost is £2,062, a difference of £740. The following week the same holiday drops back down to £1,432, £630 cheaper. Why should this be allowed to happen? No other retailers are allowed to do this.

Even holidaying in the UK is not cheap. Still using October '06 as an example, an eight berth caravan here in Blackpool to see the lights from 16th – 22nd is £225 per family of four. The following half-term week, the same caravan rises to £511, a difference of £286. I do not think that this price rise is going to improve the weather. Do not just take my word for it. Grab yourself any holiday brochure and make the same comparison for yourselves. No wonder so many children are taken out of school for a family holiday.

We call upon this Labour Government to cap these over-priced holidays and stop this extortion. Thank you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Seconder?

The Motion was formally seconded.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, both of these motions are being supported with qualifications and I now call upon Paul Wheatley to give those qualifications.

BRO. P. WHEATLEY (CEC, CFTA): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. The CEC is supporting Motions 229 and 230, but each with a qualification.

Regarding Motion 229, the CEC agrees that an extra three public holidays is consistent with both the EU and TUC campaigns. However, the qualification is that the GMB Congress 2005 carried Motion 108 calling for a public holiday on April 28th, which is Workers' Memorial Day. The CEC is aware that difficulties arise when trying to determine which days should form the remaining new Bank Holidays because GMB members hold different views as to what these days should be.

Therefore, the CEC believes it would need to undertake appropriate consultation with its members before determining which are the most popular days for any future Bank Holidays campaign. Therefore, the CEC asks you to support this motion with this qualification.

Turning, secondly, to Motion 230, which the CEC supports with the following qualification, the CEC is sympathetic to the plight of parents wanting to take their school age children on holidays, especially as the price escalate during peak holiday periods. Unfortunately, the CEC must qualify its support because it does not believe that there is any conceivable prospect that lobbying the Government will result in their intervening as a result of this issue. Therefore, the CEC asks that Congress

supports this motion with a qualification.

In conclusion, the CEC is supporting Motions 229 and 230 with the qualifications that I have given.

THE PRESIDENT: Does Birmingham & West Midlands Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)*

Does Southern Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)*

(Motion 229 was carried)

(Motion 230 was carried)

THE PRESIDENT: While our colleagues are coming up, I would like to let you know that the Retired Members raised £880. Well done. The Birmingham Region raffle, 516-520, white ticket, prize still not claimed - a digital camera.

MOBILE PHONE MASTS

MOTION 235

This Congress notes the concern amongst our members and also the general public over the conflicting advice about the safety of mobile telephones. Whilst not wishing to ban mobile phones until definitive health advice is available and in order to protect our members and their families Congress instructs the CEC to use all its political connections to bring about the following safety measures.

1. That local authorities release, where appropriate land is available, land for the siting of mobile phone masts to assist operators to site masts away from dwellings, schools and hospitals.
2. That local authorities create an advisory member forum to have a general responsibility and interface with mobile phone operators. To assess the operation of the regulatory regime and to consider technical research and development and health issues concerning safe citing of mobile phone masts.
3. That all telecommunications sites which are granted approval by local authorities, should be 'targeted sites' for planning purposes to ensure that the equipment installed is in accordance with that shown on the approved plans.
4. That independent checks are made by local authorities to confirm that the actual installation of telecommunications equipment conforms to the original specification supplied.

5. That independent audits are undertaken of emissions and publicised to ensure public confidence that base stations do not exceed the current ICNIRP or any future more comprehensive guidelines. This work to be scrutinised by a fully qualified technician employed by or contracted to local authorities.
6. That local authorities produces information booklets about mobile phone technologies, health concerns, citing, design and appearance in their areas. This to be made widely available through all council's normal outlets and websites.
7. That a fully comprehensive and up to date register of mobile phone masts and base stations in local authority areas is maintained and made available to the public, including a readily accessible electronic format and that its availability is publicised.
8. That ward members are consistently informed about the receipt of applications for mobile phone masts for their wards and adjacent areas of neighbouring wards and are provided with an up to date picture of all mobile telecommunication apparatus known to be in the ward on an annual basis.
9. Local authorities directly lobby local members of parliament and through the Local Government Association, the government be lobbied to give local authorities in England and Wales a stronger role in being able to regulate the installation of telecommunications equipment.
10. That as in Scotland and Northern Ireland the government is specifically asked that full planning permission be required for installations of all telecommunications equipment.

W50 WELLINGTON BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

BRO. J. STOKES (Birmingham & West Midlands): Congress, across the country in both rural and urban areas telecommunications industries are erecting mobile phone masts. It is now a regular sight to see posters, banners, and window stickers, objecting to the erection of these masts near schools, factories, homes, and sites of natural beauty. Concerns amongst our members exist due to the conflicting information and advice on the safety and health implications of these mobile phone masts. It is no surprise that the issue is high on the agenda of our members who are unfortunate enough to reside in areas where the masts are situated.

This motion is requesting that local authorities are given accountability concerning health, safety, and welfare of the residents in these areas. We request that the GMB use its political influence in its connections to ensure the siting of these masts is done with health and safety as the prime driver and that there is full and open discussion, with information given to the residents in these areas. Every one of you in the room today is living within 15 miles of a mobile phone mast. I doubt that many of you can tell me (a) where they are and (b) the health implications for yourself and your families.

Congress, I urge you to support this motion and help secure the future health of this nation. Thank you.

SIS. S. BIRCH (Birmingham & West Midlands): It seems that no-one can agree whether mobile phone masts pose a genuine health risk to people who live or work close to them. The so-called experts disagree amongst themselves and the science has become a matter of interpretation. The guidelines produced in 1993 by the National Radiation Protection Board provide us with so-called safe levels. However, these are significantly higher than in other countries and the research has led them to reduce exposure levels.

As well as existing 40,000 GSM pylons already deployed, 3G providers say they require at least another 10,000 new masts within the UK. We find mobile operators going to extraordinary lengths to conceal masts that form networks. They are being disguised as chimneys, clocks, drainpipes, telephone poles, and even weathervanes. These are the lengths they will go to, to attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the general public.

I work in education and see many campaigns objecting to masts being sited near schools or in school grounds. Education authorities have succumbed to pressure to reject the bribes, in some cases many thousands of pounds, from this multimillion pound industry and keeping masts away from schools but, Congress, children spend significantly more time at home than at school, therefore it follows that the same prudence should apply in residential areas. We must ensure the health and safety, and welfare, of our children as well as the general public and actively campaign to put pressure on government to ensure health and safety is not just part of the equation but the prime driver of the siting of these masts. I ask you to support this motion. I second this motion.

LONDON MARATHON – SOUTH COAST HALF-MARATHON – PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES SPONSORSHIP

MOTION 238

Congress calls for an inquiry as to how much

charitable money goes towards professional runners' expenses and to the number of runners refused entry should they be unable to meet the Organisers stated figures of sponsorship.

GUILDFORD G38 BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. A. HUTCHINGS (Southern): On Sunday I said I was a new boy and that it was my first time at Congress. Could I just say thank you for the best organised conference I have seen. I have been to a lot of conferences in my previous unions but this has been the best organised conference. Thank you very much.

I do not stand here as a marathon runner.

THE PRESIDENT: I will be later!

BRO. A. HUTCHINGS: Personally, I cannot even run 26 yards with my various health problems but I have every admiration for people that want to run more than 26 miles. Marathon running over the years has raised awareness of running to a very high degree through its exposure in the media. The London Marathon is now very big business with many top runners being paid megabucks to appear. They call it appearance money. Each year more and more runners wish to appear in this event. The London event has come a long way since its original race.

In 1979, former Olympic champion, Chris Brasher, said in a newspaper article just after running the New York Marathon, "To believe this story, you must believe that the human race can be one joyous family, working together, laughing together, achieving the impossible. Last Sunday, in one of the most trouble-stricken cities in the world, 11,532 men and women from 40 countries in the world, assisted by over a million black, white and yellow people, laughed and cheered and suffered during the greatest folk festival the world has seen." He concluded in the article, "I wonder whether London could stage such a festival?" In the next few months Brasher made extensive enquiries and studies into running such an event and he secured £50,000 sponsorship for Gillette to run an event. His dream was realised with the first event being run on March 29th 1981 with 7,747 brave runners running and 6,255 crossing the finishing line on Constitution Hill, London; not many big runners at that time, just ordinary runners.

In the past 25 years the event has raised millions of pounds for charity. The problem now is that even stricter guidelines are in place to say you have to raise so much. This is going away from the humble beginnings in 1981. Elite runners are being paid big money to run by the sponsors, money that could be channelled into all the good causes that the runners run over 26 miles for. Do we really need these elite

runners and should not the ordinary runner be allowed to enter and be considered on ability to run and raise money but not under such strict guidelines? I move the motion.

(Motion 238 was formally seconded)

ABORTIONS OF UNDER-16 YEAR OLDS

MOTION 232

Congress does not agree with the recent decision in the High Court in January 2006. It therefore instructs the CEC to lobby parliament with the view to changing the law.

This change would allow parents of under sixteen year old children access to their medical history concerning decisions of impending abortions.

R35 ROCESTER JCB BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Lost)

BRO. G. RICHARDSON (Birmingham & West Midlands): First, I would just like to put the title correct and qualify it. It should read: "Obtaining medical history of children about to have an abortion."

Congress does not agree with the recent January 2006 decision in the High Court against Sue Axon, a lone campaigner for the parental right to know if their daughter has sought advice about abortion. I seek approval to instruct the CEC to lobby parliament against this decision with a view to changing the law. This change will allow parents of under-16 year old girls access to their medical records concerning impending abortions. I know it is a very emotive subject. I know how upsetting it is to lots and lots of us but it is one I cannot hide away because of what happened to my family recently.

My wife phoned me at work and said I had to come home immediately. She was very upset. I got home. She told me the school nurse had phoned her for an off the record chat to tell us our son and his girlfriend were going to the clinic for an abortion the next day. By doing so she risked her job but we had been friends since we were teenagers and she could not leave us in the dark about something so important.

You can imagine my talk with our son was not so delicate, followed by a load of tears and hugs. I drove the two 14-year olds to the hospital the next morning. My wife and I both spoke to her parents, all of us distraught. She could not travel with them and asked me to save hitchhiking to hospital as they had done the week before for counselling. We thought they were going shopping. After a chat she decided she was going to let her parents drive her home from the hospital. They sat in the back of the car staring

out of opposite windows and I said, “Whatever you have done together as a long-term outcome your relationship may or may not last but you will always have this experience with you, so you have to show some togetherness.” They held hands.

At the clinic after booking in she was offered a cup of tea and a sandwich of her choice after the operation. Because I had to look after my younger son and he seemed to be upsetting the other women there, we were asked to wait outside. At night, after I returned back from playing rugby, my son was playing tick with his friends.

Congress, I am not proud and I am definitely not anti-abortion; that is a decision entirely for the individual and the events at the time. Congress, I definitely do not want to dictate and dilute the rights of young people who we have been fighting for, for a long time. What I am looking for is a fundamental right for our members to help the families in time of need. Surely we can see the basic ethics of our organisation is about being able to protect our children, not drive these young girls to backstreet abortionists; that disgusting 1950s/1960s, even 1970s, statistic could never return because the NHS now grants abortion on demand. The very fear factor of parents finding out must be outweighed by family bonds to help and support young girls in times of stress.

I know the CEC is vigorously opposing this but sometimes you have to fight the tide. It is the only way our forebears have done it in the past; ask Steve Forbes over there. Sometimes you have to speak out for what you believe yourself. It is hurtful to say it and bare yourself in front of everyone, but you need to follow your own judgement, not what somebody dictates to you. Brothers and sisters, without medical records and information we leave our children stranded without their family’s help, guidance, and love. Our own rule book promotes to improve the social, moral, and intellectual needs of our families.

To finish off, we spoke on the opening day about the family being the most important element of our lives and family support our bedrock. Let us not be hypocritical. I move.

(Motion 232 was formally seconded)

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate?

BRO. V. WEST (London): I am opposing Motion 232. It is really difficult to get up here after that speech and say what I am going to say. Obviously, in some circumstances – and what we have heard is of a close and loving family - a lot of young girls who seek abortions under the age of 16 do so because they do not have that close and loving family, they do not have that relationship with their parents where they

can go to them and seek support.

I think it is very difficult in these circumstances to strike the right path and the right note but I would ask Congress to oppose this motion. I do fundamentally believe that you are taking away the rights of young women in difficult and very often harrowing circumstances and by asking for a change in the law you are going to make those difficult and harrowing circumstances more difficult in lots of cases, especially for those where relationships and parental bonds have broken down. Please oppose.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vaughan. Debbie?

THE DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: The CEC is opposed to Motion 232 for the following reasons. This is indeed a difficult and emotive subject where the natural instincts of many parents can come into conflict with those who champion the rights of children. The High Court ruled that as long as the girl is sufficiently mature and competent to make decisions over sexual matters, her right to confidentiality overrides her parents’ right to know. This is because children also have the right to respect for private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

There are many practical reasons why this position should be upheld, not least because removing confidentiality may discourage girls from seeking medical help, may force them into decisions they later regret, and may lead them to seek the assistance of backstreet abortionists. Department of Health guidance states that when young people seek advice and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases or about contraception, or abortion, medical professionals should always try to persuade them to talk to their parents.

Research by Marie Stopes International UK around the time of this case showed that most under-16 year olds seeking termination had confided in one or both parents. They expressed concern that if the law was changed this would affect the minority of girls who for whatever reason felt unable to confide in a parent.

GMB policy in general is to support women’s right to choose while respecting that this is always a matter for the individual’s conscience. We also have a very strong commitment to rights and respect for young people. Congress, for these reasons we recommend you oppose Motion 232. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Debbie. Does the mover wish the right to reply? No? Thank you. Congress, I put Motions 235 and 238 to the vote; the CEC is supporting.

(Motion 235 was carried)

(Motion 238 was carried)

THE PRESIDENT: I now ask Congress to vote on 232. The CEC is asking you to oppose.

(Motion 232 was lost)

THE PRESIDENT: I just need to let Midland and East Coast know - Gail, your horse has fallen at the post; Bill Heley, yours also; and your regional secretary's, Andy Worth.

BRO. B. HELEY: I hope the National Secretary has not won it.

THE PRESIDENT: He said 9 o'clock tonight, so keep going.

BRO. B. HELEY: We are heading that way!

SOCIAL POLICY: WELFARE & SERVICES

CARE SECTOR FUNDING

MOTION 249

Congress calls on the GMB to mount an active campaign to ensure that Government funding allocated to Local Authorities for residential and nursing beds is ring-fenced to ensure it reaches its intended target and is not spent elsewhere.

MIDLAND HEALTHCARE BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

BRO. B. HELEY (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, for me the issue of funding in the care sector is an emotive one. I not only work in the sector but like hundreds of thousands of others I have a relative who, unfortunately, needs residential care, so it is also personal.

With the introduction of national minimum standards many local authorities found it too costly to upgrade and maintain their homes to those standards so there was a wholesale shutdown and offloading to the private sector. We represent thousands of members within the care sector. The carers are doing a brilliant job but are feeling very, very frustrated; they are not able to give the quality of care they feel the residents need. Generally, the only money that care homes receive is a publicly-funded bed placement and, as most people are aware, it is a postcode lottery with no two authorities paying the same rate. It can vary anywhere between £350 to £450 for a residential placement and £350 to £800 for a nursing bed. Care homes are paying up to 50% of income on staffing. They are cutting back on capital investment, cutting all expenses back to a minimum, and are saying they cannot afford to pay more or they will have to consider closing.

Congress, this is moral blackmail. Last year our region made reference to the premature deaths of residents at Holland House, which was in our region, and it closed. Last week colleagues may have seen the sad report in the Daily Mirror whereby a home was closed in Hove, Sussex. One resident died within a couple of weeks and another was so upset she committed suicide; what a sad indictment.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a report a couple of years ago and stated that care homes for older people were under-funded by over £1bn a year, which equated to a shortfall of between £75 to £85 per person, per week, for each bed that was below what the council are currently willing to pay. This year the King Fund published a report; no surprise, it says there needs to be a sharp increase in funding.

Because of the under-funding and the shortfall in beds, the NHS is becoming overstretched. It costs between twice and three times as much per day to keep someone in a residential home instead of a bed. The Government is saying they are paying, local authorities are saying they are not. It is the left hand not talking to the right.

Never mind the excuses; this is about adequate care and target funding. For me it is emotive as I see the daily consequences of years of under-funding and the cost involved in maintaining national standards. I see the effect it has on our members, physically, emotionally, and mentally.

Congress, the GMB has thousands of members, both working and retired, including members here, and one day we may need that care so let us do whatever we can, whatever is possible. We have to act now to put right this wrong. I move.

BRO. M. WIDDISON (Midland & East Coast): Seconding Motion 249, and a new grandfather!

THE PRESIDENT: And that was under Labour!!

BRO. M. WIDDISON: Looking around this room, particularly at the worthy brother who has just moved this motion, I think we had better get our skates on and sort out some proper funding before some of us become retired. We do not want residential or nursing home residents taking us to task for not campaigning on behalf of decent quality care in their remaining years. To be serious, Congress, we need proper funding for the care sector and have it ring-fenced purely to pay for bums on beds and not sidetracked into other budgets like street lighting, lowering kerbs, or other tasks that local government claim assists care in the community.

Just think what a success it would be. It would be a moral victory for the residents and they would be able to receive the care and that extra bit of TLC they deserve. They have worked all their lives and

they are entitled to some dignity and some respect. What a recruitment tool it would be for us with 1.6 million workers in the sector. We could say, "Look what the GMB has done for you and your job." What a goal. If we could recruit half of that, we would be a massive union with approximately 1.5 million members. I second.

RETURN ALL PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

MOTION 250

Congress calls upon the GMB to mount a campaign involving the Labour and Trade Union Movement to return all personal / social care for the elderly to Local Authorities as the present system is failing our elderly and local communities.

GOOLE BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

SIS. E. BLACKMAN (Midland & East Coast): Congress, some years ago the Minister of Health allocated £100m to local authorities to promote independent living. Belatedly the Government have come to recognise what colleagues in the home care service have been saying for many years, that providing practical assistance to elderly persons within their own homes would save money in the long term. Needless to say, our opinions, the opinions of those working at the sharp end, were ignored.

In the early 1980s, local authorities decided to change the criteria for client access in the home care service, which has resulted in people who could have and should have remained, with dignity, within their own homes being forced into residential accommodation because of the lack of domestic assistance and support. It is no coincidence that since the late 1980s the sharp decline in local authority provision has combined at the same time with the phenomenal growth in the numbers of private domiciliary care agencies.

Colleagues, prior to coming to Congress I checked the websites of care agencies. After scrolling through pages and pages I gave up. Yes, colleagues, it is big business now with little or no accountability or continuity of service for clients. Before the 1997 election this Government pledged it would scrap CTC - yes, it did - but its successor, Best Value, was an even worse disaster for both workers and service users. The effect of this ill-begotten pair pales in comparison to their illegitimate offspring, the Comprehensive Spending Review. Suddenly, the buzzword in Social Services Departments is "efficiency" savings, an admirable object but one that a home care worker would dread for how does

one define efficiency in terms of care? Is it time spent with the client? Is it cost? Or is it client satisfaction? I do not have a problem with efficiency but I do have a major problem with the mindset that equates efficiency solely on cost and, believe you me, that is what the Comprehensive Spending Review is all about. I reject their premise that this review will result in premier services. Delegates, so far as I am concerned, that is about as likely as Herod becoming a director of Mothercare.

Finally, Congress, my region has consistently opposed the outsourcing of social care. We believe that this union should mount a major campaign to return all personal and social care to local authorities. We demand a fully accountable locally provided service with highly trained staff; anything less is a betrayal of our elders. Please support.

BRO. V. RABBETTS (Midland & East Coast): Care homes in the private sector are run as a business to make profit. We should not be giving them the care of our vulnerable elderly when they are cutting costs by using an untrained workforce, and not putting in staffing levels needed to keep our elderly safe. "Elderly" is just a word. What we are talking about is our mums, dads, grandparents, and, yes, ourselves in the future. The more socially conscious home owners are closing because to run a home properly you do not make a profit. Yes, the property prices have risen and they are selling them off leaving our vulnerable old people homeless.

In May this year over 3,000 pensioners were debating 11 proposed parliamentary bills, one of which was on residential homes; it was calling for regular unannounced inspections of homes because of the known health and safety risks of under-manning. It was passed unanimously. We need to go back to our social care being run by government where you can be confident that colleagues who are looking after our elderly are trained and that there is sufficient staffing levels to look after our very vulnerable elderly people. I second.

CARE HOMES

MOTION 251

This Congress recognises that the current financial regulations for the elderly who are admitted to care homes is totally unacceptable and urge that the government introduce a policy of free care for the elderly.

162 STOCKPORT BRANCH
Lancashire Region

(Carried)

BRO. A. WALSH (Lancashire): I move Motion 251 – Care Homes. I want to start with a very short story, because I realise the time. My granddad passed away

some time ago now, and he was a proud man and always smartly dressed. He had a barbers' shop and before that he fought in the Second World War where he received a commendation. One day he had a massive stroke which meant that he could no longer look after himself properly. My mother did her best to look after him but, in the end, she had to admit that it was all too much for her, so she reluctantly had him admitted to a care home. My grandfather had a tear in his eye when the news was broken to him but he knew it was for the best. Happily, he really liked it.

The one thing I fail to understand is why he had to use most of his savings that he had worked hard all of his life for just to pay for his care? To tell you the truth, I never will. This is just one short story and there are thousands across the country just like it. A lack of personal care for the elderly is forcing thousands to sell their homes. Since 1995 an estimated 40,000 homes have had to be sold every year to pay for care, yet free care for elderly people has been introduced by the Scottish Parliament. Why should our senior citizens, who have worked all their lives, be stripped of their dignity?

On Tuesday, Tony Blair said, and I quote, "I would like to do more for pensioners". Well, Tony, free care would be one way to achieve that. So in memory of my granddad, Fred Field, and thousands like him, I move.

SIS. L. HOLMES (Lancashire): I second Motion 251. I am going to make no apologies for what I am going to say. Last October my mother-in-law suffered a nervous breakdown. We had telephone calls from the hospital services saying that we had to visit the hospital and address the situation with her. Six months later, after having electric shock treatment, they actually told me that we would have to sell the house and some of her belongings to provide for her care. She was put into a nursing home in Blackburn. We were asked, "Would we like to have a room, which would cost us an extra £20 a week, with an en-suite bathroom?" On the numerous occasions that we visited the home she did not have her own bathroom, but it was a shared bathroom with other patients.

This year, in March, my mother suffered a severe fall. She needed 38 stitches in her face, two broken wrists, a black eye and a broken nose. When we visited the hospital they told me that she was suffering from dementia. The social worker actually told my mother that she had to sell her house to pay for her care.

Before I came to Congress on Sunday, and I apologise for being late, my mother would not let me go because I was leaving her in a place that she did not know and nobody knew her. I have to sell the house to pay for her care, and there will be nothing left until I have to pay for her funeral. This situation is not acceptable. Please support the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, the CEC is supporting Motions 249, 250 and 251.

(Motion 249 was carried)

(Motion 250 was carried)

(Motion 251 was carried)

THE PRESIDENT: I say this to those two speakers and to anyone else who finds themselves in a similar position, I think we would wish your parents and grandparents well.

PENSIONERS FREE BUS TRAVEL

COMPOSITE MOTION 34

(Covering Motions 253 and 254)

253 - Pensioners Free Bus Travel (London Region)

254 - Travel Concessions (Lancashire Region)

Congress welcomes the travel concessions in place for our senior citizens but now calls for free travel to be introduced for all pensioners nationwide and urges all GMB sponsored MP's and the present Labour Government to issue free bus travel passes.

(Carried)

BRO. T. WALL (London): I move Composite 34 – Free Bus Travel for Pensioners.

President and Congress, the London Region fully supports this motion for the provision of bus travel for all pensioners within the United Kingdom. Free travel has been in existence for a number of years in the Greater London area. It was introduced into my county of Essex this year. It is time for the Labour Government to introduce legislation for the whole of the United Kingdom, for all pensioners.

We are all aware that the Old Age Pension has not been index linked, which has significantly affected the income of many pensioners. We must remember that these people have already contributed to the wealth and growth of this country through their tax contributions during their working lives. It is time to pay them back. Free bus travel would be a significant indication that their hard work has been appreciated. Thank you.

SIS. V. YOUNG (Lancashire): I second Composite 34. Colleagues, the mover of this composite made reference to free bus passes for the elderly. We can go further than that with free passes for bus and rail passengers. I acknowledge that at present, and certainly in my own area, pensioners enjoy free

travel. However, there are restrictions. Passes can only be used in zones and the time is restricted between 9.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. We must have these barriers removed and apply free transport for pensioners with no strings attached. Thank you.

FREE TV LICENCES

MOTION 255

Congress calls upon the GMB to campaign for free TV licences for all retired persons aged 65 or over.

The provision of free TV licences to over 65's will save retired people £131.50, which can be put towards their ordinary living costs. It is widely recognised that the general situation with pensions, both private and public have not kept pace with the overall cost of living for pensioners in recent years. The granting of free TV licences would ensure that people are able to enjoy what has become an essential means of communication and information for the retired. It is interesting to note that the national accounts will in future have to show the TV licence fee as a "tax" as not all of the licence fee contributions are given over to the BBC for broadcasting purposes. The increased cost of watching Sky, especially if people want the football and film packages, means an individual has to pay an average of £40.00 per month. This is well beyond the means of many retired people, therefore granting a free licence to retired people of 65 and over, will enable them to watch the BBC, ITV and free to air channels without fear of cost.

D41 MANCHESTER CENTRAL BRANCH
Lancashire Region

(Carried)

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (Lancashire): I move Motion 255, Free TV Licences. The motion itself says it all. This is a way of actually giving some money back to pensioners. Is it not right that we actually give them free TV licences? It is ludicrous that once people reach retirement age they are expected to pay for their TV licences. We all know the heavy cost of Sky TV, etc. So, for many people, this is not a choice. I ask you, therefore, to support Motion 255, giving free TV licences.

President, let me tell you a little story just before the end of Congress. There was a young couple walking down the front quite a few years ago and they had a young baby. They took the baby in to see the gypsy on the front. They gypsy said, "Give me the baby, give me the baby. I give the baby a test". They said, "What is it?", and she said, "Give me the baby". They said, "But what is this test?" She said, "I will

give the baby a bar of gold. If it takes the gold it be very very rich, it be a merchant. I give the baby the Holy book. If it take the Holy book, then it be wise, be good. It may even be a minister. I give the baby a bottle of whisky. If the baby take the whisky, it be one for the women." "Oh, really", says the parents. The next thing is that the gypsy takes the baby, draws the curtain and five minutes later all you hear is "Oh, no; oh, no; oh, no". The parents go dashing in. They draw back the curtains and say, "Gypsy, gypsy, what is it? What is it?" The gypsy said, "I gave the baby the bar of gold, it takes the gold; I give the baby the Holy book, it takes the Holy book; I give the baby the whisky, it takes the whisky". "But what does it mean for our baby?" "It means she is going to be President of the GMB". *(Laughter and applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I will get my own back, Kevin. Don't you worry.

BRO. J. ROBERTS (Lancashire): I second the motion on Free TV Licences for pensioners. President and Congress, how many times have we seen on the television: "We know where you are. The detector van is in your area. If you do not pay your TV licence, you will be fined £1,000." These people have worked all of their lives, they retire and, through no fault of their own, their only pleasure is watching the television, and they have to pay for the privilege. I am one of the dreaded men who used to go round and post that dreaded bill through the letter box, probably just behind the gas bill. When you open it you find that the TV licence has gone up again. "What am I going to miss out on this time? Where am I going to cut the corners?"

I urge you to support this motion and for OAPs to get free TV licences because we are only one of the few countries in this world which has a TV licence. Why they should pay for some of the crap we see, I don't know. I urge you to support this motion.

ZERO ENERGY BILLS FOR THE ELDERLY

MOTION 256

This Congress asks that pensioners be facilitated by Central and Local Government with the means to *super* insulate their homes by whatever means possible, whilst also using renewable energy in the form of photo-voltaic solar panels so that they may generate electricity over and above that which they need so that the surplus can be sold back into the national grid.

This is with the objective of, as far as possible, cancelling energy bills for the elderly in the first instance to later extend this to other areas of

social housing.

NOTTS VOX BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

BRO. V. THOMAS (Midland & East Coast): I move Motion 256 – Zero Energy Bills for the Elderly. Uncertainty about the future level of pensions combined with the adverse effects of rising gas and electricity prices means increased misery for pensioners. Misery would be bad enough, but it is more serious than that. For every degree that the temperature drops below the average winter temperature in this country, 8,000 extra pensioners die in the UK from cold-related illnesses. Think about that figure. Eight thousand extra pensioners die!

Congress, right here and right now, forget everything else that is going on in the Winter Garden. Close your eyes if you have to. Think about your mum, your dad, your gran and your grandfather. I am talking about them. That is if you are lucky enough still to have them.

I am sure we are all aware of the debate and campaign for increasing pension levels. Unfortunately, this campaign is undermined if we do not also focus on the net disposable income of pensions; that is, what is left after all the essential bills are paid. There is little point in increasing pension levels only to see it eaten up in gas and electricity bills which are increasing at an even greater rate than pensions.

I am a welfare rights worker and, as you would expect, I want to see benefit levels set at a higher rate so that claimants and pensioner can have a decent, albeit, basic – very basic – standard of living, notwithstanding winter fuel payments and cold weather payments. Those two payments are not long-term solutions to pensioner poverty. Winter fuel payments are nothing more than government payments to utility companies and the Government should not really feel so pleased with themselves merely because these payments go via pensioners, especially when it goes on increased gas and electricity bills. We have heard a lot about the financial service companies mis-selling pensions and insurance. Well, Congress, utility companies have been mis-selling energy for years, given the amount of energy inefficiency in this country. We have been paying for energy which we have not used, which runs into billions and billions of pounds.

It is not for no reason that the utility companies make more profits in winter. They are in the business of selling units of energy, not in the business of anyone not using energy, no matter how it is generated. Arguing to concentrate on the needs of pensioners with the aim of achieving zero energy bills for pensioners addresses the plight of pensioner poverty and of a balanced energy review with fewer pensioner deaths in winter. Thank you.

BRO. D. HOCKING (Midland & East Coast): I am speaking to Motion 256. President and Congress, this motion is more poignant today than when I first agreed to second it. Why? Because at 10.45 on Tuesday my father-in-law finally succumbed to the chest infection that had resulted in several stays in hospital since mid-winter. The cause of this infection was the damp conditions that he was forced to live under. This guy survived the war as a rear gunner in Lancasters. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal on account of the amount of raids he completed. Who would have thought that he would have fallen victim to the minute spores of a little green mould? Would more investment make a difference? I do not know. Would zero energy bills have saved this life? I would have hoped so. I second.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate?

BRO. J. DOLAN (GMB Scotland): I fully support free travel for pensioners. We have that in Scotland for people aged 60 and over. If we can afford it in Scotland, we can afford it in elsewhere in this island. We need to remember that the people who we are talking about won the war for us. They made this country free. These women and men need our support. Let us support them. Everything should be free from the age of 65 – TV licences, energy bills and travel. They deserve that. *(Applause and cheers)*

THE PRESIDENT: I call Kath Manning to speak on behalf of the CEC.

SIS. K. MANNING (CEC, Food & Leisure): I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. The CEC supports Composite Motion 34 with a qualification, and supports Motion 256. In relation to Composite 34 the motion as it relates to travel concessions is consistent with the current GMB travel policy. Therefore, we ask you to support the motion. However, the qualification is that bus passes are issued locally, not by MPs or the Government.

The CEC would also like Congress to note the commitments in the 2006 Budget which are related to the motion, where every pensioner and disabled person will have free off-peak national bus travel in England from April 2008.

Turning to Motion 256, there already exist a number of Government initiatives, such as the Warm Front and Affordable Warm Schemes to help pensioners and others who are in receipt of benefits to improve the insulation in their homes and to replace old heating systems with more efficient ones. However, at the moment, micro-generation options, such as solar, wind and biomass are not included in these schemes, despite the pressure from the GMB.

We believe it is an issue that deserves our continued support. Therefore, the CEC asks Congress

to support Composite Motion 34 with a qualification, and support Motion 256.

THE PRESIDENT: Does London Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)*

Does Midland & East Coast accept the statement? *(Agreed)* Thank you.

(Composite Motion 34 was carried)

(Motion 255 was carried)

(Motion 256 was carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I have just one other item of business before the closing ceremony, and that is just to say thanks to all of you for making this week momentous by the decisions we have made, but most of all – I know I was thanked by the Southern Region today for running this Congress – let me tell you, the staff from Head Office and the regions who are here this week have done an absolutely marvellous job and for months before it. I am extremely grateful to them for the help they have given me.

This week we have had three very young members. We have little Chloe and Otis, who are Richard Robson's children. You may have seen them running around. They have been in the hall and just left. Also I mention Mark, for whom this was the first time at Congress. I know that Mark has gone home because he spoke to me last night. He is from the Northern Region. When you see him, give him my love. When I see the babies later, I will. Thank you.

I want to say thanks to Mrs. Kenny Sr., who has been sitting in the hall listening to the debates, and Mrs. Kenny Jr. It has been great to have you here this week. Thank you. Thank you all. *(Applause)*

CLOSING PROCEDURE OF CONGRESS

THE PRESIDENT: I now call on Brenda Fraser from London Region to give the Vote of thanks.

VOTE OF THANKS

SIS. B. FRASER (CEC, Clothing & Textile): I move the Vote of Thanks on behalf of the CEC.

President and Congress, it is an honour and a privilege to have been invited to move this Vote of Thanks and I accepted that invitation with much pride.

Colleagues, I first wish to mention our General Secretary, Paul Kenny. Paul, you have been a true friend and a supporter of mine since the Tailor & Garment Workers amalgamated with the GMB in March 1991, the same month and year that you became London Regional Secretary.

I am immensely proud that you are now

established in your rightful position. *(Applause)* That is a sentiment obviously echoed by Congress given the ovations you received on Sunday, Monday and Wednesday. It was particularly moving that your mum, Jean, wife Pat and son Warren were all here to witness that. Your address to Congress on Monday was the most rousing I have heard from any General Secretary. Thank you, Paul.

Our President, Mary Turner, another dear friend of mine, has once again steered and driven Congress as only she can. We have heard kind words to first-time delegates and sharp words for dissenters. We know who's in charge. Don't we just! *(Applause)*

London Region is extremely proud that one of our girls and one of our boys are National President and General Secretary. *(Applause and table thumping)*

Mary was ably assisted by Malcolm Sage. Malcolm has proved that he has learned much from the master and I am sure he enjoyed his increased time in the Chair. Thank you, Malcolm. *(Applause)*

Congress had some distinguished guests, colleagues. The Secretary of State for Wales and Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, addressed us with what appeared to be a new commitment to trade unions. He also stayed behind to meet delegates from the regions. That was positive and gracious and Congress should thank him for that.

Tony Blair was the first Prime Minister to address our Congress since 1966. His comments on Warwick were welcome. But, colleagues, Gordon Brown promised the same at Newcastle last year, so we will have to wait and see. But we should thank Tony for giving us his time and you should thank yourselves for the courtesy you showed him.

No less distinguished, but perhaps altogether more inspiring, were our guests who have suffered or are suffering real injustice in the workplace. Colleagues from Cammell-Laird, Asda and Remploi. Colleagues, you will never be left to fight alone. Thank you for honouring this Congress with your presence. Please, Remploi, next year, can you lose the drum? *(Laughter)*

Billy Bragg enthralled us on Wednesday and proved, again, what a wonderful human being he is.

This morning we were addressed by Gilberth Umana from Costa Rica. He spoke of the struggles to overcome opposition from governments and multi-nationals and thanked us for our continued support and the strong links between us. He also paid tribute to our late colleague, Brian Weller, also a London Region member. Gilberth spoke only in Spanish but, colleagues, trade union solidarity is the same in any language. Colleagues, I thank all of our guests this week.

Congress has, as usual, been a wonderful occasion. We have had wonderful speeches and wonderful characters. I can't name everyone so I will just give you a précis of my observations.

When I arrived in Blackpool and heard that Pam Ross was not a delegate, I wondered how Yorkshire would be able to move all of its motions. No worries. James Stribley has taken over the role of Yorkshire's main speaker like a duck to water. Well done, James. *(Applause and cheers)*

Kevin Flanagan always makes good speeches, but I do not think I have ever heard a singing right of reply. Have you? Jokes as well. He should be on the stage.

Talking about singing, if the Spice Girls ever reform, Monica Smith showed us that he would be a dead cert to get in the line-up. *(Applause)*

London Region was proud to see one of its own receive the Youth Award. I must, however, squash the rumour I heard the other day. Russell Fraser is not my grandson.

Moving on to the merger statement, I do not believe that I have seen such passion and euphoria for years. It was, colleagues, simply magical.

I must, out of loyalty, mention my National Secretary, Phil Davies. It is not often a national secretary gets a standing ovation for his or her report. Phil did, so well done, Phil. *(Applause)*

The CEC only got turned over twice. Some may say that's disappointing but perhaps it is a sign of today's accord between us.

Congress, it is not possible to name all the speakers, but once again the standard of contribution was excellent. It appeared to me that there were more first time delegates than usual. They all did themselves and this Union proud. Well done to you all. *(Applause)*

As you know, colleagues, there are many people, seen and unseen, who work very hard to make Congress work, and others who contribute luxuries to help us through the week. I will attempt to thank them all, but if I forget anyone please accept my apologies.

Firstly, three people who have worked very hard without a word of complaint, Nigel Cleaver, Jo Ross and Zane Hema, the signers. *(Applause)*

Then for that friendly greeting every day and for coping with increased security measures, we must thank Hughie Bruce and his team of stewards, who are Brian Bala, Peter Bailey, David Hills, Stuart Carpendale, Brian Carter, Harry Hamilton, Gordon Toole and Bert Roberts. Colleagues, Bert Roberts also transferred from the Tailor & Garment Workers. At my first ever conference, he was chair of Standing Orders.

We had a new innovation this year, frequent press cuttings and press release. That is thanks to Rosie Conroy and her team, Charlotte and Wendy.

As many of you have commented, this year's stage and backdrop are excellent. It is the work of Neil Harrison, ably assisted by the boys from Clause 4. Colleagues, the President's Chair is the personal property of Terry from Clause 4. Terry assures me

that Mary is the only trade union President he would lend it to. *(Laughter and applause)*

There are two people who somehow manage what appears to be an impossible task, the shorthand writers, Phyllis Hilder and Michael Thear. *(Applause)*

Colleagues, some people did not want to be mentioned by name, but they do deserve a big thank you. They are the Head Office staff who work tirelessly behind the scenes and the regional secretaries' PAs. *(Applause)*

I would also like to mention the many visitors to Congress. Most of them are ordinary members who give up their spare time to support us. *(Applause)*

I mentioned some luxury items. The President's Night, and what a good time that was, was sponsored by Rowley Ashworth and Rollinson's, solicitors. The life-saving free tea and coffee was provided by Liverpool Victoria. Thanks also go to GMB Scotland for the whisky and Nestle for the chocolates. *(Applause)* Thanks go, too, to the exhibitors. We seem to get more and more every year. Thank you very much for your support and the freebies. *(Applause)*

Colleagues, over *here* are three people who have waited all week for something to do, who are our General Member Auditors, Les White, David Boyle and Ed Hamilton. Thank you for your patience. *(Applause)*

Colleagues, there were no card votes this week. Perhaps there should have been one, and London Region has booked an appointment at Specsavers for the President. *(Laughter and Applause)* Colleagues, please thank the tellers, anyway. *(Applause)*

Congress, the biggest thank of all is due to all of you. President, last year's Congress in Newcastle saw the GMB rise like a Phoenix from the ashes of mismanagement and disrepute. This year's Congress has seen the GMB re-established as this year's most principled, most fearless and most independent trade union. *(Applause and cheers)*

Every delegate in this hall can congratulate themselves on that achievement. Well done all of you.

President, I proudly move my Vote of Thanks. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Brenda. I now call on the General Secretary, Paul Kenny.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: I think there were times we were not entirely certain that we were going to get here, GMB in Blackpool, sunny Blackpool. In fact, I go back. Remember what I said about what was in the General Secretary's Report, opening page, "Welcome to sunny Blackpool," I said. That was written three months ago and you still don't believe it? You follow the dotted line!

You knew we were here, you knew we were in Blackpool, the museums and the libraries, and the

bookstalls that you obviously frequented in the evenings, they all knew you were here, obviously. *(Laughter)* Maybe even a pub or two knew you were here!

Unlike past years maybe, others knew you were here as well. Our members and workers at Asda Wal-Mart, Remploy, the nuclear industry, public services, and manufacturing – yes, manufacturing. Someone standing up for manufacturing, Barry Montgomery, asked a question of Tony Blair and it was welcomed by tens of thousands of people in an industry fighting for its life. They knew you were in Blackpool.

We have had some great speakers. We have mapped out our future. We have new sections to get up and running. We have a new “organising at work” strategy. We are a growing independent union.

We had some fantastic visits. We had a groundbreaking question and answer session with the Prime Minister. As Brenda said, Secretary of State Peter Hain not only did the session but then saw delegates from each delegation behind the stage here to deal with questions of interest to them. That is very important, making senior politicians accountable to our members.

We saw Gloria Mills; not only do we get Prime Ministers, we have presidents as well. We had Gloria Mills, President of the TUC. With Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, we had that fantastic equality question time, again perhaps a break with tradition but a break I think most people thought we did well to do. Real time to equality issues, not a tag-on, not something on the end of the agenda, but something we can be proud of, we put real time into the equality debate. That is something you can bet your bottom dollar we are going to be doing as we roll on. *(Applause)*

Billy Bragg, as Brenda said, it was fantastic to see him. Serious, serious talk: fighting fascism. Billy, I think, will go on to be an ambassador for the GMB. Interesting, wasn't it, how these things touch you, that Billy's great grandfather was one of those who actually founded our union with Will Thorne at Beckton Gasworks. Isn't that amazing! There he is all these years later and our paths come back again. I know from speaking to him last night that he considered being here and talking to you, and the reception you gave him, to be one of the highlights of his entire life. He wanted me to say today that he thanks you sincerely from the bottom of his heart for giving him the opportunity to talk to real live trade unionists. We thank him very much. *(Applause)*

Gilberth, he was great when he stood up and said, “Excuse me, but I don't speak English.” Fabulous, that. I do not know where he got that line from. When we looked at that one of the things that we thought about was, and I am sure you do the same, you get international speakers who have interpreters and they do a little bit and then they stop, and then it is interpreted. They do a little bit more and it is

interpreted. Of course, that is not how we speak. You want the passion. When we were looking at this we said, “Look, why don't we just let this guy make a speech? He's a trade unionist. He's passionate. He's from the other side of the world, in Latin America. Let him go. Don't stop him. We can give the delegates his speech. What's the secret? We can scroll it.”

I think we learnt a valuable lesson there about trying something different. I think the passion came through. You did not have to speak Spanish to understand what he was saying. I thought it was a fantastic contribution. He has asked us to send a delegation and I think the view of this Congress will be that we should. I think we should send a small delegation over to Nicaragua and Costa Rica to see our comrades over there, and do that later in the year. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I have a little word for someone who has not actually had any great recognition this week, but I am going to do it here, embarrass the life out of him, that is, Allan Garley, Regional Secretary of the South Western Region. Allan led our charge and our demand, and our push, on the Union Modernisation Fund which gained the union £400,000 in cash and in kind; we have to put some kind in. That is the drive behind our diversity and equality projects over the next 12 months. I think there needs to be some serious recognition from the union for putting that together and driving it through. We actually had on the basis of that work the biggest single award under the Union Modernisation Fund of any union. Thank you, Allan, on behalf of the union. *(Applause)*

Now I want to thank the staff. Where are they? I know they are hiding here somewhere. Come on. You come down here. Come along. You are not shy getting on the dance floor! You just wave when I call your name: Ida, Helen, Wendy, Barbara, Steve, Charlotte, Marilene, Kevin, Emma, Eamon, Robert Badlan. *(Applause)* There are a couple of people hiding from the NAU, Kevin Sweeney and John McCargo who helped to put all the technical stuff together at the back. Well done, mate. *(Applause)*

Let me tell you, it just don't happen without all the hours, the commitment, and the passion that these people put in. They do so much for this union. They keep it together, they keep it going day in, day out. At Congress what looks fantastically wonderful and slick only happens because of the hard work, dedication, and long hours of drinking and dancing that these people do! From me and from Congress, thank you very much. *(Applause)* Last year they said, “You won't make us stand there if you pull us out, will you?”

Robert Badlan did a lot of the organising to get almost £60,000 one way or another out of various kind people for stalls, sponsored chocolates, tea and coffee, obviously for the benefit of the delegates and financially useful for the union. Thank you, Robert.

(Applause)

I want to mention Rose Conroy and, quite right, Brenda picked her out; a fantastic job done for us on communications, a brilliant job. *(Applause)*

Also, Stevie Pryle. Stevie comes to me, and those who know Stevie Pryle know that he comes to you sometimes with one eye open and one eye shut, like *that*, but he has a fantastic passion for the union. I tell you, I do not know how many hours a day he puts in but he has worked for us for the last 12 months and he has not taken a penny piece from this union. He has worked solidly for 12 months. You tell me about dedication, commitment, and passion. That is a real GMB trade unionist. *(Applause)*

Then, all the regional staff and officers who make sure the delegates are all properly funded, they are bought drinks, they are looked after, occasionally a speech is written, for the help and back-up, thank you.

I want to mention Phil McEvoy from the Pensions Department, who did not get a mention the other day. Phil has recently joined us. He has gone back now but he is a really great addition to the pensions set-up in the union.

I now come to the platform and I want to start with Debbie. Debbie is a fantastic Deputy General Secretary. The work she does in terms of the Labour Party, bringing the union's credibility, is fantastic. The imagery and the passion is great. The ideas are fantastic. I have had the privilege of working closely with Debbie now over the last year to 15 months and I have to tell you it is an absolute pleasure. Many of the ideas and many of the inspirations for driving the union forward are coming from a joint arrangement of with and Debbie putting things on the table, thinking things through, making challenges for ourselves. I want to pay tribute to Debbie. I think she is a fantastic person to work with in terms of a national union. Thank you very much, Debbie. *(Applause)*

Malcolm Sage, what can you say? You have seen the confidence with which he operates. I think he is a fantastic chair of all sorts of meetings. I think he is an incredibly nice person. He is a good bloke. The Midlands & East Coast Region is rightly proud of him, and so are we. Thank you, Malcolm. *(Applause)*

Mary: there is not much to say that has not been said about Mary, a great president, very humane. I almost said "human". *(Laughter)* I could not make that mistake! She is a fantastic person; warm. You would hardly believe that when she gets up on that stage and you see her there looking great each morning and she has had not more than about 20 minutes in bed the night before; it is unbelievable. I wish I looked as good as that.

THE PRESIDENT: More than my reputation with 20 minutes

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: The other person on the platform with us, Dolores O'Donoghue. Dolores has worked for the union for a number of years, more years probably than she wants to recount, and was part of the backroom team and so on, but this year the job that Phil used to do for us, I went to Dolores in the way that I do things and just said, "Oh, I've got something I need you to do for Congress this year." "Yes," she says. I said, "You'll be on the platform running the show." From that point on she has had to put the agenda together, work out the timetables, get the speech notes, keep an eye on everything, and I have to say from where I sit I think she looks like she has been doing it for years. It has been a fantastic performance, Dolores. Thank you very much indeed. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Dolores.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: I want to thank the Liverpool, North Wales, and Irish Region. I have a little story. I was up there the other week in the Liverpool Region, and my wife Pat bought me a tiepin, not as dapper as Harry Donaldson's but bought me a tiepin for Christmas, and I lost it. Those of you who know when your partner gives you a present and you lose it ... So, Liverpool Region kindly searched the office. I think they even found the taxi that took me to the airport because I was then going on from Liverpool to Belfast to meet the staff and officers in Belfast. It did not turn up. Then just the other day very quietly the region came to me, Charlie Leonard and Doug Henry, and gave me this beautiful tiepin. It just says, "Blackpool 2006". It is typical really of the people in the GMB. No fuss, no nothing: "Just a present, Paul. You lost something in Liverpool and we want to give you this in response." Can I just say, if you find my wallet while you are looking round there I'll be greatly appreciative! *(Laughter)* Thank you very much Liverpool delegation, I really appreciate it. *(Applause)*

We are almost there. My wife and my mum: my mum was born on 1st May, a May Day girl. Before some website or other makes some sort of remark, can I just say my wife, Pat, who works for the union, took a week's holiday to be here at Congress and my mum paid for her own room. So before anybody ever gets to any silly conclusions, those of you who know, know.

The biggest thanks, however, is exactly as Brenda said, it is to you, for your care, your motivation, your passion about fighting injustice, it is there, you can feel it; for your time, the time you give voluntarily for the union, for your members, and for the people in the workplace. You are decent, good, people. I will not allow employers, politicians, or anybody else, to attack you. You are good, decent, people. It is about time the forces in this country understood that trade unions do good. They bring social change that mostly politicians are frightened to call for. They

challenge inequality that sometimes politicians fail to respond to. We do not shirk, in the past or the future, from challenging inequality. That is the mantle you carry. I am incredibly proud to be General Secretary and Treasurer of a union that contains people like you. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

After the merger debate, actually, there was a little bit of toing and froing and the journalists asked me, "Paul, where do you think the GMB will be this time next year?" I said, "That's simple, we'll be in Brighton - *(Laughter)* - and we will be bigger and we will be stronger." Again as Brenda said, I am not going to show you my speech any more. At Newcastle we healed ourselves, if the truth is known, we unified and we came away with a unity of purpose, in fact getting back to what we are really about. That is what we said at Newcastle, "Let's celebrate what we do."

Here at Blackpool we have direction and we have confidence, and we have talked not just to ourselves as too many times in the past we have done but we talked to the country. I will tell you something else, on many issues we have talked for the country.

I want to come to a card, it is a simple card, a "thank you" card, which a branch secretary in the Southern Region, Terry Trim, received from a member but it could have been almost any one of you. It says: "Hello, Terry. I know 'thank you' is just a word. Terry, thank you for all your hard work, the work you have done for me, for never giving up, always willing to listen, nothing was too much trouble. You are a very kind person in every way, for never turning your back and looking the other way, and most of all for being such a good friend when I needed one. PS Sorry for going on." You go on as much as you like. That sort of commitment, that sort of thank you, which does not come as often as it should, could apply to every one of you in this hall today. So, from the members to you, thank you. *(Applause)*

We come to the end of our Congress. This is the GMB. We invite working people wherever they are to join us. We will fight for you. To those who would push our members around, or try to push our union around, let them have a clear understanding: the GMB now pushes back. Have a great year. *(Standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Paul. Just before we close I would like to thank the staff in the Centre for the work they have done to make this hall clean and tidy after us lot leaving paper by the score for them. Thanks to all the staff here for the hard work and courtesy you have put in this week. Of course, not forgetting, and we do forget them because they are stuck away in a little room up the stairs, and when you are marched up to them you are what's-his-naming yourself before you get there,

"what do they want", can I say thanks to Gerry Ferguson and the Standing Orders team for a job well done; without you we could not run Congress. *(Applause)*

Of course, we have Barry Smith up there, hiding away; he did not come down. Well done. *(Applause)*

Congress, my two little friends have returned, Otis and Chloe are up there. They are two little ones. *That* is our future.

Colleagues, we now come to the closing ceremony, which is in two parts. In a couple of minutes Suzanna Clark will lead us in singing the Red Flag and I hope you will stand up and sing, but first we will see a slide show with some highlights of Congress. The music this year is, quite rightly, "A Great Leap Forward". Thank you.

(Slide show with music)

(Suzanna Clark sang the Red Flag) (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Suzanna. Congress, safe journey home. Hope you all keep well and fit. See you at Brighton, God willing, next year. Thank you.

(Congress closed)