

**GMB ANNUAL CONGRESS & BIENNIAL SECTION CONFERENCES**

held on:

**SUNDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2008 – THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2008**

at:

**THE PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS**

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**SIS. MARY TURNER**  
**(President of the GMB Union)**  
**(In the Chair)**

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**P R O C E E D I N G S**

**DAY THREE**

**(WEDNESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2008)**

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## **THIRD DAY'S PROCEEDINGS**

**WEDNESDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2008**

*Congress assembled at 2 p.m.*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, please come to order. I am sure you are delighted to be back. I welcome delegates from your sectional conferences where there have been some very lively debates and some very interesting speakers. I would like to congratulate the new section Presidents. They are Ronnie Waugh from the Manufacturing Section; Kevin Flanagan from Commercial Services Section, and I was honoured to be re-elected Section President for Public Services. *(Applause)*

I would like to welcome Nigel Gooch from Hard Dowdy, the external auditors, who is sitting with the general member auditors on my left. Welcome Bob Robinson from the National Admin Unit. Welcome both of you.

I would also like to welcome Isabel Higgins as sign language interpreter and thank Zane Hema, who was with us on Sunday and Monday. Welcome.

## **ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND AUDITORS REPORT**

THE PRESIDENT: I will now call Paul Kenny to give you the Annual Accounts and Auditors Report.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Good afternoon. Concerning the Income & Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet, which should be in your packs and I am sure you have read it, Mary, no questions have been given to us in advance regarding the Accounts. I formally move them. If there are any particular questions which delegates think of, we will try our best to answer them, but the strict procedure is that you really need to give us a little bit of time to work out the detailed answers. I am really formally moving the Accounts.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you accept the Annual Accounts and Auditors Report?  
*(Adopted)*

As advised by the SOC, Motions 37, 38 and 43 are out of order, and Motion 40 has been withdrawn.

## **UNION ORGANISATION: Finance & Contributions**

### **BRANCH SECRETARY PAYMENTS MOTION 28**

#### **28. BRANCH SECRETARY PAYMENTS**

Congress, in approximately 1987, supported a resolution that on the quarterly returns it would show Branch Secretary Payments, less allowance as agreed with the Inland Revenue, with a taxable amount payable.

This did happen prior to the introduction of the National Admin Unit in Paisley.

The re-introduction of this would assist Branch Secretary's should they have reason to claim benefits. Without this the Branch Secretary's benefits are calculated on the full amount shown which means they can lose out through no fault of their own.

Therefore Congress calls upon the CEC to re-introduce the previous accounting policy.

EAST DEREHAM BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. J. SMITH (London): I move Motion 28. Congress, in approximately 1987 it was agreed at Congress that we would revert in showing on the end of the quarterly returns the gross branch secretary's payment, less the agreed allowance and then the net allowance. Since the passing of that resolution, that has not happened. I have brought it to Conference again because there could be new branch secretaries who are not aware of the procedures. Congress, there is an agreement with the Inland Revenue, depending on your membership, the amount of the allowance that branch secretaries are allowed within your gross payment.

Delegates, if you are in a position whereby you might be able to claim benefits like Council Tax or any housing benefits, etc., if you do not have those details then your assessments will be based on your gross net payments. You will not be granted that allowance because you have nothing to prove that you are allowed this allowance. Please, Congress, support this resolution. Let us go back to how we had these figures showing and it will help everybody in doing this job. I move.

BRO. A. McLEAN (London): Bro. President and colleagues, Motion 28, Branch Secretary Payments. I am speaking in support of the motion concerning Branch Secretary Payments. The payments made to branch secretaries are made as a reimbursement for their time that is spent on union business. Most secretaries would agree that they took on their roles as they wished to promote and support the union's activities. It must be said that although no financial gain is expected, it is unacceptable that they should incur a financial loss. As demonstrated in the motion, the current means

of showing the allowance that a branch secretary received on the quarterly returns has resulted in this situation for some of our officials. To rectify this disparity, I therefore urge the acceptance of the motion and a move back to the previous accounting policy. Please support.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? *(No response)* The CEC is supporting.

*Motion 28 was carried.*

## **CEC SPECIAL REPORT: CONTRIBUTIONS AND BENEFIT PROPOSALS**

THE PRESIDENT: We now come to the CEC's Special Report on Contributions and Benefit Proposals. I will ask Paul Kenny to move. I will explain how I am going to take the debate on the CEC Special Report. The Report will be moved and seconded on behalf of the CEC. I will invite each Region in turn to put up one speaker. I will ask for any speakers opposed to the Report. The CEC mover will have the right of reply. Then we will move to the vote. Is that understood, Congress? *(Agreed)*

# **Contribution and Benefits**

## **CEC Special Report Congress 2008**

### **GMB Congress 2008**

#### **Contributions and Benefits Proposals**

For the fourth year in a row, GMB's finances have returned a modest operating surplus, in marked contrast to the years of deficits which went before. This has been achieved by careful cost management and a concentration on growth through the GMB@Work programme. In these same years, the CEC has managed to release more resources to improve the Union's organisation. For the first time ever, all members now receive a GMB magazine mailed to their home three times a year. There has been a major expansion in our use of website and laptop technology, directly aimed at organising and improving the service to members. We are starting a planned reinvestment in GMB properties at regional and local level. Funds have been generated to rebuild the value of the Union's pension scheme. A new organising department has been established to support Regions and co-ordinate targeted activity. Our campaign profile has never been higher, both in the international labour movement and among the public at large.

The CEC is proposing a package of measures which are aimed at maintaining this level of financial stability and progress, while updating certain benefits which it feels have fallen behind what Congress would want.

### **Contributions**

Congress some 17 years ago agreed that contributions should rise each year at least in line with inflation. This recognised that the Union each year has to deal with inflationary cost increases before the CEC can even begin to seek ways of funding improvements in the organisation. It also means that these improvement funds have to be found either from making savings in general expenditure or from membership growth. The bulk of the Union's expenditure is on employment costs, but we are also subject to other cost pressures, such as fuel, power and rates, which are rising at a rate higher than general inflation.

The CEC is therefore proposing an increase of 10p per week on the Grade 1 rate, exactly in line with the rise in the retail price index in March 2008. Grade 2 and any promotional rates would also go up by 10p per week, again to reflect the increase in the Union's underlying costs. The new weekly rates would become £2.50 for Grade 1 and £1.38 for Grade 2.

Some Unions raise subscription income from members on the basis of salary-related bands. This could reduce the amount payable by lower-paid members, although any reductions would have to be funded by higher contributions from the better-paid. The CEC has initiated a review into the practicality and desirability of introducing such a system, and we shall bring a report to Congress 2009.

### **Loss of earnings**

The GMB depends on the commitment and skill of its activists. Many colleagues up and down the country give up a lot because of their work for and belief in the GMB. Those who lose pay to carry out tasks for the Union should be compensated, and it is clear that the present level of loss of earnings is inadequate. The CEC is proposing a 22% increase in the loss of earnings payment, taking it to £55.00 per day, to be paid pro rata for part of a day.

### **Mileage Allowance**

The CEC review of mileage allowance has allowed Regions to examine how much mileage activists are doing, and in many cases, to reorganise priorities to reduce mileage travelled and increase the use of public transport, which is almost always cheaper. This has been good for the health and safety of activists and for the environment. The CEC does, however, recognise that motoring costs have risen and proposes that the mileage rate be increased to 30p per mile, an increase of 20%.

## **Benefits**

Many colleagues would argue that the Union is no longer the benefits-based organisation it once was, and that the existence of cash benefits has only a minor role in strengthening the organisation. The value of Funeral benefit has fallen back in real terms over the years, and to restore it to match the actual costs of funerals could not be afforded by the Union. However, there has been over the years a consistency in the number of claims from the relatives of deceased members, and it is a benefit particularly valued by long service and retired members, as measured by its regular appearance on rule-change Congress agendas. The CEC proposes to simplify the benefit and to increase it by 92%. All members who die will now be eligible for funeral benefit of £250, if they have completed eight years' membership of the GMB.

The CEC believes that this package guards against the Union's income falling behind the rate of increase of essential costs, provides the funds to support the continued growth in GMB membership and targets increases in benefits and expenses where they are most justified.

The following rule changes are recommended to give effect to the proposals:

**GMB CONGRESS 2008  
RULE AMENDMENTS  
PROPOSED BY CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
To be submitted to Congress, Plymouth, June 2008**

### **CONTRIBUTIONS AND BENEFITS**

#### **Rule 47 Clause 1,**

**Line 3: Delete “£2.40”, insert “£2.50”**

**Line 6: Delete “£1.28”, insert “£1.38”**

#### **Clause will now read:**

1 Upon entering as members of the Union, members shall pay a contribution in accordance with this rule.

Members of the Union shall pay £2.50 per week, and be termed Grade 1 members **UNLESS** they are part-time members employed for 20 hours or less, or juveniles under 18 years, or recruited as unemployed and not subsequently employed, when they shall pay £1.38 per week and be termed Grade 2 members **PROVIDED that** any Grade 2 member may elect to pay the contribution rate for, and be termed a Grade 1 member.

The above Grades are for the sole purpose of determining contributions to be paid and benefits which may be received and for no other purpose.

**Rule 47 Clause 3,**

**Line 2: Delete “£2.40”, insert “£2.50”**

**Line 3: Delete “£1.28”, insert “£1.38”**

**Clause will now read:**

3 Branch Committees shall have power to fix the amount to be paid by lapsed members as re-entrance fees. The amount to be not less than £2.50 and not more than £10.00 for Grade 1 members, and not less than £1.38 and not more than £5.50 for Grade 2 members, except in particular circumstances, when the amount may be increased, subject to the approval of the Regional Committee.

**Rule 49a**

**Clause 4(b)**

**Line 1: delete “The retired life member’s Grade shall be his/her Grade at the day immediately prior to the date of payment of the lump sum under this rule.”**

**Clause 4 becomes**

4. A retired life member shall not be eligible for any benefits of the Union save the following:

(a) Legal Assistance under Rule 27, provided that a member is of state retirement age and has been a member of the Union for 10 years and is a fully paid up life member then he/she shall not be required to pay any contributions while the Union is pursuing a legal claim on their behalf.

(b) Funeral Benefit under Rule 56.

**Rule 50**

**Clause 1**

**Line 3, after “Funeral Benefit” insert “and”**

**Line 4: delete “, and Gratuity payment”**

**Line 7: delete “Funeral Benefit,”**

**Insert: “and”**

**Line 8: delete “and Gratuity payment”**

**Line 10, after “contributions.” Insert: “Funeral benefit is not payable to members with less than eight years’ continuous membership.”**

**Clause becomes:**

1 A member shall be entitled to any benefits (except Disablement Grant, Funeral Benefit and Fatal Accident (occupational or non-occupational) with regard to which see Rules 55, 56, 59 and 61 respectively) who is a Grade 1 or Grade 2 member and who at the time of having cause to claim is a full financial member. Disablement Grant and Fatal Accident (occupational or non-occupational) will not be payable until after 12 months' continuous membership and the payment of 53 consecutive full weekly contributions. Funeral benefit is not payable to members with less than eight years' continuous membership. Entitlement to any benefit is subject to compliance with the conditions set forth in this rule, and the appropriate rules relating to those benefits, and no benefit of any description will be paid where more than six weeks' contributions are owing at the date of having cause to claim.

## **Rule 56 , Funeral Benefit**

### **Clause 1**

**Line 1: delete “Grade 1 or Grade 2”**

**Lines 1-3: delete “who has paid 53 consecutive Grade 1 or 53 consecutive Grade 2 contributions and who has had 12 months”**

**Insert: “who has had eight years”**

**Line 5: delete “requisite certificate (except in cases of death at sea)”**

**Insert: “death certificate”**

**Line 8: delete “, in accordance with the following scales of benefit”**

**Insert: “a funeral grant of £250.”**

**Lines 10-22: delete table of benefits, beginning “Completed” and ending “58.00”**

**Lines 23-25: delete “New entrants who are 50 years of age and over, or lapsed members rejoining at 50 years of age or over, shall be entitled only to 50 per cent of benefit provided in this clause.”**

**Line 25: renumber “Payment of funeral benefit will not be considered unless a claim is submitted within 12 months from the date of death” as clause 2, and renumber following clauses.**

### **Old clause 2**

**Line 1: after “sea”, insert “or in instances where no death certificate has been issued,”**

**Old clause 4: delete “For revoking a nomination 1p shall be paid.”**

## **Rule becomes**

### **Rule 56 Funeral Benefit**

1 On the death of a full financial member who has had eight years' continuous membership, the Regional Secretary shall, on the production of the death certificate pay the nominee, widow, widower or member of the family of the deceased who shall satisfy the Regional Secretary that s/he has become responsible for funeral expenses, a funeral grant of £250.

2 Payment of funeral benefit will not be considered unless a claim is submitted within 12 months from the date of death.

3 In cases of death at sea, or in instances where no death certificate has been issued, no funeral benefit shall be paid unless satisfactory evidence of such death has been furnished to the Central Executive Council.

4. All arrears to be deducted from the funeral payment.

5. The Branch Secretary shall keep a book in which the members shall nominate in writing the person to whom the funeral allowance shall be paid on their decease. Any member may revoke such nomination by sending notice to that effect, duly signed by him/herself, and it shall be the duty of the Branch Secretary in such case to see the nomination revoked.

6. This benefit shall not be payable when a claim for Fatal Accident Benefit is admitted under Rule 59.

### **Rule 67 Clause 8,**

**Line 11: Delete “£7.20”, insert “£7.50”**

**Line 11: Delete “£3.84”, insert “£4.14”**

**Line 17: Delete “£7.20, £3.84”, insert “£7.50, £4.14”**

### **Clause will now read:**

8 The Central Executive Council shall give effect to the exemption of members to contribute to the Political Fund of the Union by relieving any members who are exempt from the payment of part of any periodical contributions required from the members of the Union towards the expenses of the Union as hereinafter provided and such relief shall be given as far as

possible to all members who are exempt on the occasion of the same periodical payment.

For the purpose of enabling each member of the Union to know as respects any such periodical contribution what portion, if any, of the sum payable by him/her, is a contribution to the Political Fund, it is hereby provided that the annual contribution to the Political Fund of the Union shall, for Grade 1 members be the sum of £7.50, for Grade 2 members the sum of £4.14, and for members paying the reduced rate under Rule 49 the sum of 15p. The contribution to the Political Fund shall be payable in three equal instalments on the first contribution nights of the quarters ending March, September and December.

Any member who is exempt as aforesaid shall be relieved from payment of the said sum of £7.50, £4.14 and 15p respectively. The Central Executive Council shall have power to suspend at any time payment to the Political Fund for any quarter or quarters, in which event, that portion of the member's contribution allocated to political purposes shall be credited to the Central Fund.

**Rule 67A , Clause 5,**

**Line 5: Delete “£7.20”, insert “£7.50”**

**Line 6: Delete “£3.84”, insert “£4.14”**

**Clause will now read:**

5 The Central Executive Council shall give effect to the statutory exemption of Northern Ireland members to contribute to the political fund of the Union by making a separate levy of contributions to that fund from those Northern Ireland members who have provided written consent of their willingness to contribute, namely, for Grade 1 members the sum of £7.50, for Grade 2 members the sum of £4.14, and for members paying the reduced rate under Rule 49 the sum of 15p payable in three equal instalments on the first contribution nights of the quarters ending March, September and December. No moneys of the Union other than the amount raised by such separate levy shall be carried to the political fund.

**An additional minor amendment has been requested by the Northern Ireland Certification Officer.**

**Rule 67a, Clause 8**

**Line 26: delete “is subject to the right of appeal provided for by Section 82(4) of the 1992 Act.”**

**Insert: “may, subject to the right of appeal provided by section 95 of the Act, be enforced in the manner provided for in section 82(4) of the Act.”**

**Clause will now read:**

8 If any Northern Ireland member alleges that he/she is aggrieved by a breach of any of the rules made pursuant to Article 59 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 he/she may complain to the Northern Ireland Certification Officer, 10-12 Gordon Street, Belfast BT1 2LG, under Article 57(2) to (4) of that Order. If, after giving the complainant and a representative of the Union an opportunity to be heard, the Certification Officer considers that a breach has been committed, he/she may make an order for remedying it as he/she thinks just in the circumstances. Under Article 69 of the 1995 Order an appeal against any decision of the Certification Officer may be made to the Court of Appeal on a question of law. Additionally, if any Northern Ireland member alleges that he/she is aggrieved by a breach of the political fund rules made pursuant to Section 82 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 he/she may complain to the GB Certification Officer, Brandon House, 180 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LW. If, after giving the complainant and a representative of the Union an opportunity of being heard, the GB Certification Officer considers that a breach has been committed, he/she may make an order for remedying it as he/she thinks just in the circumstances. Any such order of the GB Certification Officer may, subject to the right of appeal provided by section 95 of the Act, be enforced in the manner provided for in section 82(4) of the Act.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, President. I am speaking on the GMB's finances and moving on behalf of the CEC the Recommendations on Contributions and Benefits, which you should all have a copy of. There have been references this week to the way the Union has recovered to a position of relative financial security and the Accounts which you have passed show the story for the past couple of years. Income has increased year on year as the *GMB@Work* strategy builds and consolidates the membership. This year, for the first time ever, we have broken through the £50 million barrier in annual income. Congress, for years you used to pass motions telling the CEC to live within our means. For many years we never even came close. We were not just spending more than our contribution income but we were making deficits even after we had spent all the investment income and the profits on the sale of shares and properties. I am going to show you a couple of slides to show you what I mean.

The first one shows the operating surplus or deficits going back over a number of years; deficit after deficit after deficit. The union's assets were, literally, pouring away. In the last four years we have growing income and controlling expenditure, living within our means. Not just cutting expenditure and raising contributions to survive, but investing the proceeds of growth to make the union stronger every year. That is a pretty stark example of the changes in the fortunes and philosophy of our union.

The second slide shows the change in the bottom line. The first slide we based on operating to our budgets, not over-spending what we said we were going to do. The second slide is the change in our bottom line earnings, after you bring in that investment income and the sales of surplus assets that we were previously wasting. The pattern of losses and waste has been transformed in recent years into steady surpluses. This means that our union's asset base is being restored.

The third side shows how our members' assets have grown by nearly 70% during the past five years, nailing the lie that you cannot run the union powerfully and as a campaigning organisation with accountability and run it well on behalf of the members.

Colleagues, one of the big challenges we have had to face in the past couple of years is our pension scheme. Like many final salary schemes, it has been in actuarial deficit since the early part of the decade. Three years ago I met the actuaries along with the Senior Management Team, and they reported to us that as the union could not afford to pay more than £10 million a year to the fund, the fund's long-term future was seriously jeopardised. Now, that in coded language is about as strong as an actuary's language can get. I am pleased to be able to stand here today and tell you that not only now has the actuary lifted that warning but that the deficit, as you can see in the accounts which you passed earlier, is now more than covered by the union's own assets. So we have gone, effectively, from being bust and not even being able to cover the pension scheme deficits of our own employees to a position of not just profitability but of being able to give security for our pensioners and our employees and to build a solid base to the union's assets to build for the future. That is my report about the past.

Now about the future. The big news, the big announcement, about the future is....more of the same. We often used to talk about what slogan to use for Congress. What might we do with the union's name or the logo, *Organising for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, *General Secretary in Hot Pants* or whatever it was. *(Laughter)* That conjured up an image. I want to say to you that it is GMB@WORK. That is this Congress, the next Congress and every Congress, including in between Congresses. It is the GMB@WORK. That is what we do. GMB@WORK is the life of the union and it is this week, next week and every week. Membership growth, income growth and investment in growth.

The CEC's proposals today aim to underpin that growth, and I want to touch on that for a moment. Do you see *that* nice little fancy target you see on the screen. A few years ago when we made the changes in the union we set *that* as the target for this union. If we could recruit 90,000 members a year we would ride most storms and we would grow.

We knew we were still going through periods of reduction in employment and membership levels in some sectors of the economy, but we knew that getting to 90,000 was a pretty tall order.

Let me tell you where we are. As of January this year, we had reached just about 82,800 -- almost 83,000 -- members being recruited every year. That is a massive leap from where we were. I know sometimes people say, "Oh, I'm sick of you talking about recruitment". I am afraid that the link to building the union and recruitment is unbreakable. That is what it means. We are 7,000-and-a-bit short of our 90,000 target. When you break that down, that is how far we have to go. Each month each region of the Union has to recruit an additional 66. Each week that is 15 new additional members. Each day -- that is only Monday to Friday. I am giving you Saturday and Sunday off -- that is three additional members across an entire region for the officers, staff, the branch secretaries, the shop stewards, the activists and the people who will be prepared to go out and tell people how great our union is. Three more! Will all of those who think it cannot be done, please leave and join Unite as fast as you can, because that is the size of our challenge. It is to put ourselves into such a position of growth that, effectively, the future of this union -- I would go further and say the future of the trade union Movement -- will be secure. We have come an awful long way and *that* is how close we are. Within the next 12 months, with the work that is being done in the regions, the fantastic work being done in the regions, *that* is how close we are to reaching *that* target. When we get there, I might have a new one, but as long as we can get to *that* one, President, I think we have made a real success. That is our target. It is not unachievable nor unattainable. It is reachable, seeable and do-able. From all the slides I have shown you, the union must live within its means and not make silly spending decisions as opposed to not recruiting, not organising, not properly servicing members and, effectively, just spending money that we do not have.

The Finance Report we have put together is a package of measures which will keep us, we think, within those parameters, recognising the need to bring contribution income in but also to deal with some of the problems that you have identified to us during the past 12 months. So we have put together a package of measures which we hope Congress will understand and welcome.

I have already outlined the way income growth is being used to reinvest in the strength of the union. Expenditure is being tightly controlled and will continue to be so. Like everybody else, we need to allow for costs because of rising costs to the union itself. The first proposal put to you in the Report is for a 10 pence per week across all grades of the union. There will be colleagues who say that a single rate of increase is easier to take for higher paid members than lower paid members. The truth is, of course, that the cost of providing the service is exactly the same for all members, and the cost of subsidising contributions from lower paid workers will have to work through into higher contributions for the rest of the membership. We have looked at this issue at some length on the CEC and we have argued it in the CEC from different perspectives. So that is why we are suggesting and proposing that we re-visit the possibility of a banded system of

contributions and report back to you next year, a system, perhaps, based on the percentage of earnings.

We forecast that with this 10 pence increase, coupled with the benefit changes which will keep us just ahead of the cost of inflation during 2009, after taking account of branch commissions.

I want to take a minute to make a couple of comments about branch costs and the Political Fund. Congress has agreed that the present system of payments to branches will change in 2011. The growth in income has led to a healthy increase in the balances held by many branches. The Certification Officer, indeed, our own rules, oblige the CEC to account for all expenditure of the union, wherever it is spent, and the present branch accounting system can sometimes be too vague. So we will be introducing more specific wording in the reports and re-organising some of the accounting questions and also implementing Motion 28 as just agreed. We will not be adding extra burdens – that is not the intention – to branches, but just trying to make the forms and information more useful and more user-friendly. We will be looking at on-line completion of the reports, which will speed up the release of cash back to branches each quarter.

On the Political Fund, I remind Congress that the Political Fund is our members' money. It is not the property of any political Party. It remains our decision about how it is spent and where it is donated. This week we have made some pretty clear decisions about who is not going to be getting it any more. In the current political climate, with many members feeling disaffected with the Government, and the Tories looking at ways to block the union funding for the Labour Party, the CEC believes that we need to protect our finances against attacks on the Union's Political Fund. The law allows the CEC to vary the amount of the levy between Congresses, and the CEC has asked me to report to you that should an emergency arise, the CEC will act to protect our finances by reducing the levy and, of course, seeking endorsement at the subsequent Congress.

The CEC looked long and hard at cash benefits and members' expenses. Loss of earnings has fallen in real value and, as delegates have pointed out in the past, it is too close to the minimum wage to be respectable. We know it does not fully compensate better paid members, but we can afford, and we are recommending to you, a 22% increase to £55 per day. The cost of fuel is high and that is putting pressure on members who use their cars for GMB work. So we are tackling that situation in two ways. Firstly, and most importantly, regions are encouraging the use of public transport and querying the need for car trips and helping to get good value fares. This is good for the environment and good for members' health and safety.

The second way is to raise the current 25 pence per mile band rate to 30 pence to compensate drivers whose car journeys are essential and unavoidable. On average that will mean the union will pay around £3 a litre to users.

The final element in the package is the Funeral Benefit. Not everybody I meet is convinced that the Funeral Benefit adds a lot to our organising and industrial strength. For a start, you have to die to qualify. But I know that the feeling in many branches is that the union needs to address the level of payment. It is a benefit which is claimed by the relatives of many long-standing members, more than 1,500 last year. Frankly, it is so low it is embarrassing. So we propose to simplify the benefit and virtually double it to £250, payable for all members whatever their grade and to reduce the ten year qualifying period to eight years as a one-off payment. *(Applause)*

The CEC recommends this package as having a proper balance to carry on doing what we know you want us to do, which is to keep the union on the path that we have been pursuing. The union has begun the process of rebuilding its assets and its membership. It is based on simple values, the values we apply in our daily lives – service, effort, discipline and a commitment, frankly, to hard facts. Self-indulgence and fairytale stories to bloat up the egos of general secretaries are not on my agenda. They must be left to others. This is the GMB. We don't kid ourselves any more. I move.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I formally second.

THE PRESIDENT: Conference, I will now go round the regions and ask the regions, if they want to put up a spokesperson, to let that delegate come to the front of the hall.

BRO. C. MURRAY (Birmingham & West Midlands): I have a point of clarification about the mileage allowance. I take it that this does not overturn the motion we passed last year for those who qualify for the 40 pence? Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Are there any other queries or points of information? *(No response)*  
Paul.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Cliff, the situation is absolutely clear. I said that the 25p band will move to 30p. Those who qualify for the 40p will apply to their regions. If they qualify they will get it. It was a special rate introduced to deal with those hardship situations which you moved last year. This is specifically the 25p band which now moves to 30p. It is as simple as that. Is that all right?

BRO. MURRAY: Yes. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: We will now go round the regions. Will all the regions come forward who are putting up a speaker.

BRO. J. WINTER (Northern): I am speaking in support of the CEC Special Report: Contribution & Benefits. Congress, the Northern Region welcomes the increases in benefits for our members, loss of earnings, mileage allowance, etc. We also accept that the rise in contribution rate, although not popular, is very necessary to keep going forward on a sound financial footing. We welcome the review into how membership

rates are determined, whether linked to salary or at a flat rate. Most welcome of all is the increase in Funeral Benefit, which is of help to our loyal members and families at a time of need. The Northern Region supports this report.

BRO. R. LOWDEN (North West & Irish): I am speaking in support of the CEC Special Report on Contributions & Benefits. President, we are mindful of the serious financial difficulties we all faced just a few years ago. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the previous CEC on its prudent management of the union's finances. Of course, the significant improvements in our financial situation could not have been achieved without the support and commitment of our GMB officers and staff, not least the tremendous contribution our lay activists have made and continue to make day by day. I am sure colleagues would agree that the current financial structures are much more transparent and accountable. The financial checks and balances which have been developed during the past few years, the commitment to careful financial management, should enable the new CEC to identify any potential financial risk and to deal with it in a manner which ensures that the assets of this union are never again put at risk.

In terms of the proposed changes in the Report, our delegation had a problem regarding the differential between grade 1 and grade 2 members. However, we accept that this issue can only be addressed at a future Rules Revision Conference.

I was slightly concerned, President, on Sunday night about an awful rumour going about that the General Secretary was reconsidering the increase in Funeral Benefit. I think this was based more on the fact that so many delegates kept falling off their chairs on Sunday. I am glad that was only a rumour. We support.

BRO. S. HATTON (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I speak in support of the CEC's Special Report on Contribution and Benefits. The region supports this report as it recommends increases in benefits which have fallen way behind the times. The substantial increase in Funeral Benefit will now go some way to pay for the funeral of our bereaved brothers and sisters. The increase in loss of earnings and mileage allowance are also welcome. Thank you.

BRO. C. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): I am responding to the Contribution and Benefits proposals. Congress, GMB Scotland welcomes these proposals. Contribution increases are always very difficult and emotive. The reality is that the GMB, in considering the issues which the GMB has to deal with, as we have heard so far during this week, has been applauded both by politicians and the General Secretary of Unison for the campaigning we have done on behalf of working people from private equity to the Agency Workers' Bill.

*GMB@Work* is a step challenge in the direction of this great union and it is now embedded in the way we do things from delivering our new training materials to organising recruitment, servicing and retaining our membership. To maintain this momentum it is clear we must ensure that we need to deal with the inflationary costs by

maintaining any increases in line with inflation. We particularly welcome the increase in Funeral Benefit which now attempts to bring it nearer to a level which is meaningful and recognises the real costs of funerals today. GMB Scotland debated and agonised over this document but also recognised the need for contribution increases combined with these benefit proposals. The GMB is a strong, growing and independent union and we must maintain the current momentum. GMB Scotland welcomes the package of proposals.

BRO. C. JONES (South Western): President and Congress, the South Western Region fully supports the CEC's Special Report: Contributions & Benefits. Colleagues, the GMB through commitment and good management by all, shop stewards, officers and the union's strong management of its financial affairs, has turned our past debt – a massive debt brought about by poor management – into a surplus, albeit a modest surplus, but a surplus nevertheless. Conference, we must never go back to the bad debt days again because the losers will be our members. So if you want to remain financially viable and provide a continued excellent service to our members, then the proposed contributions increase must be supported. The South Western Region supports.

BRO. P. GOODACRE (Southern): I am speaking in support of the Special Report. At our pre-delegates' meeting our debate was focused on the level of increases in contributions. Several of our party had concerns regarding the increases, especially with the way the economy is going, bearing in mind there are other draws on people's incomes. However, we pretty much concluded the meeting. We found that an annual increase of just over £5 for membership of this union represents excellent value for money. The contributions pay for themselves several times over. For a sum just shy of £11 a month – that figure was seen to be getting quite psychologically important – our members can call on an expert organisation to enforce their individual employment rights. Obviously, this costs. Collective organisation equates to better terms and conditions. I recently read that a DTI study had found that salaries in organised workplaces were 15% higher than those in non-organised workplaces. Times are tough, but we always have to justify contribution increases. We can do so but we must keep doing that. Without GMB organisation, times are likely to get tougher for many of us.

BRO. B. HELEY (Midland & East Coast Region): I speak in support of the CEC's Special Report on Contributions and Benefits. Congress, we not only have grown the union but we are also a campaigning union. We need the funds to do that. We want to increase the benefits to our members as well as activists. We need the funds to do that. During the past four years we have been out of the red and into the black. I don't know about you, but I don't want to go back to being millions in the red and have the threat of a forced merger with other unions hanging over my head. I am rather proud to belong to the GMB and I am quite happy to stay that way, thank you very much.

With the extra funds from the increase in rates it is proposed to increase the mileage rates – there has been a lot of controversy over that – and the lost earnings rate when we go and represent members. That is welcome. Also there is to be an increase in the Funeral Grant. Does all of this sound familiar? It should, because Congress after Congress has

been pushing for them. But every time there is a move to increase, there is also massive debate and a cry that it will hurt the low paid and we will lose members. To those delegates, I say “Wake up and smell the coffee. You can’t have it both ways”. You cannot spend a fiver in one hand if you have only got a pound in the other, not unless you have a death wish.

I represent about 8,000 of the lowest paid workers, mainly female, barely above the minimum wage. If it had not been for the strength of the unions we would never have had the increase in the National Minimum Wage. Their wages have doubled since its introduction. Their message to us is, “Thank you. Do more of the same”. With the current rate of inflation, we have two options: increase the subs or decrease benefits. As we are here for our members, I would suggest agreeing to what we are being asked, or perhaps you want to do what shareholders do, which is to say, “Sod the members. I want the profit”. Our region supports.

BRO. D. KEMPSON (Birmingham & West Midlands): I am speaking on the Special Report: Contributions and Benefits. Congress, my region supports the Report but with a number of qualifications. The first qualification is on a lighter note. As you know, our region is landlocked, so it was a concern to us to see on page 6 of this Report, paragraph 3, the words “death at sea”. It confused us a little bit because, as I say, we are landlocked. Our delegates were concerned that Mary and the GMB senior management team had heard that there was a surge of bookings for holiday cruises by GMB members and there may be a run on the new benefit with some of us going overboard.

On the serious side of this paragraph, though, we hope we never have to face claims of that nature. However, if an unfortunate event did happen the GMB would deal with it in a compassionate and sympathetic way.

The second qualification is again on page 6 of the Report, paragraph 5. This item reads: “The branch secretary shall keep a book in which members shall nominate in writing to the person to whom the allowance shall be paid.” Congress, I spent 30 years at regional level and I have not had to deal with one issue regarding Funeral Benefit from our members, which is a credit to the GMB staff for the professional way in which they deal with members’ claims, past and present. We have what is called an Assignment Form, identifying the person and dealing with matters in regard to funeral allowances. The method has stood the test of time. I am sure that other regions have just as good a system as ours. Congress, we all know the problems with ballots and keeping up-to-date records. Left as it is, item 5 of the Report could be a minefield for the union. Our region is saying that if current regional systems work and have stood the test of time, leave well alone. With those qualifications, we support.

BRO. D. PARMENTER (London): I am speaking on behalf of the London Region. President and Congress, the London Region is in support of the CEC’s Special Report on Contributions and Benefits. We recognise that we live in a world of rising costs so, therefore, we have to acknowledge that our operating costs rise as a result. If we want to protect our members and to continue to support them in their workplaces, we,

understandably, have to ask them to contribute towards this end. As a union we need to grow and develop. We believe that increasing benefits and expenses will help us to encourage more people to participate within our trade union movement. We, as a region, would ask for our members' understanding as to why we need to put these increases in place.

As the Report says, Congress agreed 17 years ago that contributions should rise each year at least in line with the Retail Price Index. This rise in contributions is no more than that. Yes, some of our members will be unhappy that we are putting up their subscription again, especially in the current climate of rising fuel and food costs. But if they look at what we are proposing properly, their membership will only cost an extra few pounds a year, which is a very small price for a stronger union. London Region supports.

THE PRESIDENT: Darren, I have a point of order with you. This is Darren's last Congress. He has just taken up a position in London Region as an organiser and we wish him well. Good luck. *(Applause)*

I have taken all the Regions into the debate. Does anyone oppose the Special Report? *(No response)* In that case, I call Paul Kenny.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Mary, I think the debate eminently sums-up the reality of the situation from the perspective of the members. They know that it is not easy at any time to go back and seek contribution increases in many areas where we are battling to get members even inflation-linked wage rises. I think it also means that people understand that the union is a campaigning union, that it is an organising union, and that the 10 pence increase is per week. Even the increases in the Minimum Wage that we have managed to secure by pressure this year on the Government will amount considerably more than that for each hour of work. So it is relative to where we are. None the less, it is not an easy issue. I know that the CEC understands that and it understands the situation facing delegates, regions or branches. Thank you for that maturity.

We will continue to look not just at maintaining our financial management of the organisation in the proper way, as we have tried to do in the past few years, but continue to try and restore this union to what it was when I joined it and when John Cope joined it – he is sitting at the back of the hall – which was very much a benefit-led union. One of the key issues when going out to talk to prospective members was, “We can provide you with benefits as part of joining the organisation. Those benefits are legal benefits, campaigning benefits, protection benefits and other benefits that people find useful in their lives”. Frankly, I think most of us are pleased that the Funeral Benefit has been increased and I will guarantee you that we will continue to look at that to see where we can move it in the years to come, as a really positive issue.

In relation to what Dave Kempson, from the Birmingham & West Midlands Region, said, no, there is no intention to move Birmingham to the coast, if that is what you were thinking. Occasionally the idea flicks through my mind that I might want to put one or

two of the Birmingham delegates on a long cruise, I suppose, you might say. No. All jokes aside. The wording you picked up, Dave, is the old wording in the Rule Book. I give a guarantee to Congress that no claim will ever be turned down. They will all be handled properly, as they have been in the past. They will not be turned down because of that old out-of-date wording. I think this is a prime example for some rules revisions to some of this material coming back next year. So there is an open invitation to knock some of this out, to make it more aligned to the reality of today. I give the assurance that that rule will not be used to knock out any claim. We will continue to pay claims in the sympathetic manner that we have always tried to do.

THE PRESIDENT: Dave, you have a lifebelt. Do you agree with the qualification that Paul has given you?

BRO. KEMPSON: I agree.

THE PRESIDENT: Conference, I will now put the Special Report to the vote.

*The CEC's Special Report: Contributions and Benefit Proposals was carried.*

#### **STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 5**

THE PRESIDENT: I now ask Helen Johnson, the Chair of Standing Orders, to give us Report No. 5.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE: I move Standing Orders Report No. 5. Colleagues, we have one further withdrawn motion, which is Emergency Motion No. 3 concerning Thompsons Solicitors, in the name of North West & Irish Region. This motion has now been withdrawn.

The SOC has also given permission for a video to be shown about the Acorn Children's Hospice which relates to the Congress Gift this year. The SOC is recommending that this video be shown on Thursday. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Does Congress accept Standing Orders Report No. 5?  
(Agreed)

#### **ANNOUNCEMENT**

THE PRESIDENT: I have an announcement for the CEC members. A short CEC meeting will be held here in the hall at the close of Congress today. Papers will be circulated shortly. So if any of our CEC members are missing, would the rest tell them, please.

I now move to Motions 82, London Region; 85, Birmingham & West Midlands; 86, London Region and 87, London Region.

## **REPEAL THE ANTI TRADE UNION LAWS MOTION 82**

### **82. REPEAL THE ANTI TRADE UNION LAWS**

This Congress notes that the UK still has some of the most restrictive anti-union laws in Europe. We resolve to secure the repeal of all anti-trade union laws and to secure the introduction of new laws which enshrine instead:

the rights of workers, without penalisation, to take industrial action (including solidarity action and action to secure recognition) and to be represented by their unions; and the rights of unions to draw up their own constitution free from state and employer interference and to be recognised by employers for collective bargaining where workers so wish it; so fulfilling the UK's international law obligations under UN Covenants, the ILO Conventions, and the Social Charter of the Council of Europe.

To support workers and unions penalised or threatened by the anti-union laws or which adopt a policy of non-compliance with those laws.

To do anything lawful intended to further these objects or ancillary to the furtherance of them.

To further this process we resolve to affiliate to the United Campaign to repeal the anti union laws at a cost of £600.

HOLBORN APEX BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

**BRO. D. FAITH (London):** I move Motion 82 – Repeal The Anti Trade Union Laws. President and Congress, for as long as there have been trade unions, there have been attempts to suppress us, and some of those attempts have been in the form of legislation. Obviously, the bulk of the current laws that we face were introduced under Margaret Thatcher, and key amongst the changes that she introduced during her time in power was the making taking secondary action illegal.

People seem to have short memories. A myth goes around that somehow Margaret Thatcher faced down the unions which were too powerful and all the rest of it and people going on strike over nothing. I think it is worth recalling a couple of examples of why secondary action was made illegal and what was actually prevented at the time. For example, in the early 1980s miners in South Wales went on strike not for themselves, not for anything to do with them, but because nurses were in disputes. Those nurses, who had, obviously, helped the miners when they had been sick or injured, did not feel in all conscience that they could go out on strike for themselves. The miners recognised that and went on strike on their behalf. Likewise, during the Great Miners' Strike of 1984, when print workers who produced the *Sun* newspapers saw that the journalists were going to put a picture of Arthur Scargill on the front page making him look like somebody taking a Nazi salute, they took secondary action and prevented that picture being printed. In fact, the only time I ever bought a copy of the *Sun* was when they had

it, and the front page said something like, “We cannot print the front page as we wanted to because of the action of the printers”. Thatcher was opposed to all of this because she believed there was no such thing as society. The idea that we are responsible for our brothers and sisters elsewhere was completely anathema to her.

Unfortunately, and it is a tragedy, when New Labour came in, they kept the bulk of these laws in place. The arguments were, “This time there is a new justification”; “This is to prevent the unions become too powerful and people will not invest” and “We won’t have the jobs”. Frankly, that argument has been used about the Minimum Wage and proved completely spurious. It is used every time any kind of proposed legislation is put forward. The child labour laws were opposed in the 1830s by people saying that people would lose jobs. Somewhere out in the Far East someone is probably saying, “We want to keep our sweatshops going and keep the kids working in these sweatshops because, otherwise, jobs will be lost”. Many countries around the world have much better labour laws than we have, such as France, Sweden, Germany and the like, who have just as good employment records as we do.

The arguments in defence of our anti union laws are completely spurious. So we continue to fight over this issue. Various initiatives are outlined in the resolution. We have supported the Trade Union Rights and Freedom Bill, and 184 MPs, to their credit – there are some to whom we should give some credit to – supported it. We are now putting our weight, and I am pleased to see it, behind the *United* campaign, and we defend anybody who unjustly suffers under these laws.

As I said when I began my remarks, this issue has been around for a long time. It will not go away and we need to remind our politicians that that is the case. With that, I move.

BRO. M. WALTON (London): I second Motion 82. President and Congress, throughout our history the trade union Movement has had to combat laws which sought to prevent us from conducting our business or pursuing our aims of collective representation. Just in case we forget, we have seen Tory Governments introduce laws designed not only to diminish our rights but which also have the clear intention of trying to destroy the trade union Movement. We have had a Labour Government in power for more than ten years and yet most of these laws are still in existence. Congress, this is a disgrace.

In those ten years we have seen laws introduced which have increased individual rights. This is to be applauded, but we have seen little enthusiasm from a Labour Government in pursuing the repeal of unjust anti trade union laws or the actual enhancement of collective rights.

On a day-to-day basis, these laws seek to prevent us from working to achieve our aims of recruitment, recognition and representation. This motion seeks a small financial commitment from our union which will be used along with finances from partners to fight for the repeal of these out-dated and Draconian laws. I ask that Congress supports this motion.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: We now come to Motion 85.

**‘TRANSFORMING TRIBUNALS’ LEGISLATION  
MOTION 85**

**85. ‘TRANSFORMING TRIBUNALS’ LEGISLATION**

Congress calls upon this Government to block any proposals, which could end the tripartite system of employment tribunals.

We need to defend the tripartite system, ensuring fairness and justice with both employee’s and employers’ interests represented in all types of cases.

T10 - TAMWORTH BRANCH  
*Birmingham & West Midlands Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. M. CLARKE (Birmingham & West Midlands): I move Motion 85. President and Congress, the background to this motion is the setting up of the Tribunal Service last year, and many of the larger tribunals, including Employment, transferred into it. The latest consultation document ‘Transforming Tribunals’ makes a number of suggestions regarding lay members. If implemented it will inevitably mean a fundamental change to the practice of tripartite decision-making. The changes would have the effect of drastically reducing the number of tribunals with three members and see employment judges sitting alone to decide cases.

The need for lay members remains as a vital part of the protection afforded to all, allowing justice to be done, which is essential to the implementation of employment legislation. A legally qualified chairman, together with members representing both sides of industry, was intended to ensure fairness and an informed understanding of the problem in question, to play an impartial view in deciding the case. I am not confident of the views reflected in the consultation document and, like me, members anticipate a down-grading of their role. Congress, defend the tripartite system, ensuring fairness and justice in all types of cases. Thank you.

SIS. S. TANNER (Birmingham & West Midlands): I second Motion 85. President and Congress, the tripartite nature of what are now employment tribunals remains crucial to the system. All have equal status and play an important part in the process of decision-making. Congress, you can share these concerns and ask MPs to raise the matter, possibly by an Early Day Motion or by a Parliamentary Question. I am sure many MPs, irrespective of their political persuasion, will be concerned at the changes anticipated and will wish to receive assurances from the Government that the long-established method of tripartite judgments be continued within employment tribunals.

**EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS  
MOTION 86**

## 86. EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS

Congress agrees that the CEC must start a campaign to remove the unfairness of the new Employment tribunal statutory rules.

The new rulings are made to favour employers and leave our members facing heavy legal bills, or our members are to scared to submit claims

The new rulings are therefore unfair and must be reviewed.

ISLINGTON 1 BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. C. KERR (London): I move Motion 86 – Employment Tribunals. Congress, the Gibbons Report identified many changes to employment tribunal services, changes which were supposed to be fair. We were told that these changes were needed to free-up valuable time and reduce the amount of bogus claims being submitted. Congress, we need to be aware of why tribunals were introduced in the first place. They were supposed to reduce increasing industrial action from trade union and give an element of fairness when an employee is faced with an injustice. Since the Gibbons Report was implemented, the claims may have reduced but, however, this is not all down to the success of the report but more as a result of employees too scared to take out claims as they could face heavy legal costs should they be unsuccessful. We do not have the fair system which was originally proposed. It fails to give employees, our members, their basic rights, and more importantly natural justice. For an employee to weigh-up whether to risk getting heavy costs over their basic rights to take an employer to task is not right.

Congress, I understand tribunals are busy but if we had fair employers and stronger employment laws in the first place, then *this* itself would go some way to reduce the need to use the Tribunal Service. At the moment our members have to jump through hoops simply to get their basic rights, hoops which certainly favour employers. We need a system which imposes no cost to the employees, more investment in the Tribunal Services, stronger employment laws and not more regulation which allows employers to get off the hook.

I know that ACAS is looking at new proposals and documentation is now out to consultation. But we must respond clearly, stating the points that I have made as clear objections. We owe it to our members to get a fair system and we want investment not more regulation and certainly not cost. I move.

BRO. V. WEST (London): I second Motion 86 on Employment Tribunals. Let us be clear, Congress. Employment tribunals are not necessarily a fair system. Employment law favours the employer, not the employee. If you put barriers in place which means that employees are worried about facing huge financial costs in case they lose, then the system is even more weighted in favour of the employer. I second.

## **CHANGES WITHIN THE EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL SERVICES MOTION 87**

### **87. CHANGES WITHIN THE EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL SERVICES**

Congress calls on the GMB CEC to investigate the changes that are taking place within the Employment Tribunal Services, which are resulting in more and more claimants having their cases heard by sit alone judges.

You will note that within this motion the word "judges" has been used and not chairman, this title change will result in more cases being heard by sit alone judges and the possible demise of lay members putting our members at a disadvantage when having their cases heard.

SOUTHEND BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. B. BENHAM (London): I move Motion 87. There have been several changes during the past two or three years to the way in which employment tribunals are brought, heard and decided. Colleagues, none of these changes are to the benefit of the claimants. Instead, these changes are hurdles designed to reduce claims by making it harder to claim and to win. For instance, if the three stage statutory grievance procedure is not followed, claims could automatically be thrown out. The threat of costs also makes claimants think twice and trade unions must evaluate every claim before they decide to employ lawyers to pursue their claim. However, the moves to stem the number of employment tribunals have failed. In 2007 there were 132,000 cases. The number of equal pay cases in that year was 44,000, an increase of 155% over 2006. So there is a concerted effort under the Gibbons Review to rationalise employment tribunal rules even more, and in so doing stack the odds further against the claimants. There is definitely pressure by the Government for more cases to be heard by judges sitting alone; judges, not chairmen.

This lofty change of title is nothing more than a ploy to eradicate the use of industrial members, thereby denying judges the valuable impact they make and, further, disadvantage claimants. It has been said that chairmen – sorry, judges – are not in favour of sit-alone tribunals. Congress, the only way employment tribunal claims can be reduced is if employers stop treating employees unfairly. Until that happens, we owe it to our members to make sure that the employment tribunal system is transparent, accountable and is as fair to the claimant as it is to the respondent. Colleagues, please support.

SIS. L. SENECHKA (London): I second Motion 87. President and Congress, in the '70s when Harold Wilson's Government gave employees the right to sue for unfair dismissal, doing so was a relatively simple process. There was no qualifying time period, no statutory grievance procedures and no threat of penal costs. Over the years that simple process has become more and more difficult. The imposition of the two-year qualifying period has now been reduced to one. The changes to the costs, the changes in the appointment of members and now the trend to using sit-alone judges all make it

harder for employees to get redress. Our members are being unfairly dismissed and the Tribunal system should help them, not discriminate against them. Please support.

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Linda. She was shaking as she came to the rostrum. Does anyone wish to come in on these debates? (*No response*) In that case, I call Billy Tonner.

BRO. B. TONNER (CEC, Public Services): I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. The CEC is supporting and is asking Congress to support Motion 86 with a qualification. The motion calls for a campaign to remove the unfairness of the Employment Tribunal Statutory Rules. These rules, which were introduced in October 2004, must be complied with before making a tribunal claim. For example, by submitting a written grievance. These rules have proved to be exceptionally complex and have, in some cases, been abused by employers to argue procedural points in an effort to defeat good claims and to deny justice for employees. This is something that we have seen in our mass equal pay litigation.

The Government is repealing the rules in 2009 and, in some respects, repeal is to be welcomed. However, the qualification is that the repeal should not be at the expense of workers' rights, such as the right to written reasons prior to dismissal which also forms part of those rules. The new system will need to be examined closely, and the GMB will argue for the protection of workers' rights and the removal of barriers to justice.

A public consultation is taking place at present on the new ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures. Regions have been asked to comment on the draft as part of the GMB response. We will need to monitor the position very closely.

President and Congress, in conclusion, the CEC is asking Congress to support Motion 86 with the qualification.

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

*Motion 82 was carried.*

*Motion 85 was carried.*

*Motion 86 was carried.*

*Motion 87 was carried.*

## **SOCIAL POLICY WELFARE RIGHTS & SERVICES**

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, we now move on to Social Policy, Welfare Rights & Services. I will now be calling Motions 191, to be moved by Midlands & East Coast; London Region to move Motion 192 and Northern Region to move Motion 194.

**DIGNITY IN CARE  
MOTION 191**

**191. DIGNITY IN CARE**

This conference is concerned that the £20.45 allowance given to older people in care homes is expected to cover the cost of all personal items not covered by the care package agreed by the Local Authority, including clothes and toiletries, and is symbolic of the way that older people are treated in society.

We believe that this allowance should immediately be increased to £40.00 per week, and we call upon the CEC to pressurise the Government into implementing this change.

LEICESTER HOME CARE & GENERAL BRANCH  
*Midland & East Coast Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. G. GLASSFORD (Midland & East Coast): I move Motion 191, Dignity in Care. President and Congress, I, like most people, am looking forward to growing old with some trepidation. It is possible that I will be able to grow old gracefully and not rely on care until I am well into my old age, but it is more likely that at some stage I will have to go into a care home where I can be looked after, and that thought, quite frankly, fills me with dread. Not only will I, perhaps, not be able to perform some of the basic functions, but I will also be faced with the prospect of having my income drastically cut in order to help fund some of the care I shall need.

At the moment the Government is consulting various agencies and pensioner groups on how to reform the complex maze of funding for residential and nursing homes. Everyone acknowledges that it would be difficult to reform the existing system immediately, but some initial measures could bring immediate improvements. One of these measures is an option put forward by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and supported by my region, suggesting that the Government should increase personal allowances for those in care who, contrary to popular belief, do not receive care free but must surrender almost all of their State pensions to pay for it. The low level of £19.60 which they retain as the Personal Expenses Allowances undermines their dignity, treating them like children with pocket money rather than adults with pensions based on a lifetime of contributions.

According to the Rowntree Foundation to double this allowance to £39.20 per week would cost £250 million a year, which is just peanuts in the overall budget. Combining such a measure with a raising of capital allowances would be a just way of giving something to the least well off as well as to people on modest means but with some capital.

The sum of £19.60 is just enough to cover personal items such as clothes and toiletries, but the biggest regret is that this removes any semblance of independence the elderly might have. They have almost nothing left to buy gifts and treats for their families at Christmas and birthdays or to visit the pub for a drink. By increasing the Personal

Expenses Allowance for care home residents who are supported by local authorities, this would allow them to afford these items and make a person feel as though they have something to contribute to their family and society rather than just being someone to be looked after.

As we are painfully aware, the Government is in deep trouble and every sign is that they will struggle to defeat the Tories at the next election. This is just the sort of policy which will help them claw back some of their credibility. It will be practical, popular and fair. Please support this motion.

BRO. M. RALSTON (Midland & East Coast): I am a first-time delegate, seconding Motion 191 – Dignity in Care. President and Congress, we all need dignity, whatever our age. Without the funding for the basics, this is impossible to achieve. This is only the first step to push for a new minimum of £40 per week to improve into the future and maintain. Thank you.

## **CARERS ALLOWANCE MOTION 192**

### **192. CARERS ALLOWANCE**

This Congress condemns the Government for the level of financial support they give to those who care for their loved ones, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, saving the Government £s billions and what do they get? 20p per hour and then when the carer reaches retirement age this payment stops - at a time when they need more nutrition & support to cope with the stress. This just adds insult to injury and it is time for it to stop. We want action not words.

1. All Carer's to be paid in line with Public Service Workers
2. That the Carer's allowance remains for the life of the one they are caring for.

HENDON BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. B. BENHAM (London): President and Congress, I move Motion 192. In this country today there is a National Minimum Wage. In this country today every employee has the right to 24 days paid holiday, thanks to the Labour Government. In this country today it is illegal to discriminate by reason of age, thanks to the Labour Government. There are, of course, rogue employers who avoid granting these basic rights but, colleagues, it is nothing short of a national scandal that more than seven million people are denied these rights by the same Labour Government which enacted them.

I am talking about carers, devoted people, who selflessly care for their loved ones and, in some cases, do so for up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and in doing so save the NHS and local authorities millions and millions of pounds. There is, of course, a Carers Allowance of the princely sum of £50.55p a week. If the carer spends 35 hours a week caring for a loved one, that equates to £1.44p per hour. If the care required is 24/7, then

that equates to just 20 pence an hour, which is certainly not the minimum wage, let alone a living wage. But the Carers Allowance is not guaranteed. No, colleagues. There are more ways the State can avoid paying it, and they have excuses for not repealing the anti-trade union laws. If the carer spends less than 35 hours a week caring, there is no allowance. If the carer earns more than £95 a week after tax, there is no allowance. If the carer is in full-time education – forget it. If the person being cared for receives Attendance Allowance or the Disability Living Allowance, then there is no chance. Bearing in mind the way the Government restricts this allowance, it will not be long before a carer will be refused if she wore a size 5 shoe or a size 16 collar.

Then there is the right to holidays. How does the carer get on with holidays? They could apply for Respite Care, but that is administrated by local authorities and the availability varies widely. It is also means tested. If there is more than £22,000 in assets, then a contribution must be made towards the care. Isn't it amazing, colleagues? A carer works for nothing and, instead of getting holiday pay, may have to pay it out of their own pocket. How about age discrimination? Any employee has the right to apply to their employer to continue working after normal retirement age. Any person receiving a State Pension has the right to work to supplement that pension. But if you are a carer, Carers Allowance stops as soon as the State Pension is paid.

The need to care does not suddenly stop when the carer reaches pensionable age. So why should the Carers Allowance? This is blatant discrimination. There is no doubt that carers remove a tremendous burden from the State by providing care to their loved ones, care that should be provided free by the State. If the person being cared for was in a care home or hospice the cost of care would be far in excess of £55.50 a week, just as it would be if a carer stopped caring when he or she reached pensionable age.

Congress, this motion calls for public service rates to be paid to all carers, and that rate should continue throughout the carer's life or for the lifetime of the person being cared. The economic and moral arguments for this motion are beyond reproach. Please support.

BRO. D. GREEN (London): I second Motion 192. President and Congress, being a carer can happen to any one of us at any time. Most of us will have to give up our jobs and careers to look after our loved one. This could be your mother, father, partner or child. What does the Government do for us if that was the case? They pay us 20 pence an hour. For anything else you are entitled to, you have to fill out endless numbers of forms, sometimes to no avail if you are earning too much money. Carers save the Government millions of pounds just by caring for their loved ones by giving physio, home care and even being a taxi driver, to name but a few. In most cases, this is 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We say pay carers what is fair, and that should be in line with public services, and pay them for the life of the one they care for or the one they are caring for. I support.

**BENEFIT ADVICE  
MOTION 194**

#### 194. BENEFITS ADVICE

Congress instructs the CED to press the Government for benefits advice to be offered at GP surgeries to cut the high number of elderly and disabled people losing out on vital extra income.

SOUTH SHIELDS 1 TCS BRANCH  
*Northern Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. S. APPLEBY (Northern): I am moving Motion 194 on Benefit Advice. Congress, as the benefit system becomes ever more complicated, successive governments have said that they will simplify it. In fact, successive governments seem to make it more complicated, the result being that many people who are entitled to benefits do not get what they are entitled to as they do not understand what they can claim or how to claim it. A simple approach would be to make benefits advice both easy to access and available. This motion calls on the advice to be available at GP surgeries. A high number of people on benefits who are elderly or disabled often regularly visit their GPs. GPs' surgeries are often places they feel more comfortable in an attend on a regular basis.

If fully trained benefits advisers held sessions at GP's surgeries, which were advertised, I am sure they would be used. The result would be that the elderly and disabled people would take up the benefits they are entitled to, thus improving their quality of life. Please support.

BRO. M. BAKER (Northern): I am seconding Motion 194 on Benefits Advice. Congress, the Government are building poly clinics where many GPs are based in one clinic. The supposed advantage to this development is access to many more services than are available at traditional GP surgeries. They are a one-stop shop for the GP, the dentist, etc. How simple it would be to add into that service that of a benefits adviser. Many of our vulnerable citizens in society do not receive the benefits they are entitled to. They are often the people who are in the most need. The reason is quite simple. They are not aware of what they are able to claim. That is where benefits advice is invaluable. As a society, I believe that we have a duty to protect our most vulnerable citizens; for example, the elderly and disabled. By making social services accessible we go a long way to fulfilling that obligation. This motion is common sense by putting a service that is needed in place that is accessible. Please, Congress, let common sense prevail. Support the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? *(No response)* We are asking for Congress to support each resolution; 191, 192 and 194.

*Motion 191 was carried.*

*Motion 192 was carried.*

*Motion 194 was carried.*

We are running a little ahead on our agenda. *(Calls of "Hooray")* I have been very good this week, if you don't mind. You have only been ten minutes late going home.

**SOCIAL POLICY – General  
MOTION 160**

**160. GRANDPARENT CARERS**

Congress is well aware that UK citizens are now living longer and keeping active and there is a growing group of grandparents who are now playing a key role in their grandchildren's upbringing, not only to give support to their children to allow them to continue to work, but giving support where necessary when for one reason or another their own children are unable to cope with child care responsibilities.

We therefore call upon the CEC to champion the increasing role of relatives and enable them to access financial support and access their own flexible working in order to stay within paid employment whilst supporting family members when they most need it.

BRISTOL PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH  
*South Western Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. A. DAVIES (South Western): President, Congress, we are all aware that with today's increase in medical knowledge and better living conditions people are living longer and have more active lives than probably their parents and grandparents before them. This has seen a generation who are now playing a key role in helping with the grandchildren's day-to-day lives. This often manifests itself in the grandparents giving up their paid employment or reduced working hours to look after grandchildren, and in the majority of cases it is the grandmother who tends to take on this role. The rationale for this is either to enable her son or daughter to remain in paid employment to contribute to the family income. It is the norm these days rather than the exception that both parents have to work to support the family and this is especially true of low-paid workers who need to supplement family income after having children.

With the increase of single-parent families, to bring in an income and childcare facilities are too expensive grandparents have to step in to help with a saving to the economy of around £4bn a year. Alternatively, the grandparent takes on a primary caring role of their grandchildren when the family breaks down due to their own children finding themselves unable to cope. This can be brought on through many reasons, ill health, mental health problems, and the serious issue of drug addiction, a dependency of either one or even both parents.

This situation can have a catastrophic impact upon the grandparents who perhaps are either pursuing their own career after bringing up their own children or beginning to plan their retirement. Apart from having an emotional impact upon the grandparents it can also have a financial impact; not only can it reduce their earning power; it can also have an affect upon their future pension entitlement. If they become the primary carer for the grandchildren they have to register as a foster parent in order to qualify for financial assistance. Many are either unaware or unsupported on how to access this very necessary assistance. Once the Government has acknowledged the role the grandparents play in supporting the grandchildren's childcare, and the right to request flexible working regulations, it is still very difficult for grandparents to change their working hours to accommodate their new role.

We call upon this Congress today to champion this increasing role of relatives to enable them to access financial support and get access to flexible working arrangements in order to stay within paid employment, while supporting family members when they need it most. Please support. (*Applause*)

*Motion 160 was formally seconded.*

## **SUPPORT FOR CARERS MOTION 161**

### **161. SUPPORT FOR CARERS**

Congress notes that at present Carers, particularly for the elderly, have been unrecognised and undervalued.

This Congress calls for a significant change in social policy which would ensure that Government, Employers and the Voluntary Sector work jointly to ensure that our Carers receive the support which delivers this vital service.

In particular, that significant investment is targeted to ensure that the training, skills and financial support mechanism are in place to support our Carers.

Congress calls upon the CEC to utilise the GMB's political influence to bring about these changes.

HILLINGDON BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. L. SENICKA (London): President, Congress, there is one section of our society that performs a vital role but who are under-valued, under-trained, and most certainly under-paid. This section of society is of course carers, people who selflessly give up their time, their energy, and in some cases their savings to care for their loved ones, young and old. It should never be forgotten, colleagues, that this selfless provision of care for their dependents saves the country millions and millions.

Congress, this motion clearly calls for some joined-up thinking in our social policy which would improve the lot of carers and their dependents by improving the standard of care provided. This joined-up thinking should address three specific areas. Firstly, there is the financial aspect. It is a fact that carers provide a vital service for next to nothing. Carers allowance is a pittance and very hard to get. Secondly, the question of respite care must be addressed. It is simply not viable for a carer to look after a dependent 24 hours, seven days a week, and 52 weeks a year. Government, local authorities, and voluntary agencies must work out a standardised system for respite care making it an absolute right and taking no account of income or savings. Thirdly, there must be provision of relevant training. Carers provide their service for love but, as we know, as dependents' conditions deteriorate love is not just enough and cannot provide the level of care needed. Specialist training and knowledge is required to improve the level of care carers can provide.

Colleagues, these measures will not be without cost or sacrifice but our government, our local authorities, and voluntary agencies, must get together and think this through, collectively they must agree to pay money, to make that sacrifice because, Congress, any cost, any sacrifice, or any cost to government, local authorities, or voluntary agencies, is small beer compared to the sacrifice and expenditure of carers. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Secunder? While the seconder is coming up, I think there has been a misunderstanding. What I said was, after Motion 103 I will be calling Motion 9, which is Fair Trade Union, and 10, Green Options and Eco-Friendly Policies. *(Inaudible comments)* OK, we will get back to you. I will give you a ring!

RO. J. RICHMOND (London): There is a definite management policy in this country for carers, the mushroom management system: if you are dropped in the shit, the lights are turned off. The overriding principle is that if carers are prepared to provide care for a dependent and keep them out of the residential home, that is fine, just let them get on with it; they provide care, and the authorities forget all about them. Well, Congress, no more. Enough is enough. It is time to bring carers out of the dark and into the light. They are entitled to pay, holidays, and training and they must get all of them. It would cost but it is still cheaper than full-time residential care for dependents. Congress, please support. I second. *(Applause)*

BRO. P. DUNCAN (North West & Irish): I am the primary carer. My daughter is autistic, she has epilepsy, and she has the mental age of a 3, maybe 4-year old. Together my wife and I work endlessly, tirelessly, 24 hours a day. The company I work for, as bad as they are, allow me time and time again to have time off. They allow me to work a specific shift so that my shift does not fall into the fact of overriding while my wife has to work. So between us we cover our areas, and we cover the shift patterns. We have huge problems. Where I live is in Derbyshire but I am two miles away from Stockport. If I were in Stockport I would be with the Cheshire banner. Because I am in Derbyshire we can get very little support. We have time and time again tried to get my daughter into respite care. We can now. She is 15 years old but it has taken us that long to get her there. What we get is one night every three weeks and one weekend day every five weeks. We have to travel from where I live to Chesterfield, which is an hour-and-a-bit every single time to either collect her or to take her, and that is the time we are supposed to be having off as a family unit. Please support, carers need your help. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: We have nothing but admiration and because it is your child naturally you will do it but you should be fully respected by the government and the councils for that. Thank you. Anyone else wish to come in? No? I put 160 to the vote, we are supporting.

*Motion 160 was carried.*

*Motion 161 was carried.*

THE PRESIDENT: Right. I am ringing you. Section 9, Social Policy Housing, Motion 179, commitment to the Fourth Option, Southern Region to move, Section 10, Social Policy – Welfare Rights, Composite 10, Incapacity Benefit Testing and Vulnerable Members, London Region to

move, Northern Region to second. They will be taken after Motion 103. OK? I am clear now. Thank you.

Colleagues, could Congress give a warm welcome to Michael Mazurek from the Polish Consulate who will be speaking to you later. Michael, would you like to stand up? (*Applause*)

## **REGIONAL SECRETARY'S REPORT: SOUTHERN REGION (pages 128-135)**

### **SOUTHERN REGION**

#### **1. MEMBERSHIP AND RECRUITMENT**

<b>FINANCIAL MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>76,118</b>
Section Financial Membership (by each Section):	
COMMERCIAL SERVICES SECTION	23,345
MANUFACTURING SECTION	9,315
PUBLIC SERVICES SECTION	43,458
Grade 1 members	47,696
Grade 2 members	22,355
Retired, Reduced Rate & Others	6,067
Male Membership	37,752
Female Membership	38,366
Total number recruited 1.1.2007 – 31.12.2007	12,088
Increase/Decrease 1.1.2007 – 31.12.2007	2,897 Increase
Membership on Check-off	49,281
Membership on Direct Debit	19,829

#### **Response to Organising Agenda**

Having established a Regional Organising Team, headed by a Senior Organiser and two Membership Development Officers in 2006, 2007 was the first full year that the Team had operated. Towards the end of 2006 the Team set a target of 12,000 members recruited in a calendar year; a figure never achieved previously by the Southern Region. This figure was reached by the middle of December. The Region also met the General Secretary's target in terms of an increase of 200 in the average monthly figure since the base figure was set in September 2005.

The Region also set a target of growing to 75,000 members by May 2007. This figure was achieved and in November 2007 the Region's membership stood at 76,000.

Following on a 3-day seminar that had taken place in 2006, there was a follow-on meeting in 2007 which looked at the progress of the Organising Agenda. A decision was taken to increase the size of the Regional Organising Team and steps were taken in early 2008 to achieve this aim.

In response to the Green Agenda, the Region has been looking at how it can maximise recycling. There was though only limited recycling in 2007 but it is anticipated that this will increase in 2008.

The Region has looked at its purchasing policy in regard to promotional materials that are given to members and branches as part of the Organising Agenda. It is the Region's policy to purchase fair trade materials.

## Recruitment Targets and Campaigns

In 2006 and 2007 the Region reported that it had faced considerable problems by attacks from disgruntled former officials. Having seen off those earlier attacks in DHL and NCP the Region faced a further attack in Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospital. A rapid response team was organised to move into the Hospital as a result of which this challenge was seen off very quickly and in fact the membership grew.

Once again, the majority of recruitment has been in the public sector although there has also been considerable growth in the private sector in organising migrant workers. The Region now has over 2000 migrant workers in membership and the Southampton Migrant Workers' Branch now stands at over 500 members.

In 2007 the campaign against Private Equity which had been initiated in the Region continued to gather steam. The General Secretary attended the Select Committee in the House of Commons and put forward very forcefully the Union's view in regard to Private Equity. Paul Maloney, Senior Organiser, who has led the campaign within the Region made numerous television and radio appearances and also attended a number of conferences. As a result of the campaign, the Government did finally agree to amend the Tax Rules.

On the International front the Region has supported the Justice for Columbia Campaign. Richard Ascough the Regional Secretary, visited Columbia in August/September 2007 as a part of a delegation including senior Trade Unionists, MPs, members of the Labour Party National Executive and one MEP. The Region is co-financing a project in Columbia to support families who have been affected by injustice.

## Overview of Region's Economic and Employment Situation

Although towards the end of the year there were clear signs of an economic downturn, this had not yet produced any dramatic increase in redundancies.

The Region continues to see an increase in public service membership with the declining engineering and manufacturing jobs levelling out.

It is clear that many small enterprises with poor employment practices and low pay there is a great dependence on migrant labour. Although this is a feature of the whole Region there are a number of areas with high levels of migrant labour; hence the reason for the Region targeting organising this labour.

As reported in previous years, the Region is dominated by small enterprises, the definition of which is a company that employs 250 or less. These account for over 80% of employment in the Region.

## 2. GENERAL ORGANISATION

Regional Senior Organisers	5
Membership Development Officers	2
Regional Organisers	18
Organising Officers	6
No. of Branches	108
New Branches	3
Branch Equality Officers	23
Branch Youth Officers	12

### 3. BENEFITS

Dispute	NIL
Total Disablement	NIL
Working Accident	2,714.50
Occupational Fatal Accident	4,000.00
Non-occupational Fatal Accident	NIL
Funeral	14,770.00

### 4. JOURNALS AND PUBLICITY

As indicated above, the Region has played a leading part in the publicity around Private Equity.

The Region's magazine which had been re-launched in 2006 under the title of 'Vision', appeared four times in 2007.

The Region also re-launched its website which has been well received.

### 5. LEGAL SERVICES

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

Applications for Legal Assistance	Legal Assistance Granted
564	532

#### Cases in which Outcome became known

Total	Withdrawn	Lost in Court	Settled	Won in Court	Total Compensation
559	214	4	339 £ 6,853,210	1 £1818	£6,855,028
Cases outstanding at 31.12. 2007			723		

#### (b) Employment Tribunals (notified to Legal Department)

Claims supported by Union	261
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#### Cases in which Outcome became known

Total	Withdrawn	Lost in Tribunal	Settled	Won in Court	Total Compensation
69	32	-	30 £490,470	7 £128,309	£618,779
Cases outstanding at 31.12. 2007			92		

#### (c) Other Employment Law Cases

Supported by Union	Unsuccessful	Damages/ Compensation	Cases outstanding at 31.12.2007
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111	6	£725,079	35
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**(d) Social Security Cases**

Supported by Union	Successful	Cases outstanding at 31.12.2007
4	1	-

**Innovations and Changes to GMB Southern Region Legal Services between 01.01.2007 and 31.12.07**

Having previously established CCFAs for personal injury claims, the Region also introduced a CCFA for Clinical Negligence Claims. There has been an increase in the use of Criminal legal assistance as a result of claims by patients in the Care and NHS sectors.

During the course of 2007 the Region concluded a case against Cleanaway who had the Parks contract in Lambeth which achieved £1.3 million for our members. Included in this was the highest ever level award for a Disability Discrimination claim where our member achieved more than £½ million.

**6. EQUAL RIGHTS**

Once again the Southern Region has had a successful year in terms of Equal Rights.

The Southern Region Equal Rights Committee met 5 times over the last twelve months, discussing issues on Disability, Women's Rights and Equal Pay in particular. The Committee took on one major project last year which was the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of abolishment of slavery, with a Rally in Brixton, and also organised a stall at both the Brighton Pride and London Pride events. Kelly Horsburgh and the Committee for L.G.B.T. designed new membership forms for these events, which turned out to be extremely successful at both venues.

There is still a lot of work to be done with regard to Branches in the Region, in order to encourage more Branch Equality Officers to be nominated. The Region has only 23 Branch Equality Officers out of a total of 108 Branches, which is around 20%. We hope to address this situation by writing to all Branches in order to outline what this position entails, and to generally encourage more people to take up the role of Branch Equality Officer.

With the new National Equality & Diversity Officer now in post we can look forward to stability and progression.

As both the Senior Management Team and the Central Executive Council have approved and endorsed, the way forward is that we would want the GMB to be recognised as the Lead Trade Union in driving home the importance of Equality at Work and also in our Society, whilst reflecting the make up of our members and potential members at all levels of the GMB and unleashing their potential. All this goes towards making the Diversity and Equality Agenda an exciting venture, both for the activists to be a part of and for the benefit of our members and society as a whole.

**Committee Membership**

The Regional Race Committee consists of 12 members, and is chaired by Dotun Alade Odumosu supported by Lorraine Parker as Vice Chair.

The Committee met bi monthly throughout the year although meetings were occasionally inquorate.

### **Regional Race Conference**

The Regional Race Conference took place on 11 May 2007 and was the best attended conference for some years with new delegates from a number of branches.

The conference discussed the teaching of black children, proposed activities around Black History Month, Festivals and Rallies and considered motions on Regional education, improved communications and the absence of sufficient non white members on the Regional Council.

### **Political Activities**

Members from the Region participated in the London Mayor's RISE Festival in London, which unfortunately was held on the same date as the Tolpuddle Martyrs Rally in Dorset. The Committee seek to recruit new members to GMB at events such as Rise, regardless of where the prospective members work. In the absence of support from the London Region in terms of participants or material, Southern Region activists recruited members on behalf of London Region as well as Southern Region.

### **Future Plans**

The Committee had hoped to organise an event in the GMB Southampton Learning and Organising Centre but this proved impossible this year. Committee members will instead be attending an event organised by the Birmingham and West Midlands Region. The Committee hopes to plan an event for 2008.

### **National Representation**

The Southern Region is represented on the National Race Committee by Dotun Alade Odumosu.

### **Organising**

The need to organise new workers has always been seen as important by the Race Committee. Members have offered to assist officers in recruitment campaigns where non white members were likely to be involved, and recruitment is the prime activity at events such as RISE.

### **Migrant Workers**

The Race Committee has built links with GMB Migrant Workers branches during 2007. A member of the Race Committee is invited to attend meetings of the Southern Region Migrant Strategy Committee, and a member of the Southampton based Migrant workers branch has been elected to the Race Committee.

Over 560 members have been enrolled in the Migrant Workers Branch since its inception, including numbers at World Flowers Ltd and Nicholas and Harris Ltd in Salisbury, both of which are the subject of recognition campaigns. Other migrant worker initiatives have seen a growth in migrant worker membership in West Wiltshire (250 enrolled, with recognition planned at two local companies), Southern Cross Healthcare, together with projects underway or planned in South London, Bournemouth, Plymouth, Brighton and the Thames Valley. There is also a good sized membership in the security industry and among NHS contractors.

Exact figures of migrant worker membership are difficult to establish but there are around 2000 migrant worker members in GMB Southern Region.

### **BME participation in GMB**

There are no non white Officers in the Southern Region. There are no non white members of the Regional Committee, and there are no non white members of the Regional Council, apart from the 2 who occupy the race reserved seats (1 of whom has never attended a meeting). There are very few non white branch secretaries.

## **7. YOUTH**

### **GMB, Labour Party and TUC Young Members Conferences**

The second annual GMB conference was scheduled to take place in November. However, due to limited responses from some regions there weren't the numbers to go ahead. I am hoping that it will go ahead next year. With regards to TUC and Labour Party conferences once again a full delegation of southern region young members were sent to both.

### **GMB Congress**

Congress was addressed by a young member representing the young members section for the first time. As a shop steward and ULR from Asda she was able to give a good insight in to what life is like as a representative and young person working with a sometimes difficult employer. It was also very refreshing to have someone highlighting issues relevant to young people who was actually under 27! The member herself actually became involved through the 2006 National Young Members' Conference – proof that such events are worthwhile.

### **Cuba Solidarity Campaign**

Through discussions held at Congress in Brighton I learnt about CSC's intention to send a delegation of young trade unionists to Cuba to take part in their May Day celebrations. A spokesperson from CSC then attended a couple of young members meetings highlighting the work that they do, the reality for Cuban people and Cuban Trade unionists. This provided a real insight and gave an interesting perspective on the kinds of workplaces we organise. The response from members led me to approach Richard Ascough, other young members, officers, and branches, for funding and delegates to attend. This received a good response and we are now finalising details for a trip in 2008.

### **Website**

The Southern Region's website has been revamped and the young members pages were included in this. They are now part of the main site, there is a much simpler layout including a 'News' section which is regularly updated.

### **Workers Beer Company**

Once again we managed to send young members to work at various events throughout the summer, including Glastonbury and Reading festivals. Despite the heavy rain and muddy conditions a good time was had by all. We managed to raise lots of money to help the section support other events. This money was also used to make a donation to a Baby care unit, set up at the Royal Sussex Hospital in Brighton, in honour of one of our youngest members who tragically died at the beginning of 2007. There is now a regular commitment from young members at the hospital to carry on this work to help continue funding the unit.

### **Young Members Project**

The Somerset S33 branch has decided to implement the young members' rate. In doing so they have decided to implement a young member's project to attempt to improve levels of young membership and to encourage participation and activity within the branch amongst young people. The project is very much in its infancy but collaboration is already being sought from young people to assist in a new website, designing new young member specific joining information and events and activities supporting families and young people. The branch will also send a delegate to Cuba.

## **8. TRAINING**

<b>(a) GMB Activists Basic Courses</b>					
	No. of Courses	Male	Female	Total	Total Student Days
2-Day GMB@Work	5	57	12	69	138
5-Day Induction Part 1	10	86	45	131	655
5-Day Induction Part 2	7	66	28	94	470
3-Day Induction AA Section	1	6	-	6	18
5-Day Induction NHS Section	1	7	6	13	65
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>1,346</b>

<b>(b) GMB Activists Courses</b>					
	No. of Courses	Male	Female	Total	Total Student Days
5-Day Union Learning Reps	2	19	9	28	140
5-Day Accompanying Reps	2	10	3	13	65
3&5-Day Introduction to Employment Law	(3d) 1	19	4	23	69
	(5d) 3	20	8	28	140
5-Day Advanced Employment Law	1	7	3	10	50
5-Day Negotiating Skills	1	5	8	13	65
3-Day Stress at Work	1	6	8	14	42
2-Day Pensions for Activists	1	6	2	8	16
5-Day Advanced Pensions (National)	1	1	-	1	5
3-Day Migrant Workers & the GMB	1	8	5	13	39
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>631</b>

<b>(c) GMB Activists Health &amp; Safety Courses</b>					
	No. of Courses	Male	Female	Total	Total Student Days
5-Day Health & Safety Part 1	2	15	4	19	95
5-Day Health & Safety Part 2	1	7	1	8	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>135</b>

<b>(d) Other GMB Courses</b>					
	No. of Courses	Male	Female	Total	Total Student Days
3&5-Day Access Trade Unions & Politics	(3d) 1 (5d) 1	9 8	3 4	12 12	36 60
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>96</b>

<b>(e) TUC Courses</b>					
	No. of Courses	Male	Female	Total	Total Student Days
2-Day ULR Follow-on Working with Providers	1	3	-	3	6
7 x 1-Day/Week Certificate in Occupational H&S	1	-	1	1	7
5 x 1-Day/Week Disability Champions At Work	1	1	-	1	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>18</b>

<b>(f) GMB Officers Courses</b>					
	No. of Courses	Male	Female	Total	Total Student Days
2-Day Organising Migrant Workers	1	11	5	16	32
2-Day Advanced Employment Law	1	5	2	7	14
2&3-Day Training the Trainers	(2d) 2 (3d) 1	16 8	6 3	22 11	44 33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>123</b>

<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>2,349</b>
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## 9. HEALTH & SAFETY

### Introduction

The Region continues to engage more productively with our members' and activists in terms of raising the profile of health and safety, as well as providing an enhanced support service which is linked to the organising agenda.

As a result the Region has seen an improvement and better health, safety and welfare standards in some workplaces, visible development and, more importantly, greater GMB worker involvement in organising for health and safety.

### How are we doing this?

- Providing comprehensive and up to date information.

- Offering bespoke training and education tailored to our members' needs, delivered in a way that best suits them.
- Engaging with employers' ie. joint union/management initiatives, partnerships, working together and offering guidance, advice and support regarding workplace structure and organisation and, most importantly, promoting the value of worker involvement which is at the heart of effective health and safety management.

As a Region we facilitated these requirements by us going to our members' rather than them coming to us. This demonstrates and reinforces how we are addressing our members/activists needs with an organising agenda and building self sufficient Health & Safety Reps and Activists in the workplace.

One clear example of using health and safety in the workplace to develop an organising and recruitment agenda has been our campaign to get the GMB recognised with World Flowers. The health and safety agenda raised by both workers and the GMB has been critical in us moving towards the Recognition Agreement.

Trade Union Education is an important integral part of many Health and Safety Reps lives. The Southern Region therefore continues to run a series of bespoke health and safety courses, linked to particular sectors and workplaces on issues such as risk assessment courses. We will continue to develop and consolidate our health and safety training programme, as it is clear that this process reinforces and builds the confidence of our Safety Reps, in order for them to represent members effectively in the workplace.

*(Adopted)*

THE PRESIDENT: I now ask the Southern Regional Secretary, Richard, to move his report. Richard?

BRO. R. ASCOUGH (Southern): Formally.

THE PRESIDENT: Formally seconded?

*Regional Secretary's Report: Southern Region (pages 128-135) was formally moved and seconded.*

THE PRESIDENT: Pages 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134...

SIS. S. MEMMOTT (Southern): In reference to page 128 of the Regional Secretary's Report, with the support of my region with reference to Public Sector Workers, specifically the police, could we please as the GMB Union show public support for our colleagues in the Police Federation, especially in light of the most recent lack of support shown to them by the Home Secretary. I refer to the non-payment of back pay. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Are you going to answer that, Richard? *(No audible reply)* 134 and 135. Does Congress agree to accept? *(Agreed)* Thank you.

*Regional Secretary's Report: Southern Region (pages 128-135) was adopted.*

## **EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK**

### **COMPOSITE 5**

(Covering Motions 101 and 102)

**101 – National Minimum Wage – (GMB Scotland)**

**102 – The National Minimum Wage Helpline (Midland & East Coast Region)**

### NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

Congress is shocked and alarmed at the scale of underpayment of the National Minimum Wage and believes that only effective enforcement will end this practice by unscrupulous employers.

We do welcome the latest proposals by Government to improve the enforcement mechanism of the Minimum Wage by a more effective penalty regime and an improved approach to dealing with arrears owed to workers.

However, Congress believes that while these measures are welcome that further intervention by Government is needed:

- By increasing the National Minimum Wage enforcement budget.
- Greater financial penalties against those employers who are found to be underpaying with more criminal prosecutions.
- Increased publicity bringing their rights on the National Minimum Wage to the attention of low paid workers.

Congress is encouraged to promote the revenue and customs 0845 6000 678 National Minimum Wage Helpline to its members, many of whom are low paid, wherever our members find themselves being short changed by unscrupulous employers. Widely promoted on commercial radio, press and internet, GMB members can, if normal channels fail them, easily and quickly resolve the failure to pay properly the correct remuneration owed to them, particularly when the GMB does not have full recognition in the workplace.

*(Carried)*

**BRO. F. McNEILL (GMB Scotland):** President, colleagues, the National Minimum Wage has been in place for a number of years now but still has colleagues not receiving their due. The situation is going to get worse due to the present economic downturn, due to unscrupulous employers who will plead that they cannot afford to pay our workers what they are rightly due. In fact, some of the profit-making rascals are already asking the employees to take a pay cut.

We in the GMB are proud of what the GMB has done for the low-paid workers in the UK thus far but we must continue to pressure government to put the measures outlined in the composite in place and back them with action not just words. Congress, I move. Thank you. *(Applause)*

**BRO. J. NEEDHAM (Midland & East Coast):** This motion started life before the belts began tightening and the banks and the employers started to get into difficulties. However, given the present situation the need for this motion may increase in the light of the financial crisis. Our members who earn the Minimum Wage, such as cleaners, porters, caterers, and shop workers, have complained at wrong payments for a variety of reasons including withholding of our members'

money, wages that have been proved to be wrong, and the mess that employers get into when they outsource their pay services to a second provider.

This motion, therefore, centres on our Union to work towards promotion of the Government Revenue & Customs Service, National Minimum Wage Helpline, 0845600678. With over 100 Revenue & Customs officers appointed to deal with these issues, they promised to put right the wrongs reported by members and report back their findings. This gives instant access to the promise of funds going into the banks and stops the unscrupulous employer who causes bank charges to our members, sometimes exceeding £100 for a multiple of bills that otherwise cannot be paid.

This motion is about empowering our lowest paid members to help themselves against the employers who think that they are above the law, so ensuring that the unscrupulous employer can be encouraged to pay the proper rate of pay and above the levels of mere existence when your level of pay will not even take you home. Support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

### **LOW PAY UNION MEMBERS MOTION 103**

#### **103. LOW PAY UNION MEMBERS**

We call upon the Labour Government to intervene and help our Union members on low pay and below average earnings and our members forced to work on the minimum wage. Many members are excluded from the benefits of Working Family Credit and Child Tax Credits and are forced to live close to poverty and on the bread line. This is not acceptable and we call for it to be made compulsory for employers of such members to give at least an annual pay rise in line with inflation each year, irrespective of industry sectors.

Please support this motion.

MATLOCK BRANCH  
*Midland & East Coast Region*

*(Carried)*

SIS. D. MILLS (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, we call upon the Labour Government to intervene and help our union members on low pay and below average earnings and our members forced to work on the Minimum Wage. Many members are excluded from the benefits of Family Working Credit and Child Tax Credit, and are forced to live close to poverty and on the bread line. This is not acceptable and we call for it to be made compulsory for employers of such members to give at least an annual pay rise in line with inflation each year, irrespective of industrial sections. Please support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

BRO. R. WHILDING (Midland & East Coast): Congress, we call upon the Government to put pressure on the low-pay companies to give our workers a decent living wage. Why should hardworking members not be paid a decent wage? Why should they have to look to the Government for handouts? Shame these skinflint employers and get our members a wage rise each year in line with inflation. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Before I call George Fraser to respond on behalf of the CEC, does anyone wish to come in on the debate? No? Thank you.

BRO. G. FRASER (CEC, Public Services): President, Congress, the CEC support Motion 103 with a qualification. There are many low-paid workers working for below average earnings and who are not entitled to benefits given to working parents. Their plight has been highly publicised very recently in the debacle over the removal of the 10% tax band. They are the working poor and they are at a real economic disadvantage.

Colleagues, this motion calls for the Government to make it compulsory for employers to automatically increase pay by inflation every year. The CEC qualification is that a policy such as this is not viable and even if it could be enforced would cause economic stagnation and undermine the principle of collective bargaining. The CEC is of the opinion that a far better way of addressing the issue of the working poor would be to continue our policies of increasing the Minimum Wage so that it is a real living wage, and seek to improve the tax and National Insurance position of the lower paid, and address and eradicate exclusion from the benefits paid to other groups. Congress, with this qualification the CEC is asking you to support Motion 103. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, George. Does the region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*)

*Composite 5 was carried.*

*Motion 103 was carried.*

## **SOCIAL POLICY**

### **HOUSING**

#### **MOTION 179**

#### **179. COMMITMENT TO THE FOURTH OPTION**

This Congress reaffirms the GMB commitment and support for the retention and the provision of social housing within the public sector and the fourth option of direct investment to improve the existing and build of new council homes.

Congress re-commits the GMB to support Local and National Campaigns for the fourth option, that they are fully supported and support for local authority tenants facing a vote, on any stock transfer, to be provided with full information in regard to the consequences of a positive vote.

Given the venue of this conference and Plymouth City Council's determined headlong plunge to force through the wholesale transfer of its own housing stock, without the fourth option and given the recent history of tenants voting on successfully as was the case of Mid Devon Council's stock transfer attempt, these examples re-emphasise the necessity for Congress to further commit this motion as GMB policy.

PLYMOUTH P20 BRANCH  
*Southern Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. G. PALMER (Southern): President, Congress, without the investment required to fund a major council house building programme this Government has no chance of ever meeting a

constantly increasing demand for affordable social housing. With the private sector having failed to deliver now moving into recession, together with the credit crunch and the growing negative equity leading to rising repossessions, meeting the people's housing needs now must depend on a government dropping its inflexible opposition to invest in first-class council housing.

Taking into account that the financial case for council housing is that it is cheaper for local authorities to build and maintain council homes than other alternatives, a level playing field and the fourth option of direct investment would improve not only the existing authority homes but begin to redress today's necessity for a large council house building programme which will provide the decent, secure, and low rent homes people need.

If people want to own their own home or prefer housing associations, that should of course be their right, but over 2.5 million existing council home tenants should not be blackmailed into giving up publicly owned homes with their landlords accountable democratically through the ballot box to become part of housing associations who are of course, in essence, privately run companies with boards of directors with an ever-increasingly corporate culture, which includes inflated large salaries, less coordination and buck-passing, and of course even with the inevitable rent increases tenants will face, they will see an ever-decreasing investment in their homes.

Gordon Brown was reported saying that he had an open mind on the Fourth Option. Let us not allow Mr. Brown to have an empty mind on this matter by reaffirming at this Congress our commitment to support both the retention and provision of a new generation of first-class council homes through lobbying of government, and supporting social housing provision through both local and national campaigns. I seek Congress support of this motion. (*Applause*)

*Motion 179 was formally seconded.*

BRO. G. GIBBS (CEC, Public Services): The CEC is supporting Motion 179 but with a qualification. The GMB has a long and proud record of working with and defending council housing and other organisations to ensure Labour Party policy is committed to social and council housing. GMB Congress agreed and endorsed a special report on council housing at Congress 2005, looking to the future and setting clear policies. The Tories opening up the right-to-buy neglected the future of council housing by not allowing councils to rebuild or centralising and limiting the use of council house receipts. GMB played an intricate role in campaigning for commitments to allow councils to retain and to build new houses in the social rented sector. We must ensure that these commitments are delivered on and put into practice.

The qualification relates to the wording of the motion, the Fourth Option, having been redefined and extended beyond its previous usage, and there are other related measures that GMB would also support. Please support Motion 179 by taking on board the qualification. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gordon. Does anyone wish to come in on this debate? No? Southern Region do you accept the qualification? (*Agreed*)

BRO. T. FLANAGAN (London): I would like to come in on the housing debate. I live in Camden, North London, a very good socialist borough for 45 years at least. We very rarely had any trouble

with the Tories but two GMB-sponsored councillors repeatedly, on two occasions, ran ALMO (arms length management organisations) at our tenants and twice they were defeated: an absolute disgrace. Camden Council has a history of building twice as many council houses during the 1960s and 1970s than any other borough in the country. We will be discussing today about the need to look at MPs we are sponsoring and on this issue might look at Caroline Flint and some of her statements.

As well as looking at MPs I think it is now imperative we look at the actions of councillors. I believe that the action of the GMB-sponsored councillors in Camden lost us control of that borough. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Terry. Are they still councillors? *(Inaudible reply)* Ah, well, so there is no problem then, is there? OK. I put 179 to the vote.

*Motion 179 was carried.*

## **INCAPACITY BENEFIT TESTING AND VULNERABLE MEMBERS COMPOSITE 10**

(Covering Motions 195 and 196)

**195 – Vulnerable Members – (Northern Region)**

**196 – Caution on Incapacity Benefit Testing – (London Region)**

### **INCAPACITY BENEFIT TESTING AND VULNERABLE MEMBERS**

Congress agrees that our economy would be better if more people could move from benefit to adequately rewarded employment. However, Congress believes that the attacks being made on vulnerable members in our society on incapacity benefit are unjustified and not acceptable; we should ensure that their benefits and services are protected.

It would be untruthful of this union to say that no claimants of incapacity benefit abuse the system, but that should not be to the detriment of the 2 million plus genuine claimants. People who are genuinely incapacitated through physical and mental illness must be allowed to retain their dignity and meagre benefit.

It should also not be forgotten that many claimants would be willing to work, despite their conditions, if employers and workplaces made a genuine effort to adapt in order to meet their needs. We welcome genuine moves to help people back to work that is suitable and that they are able to do.

Therefore, this motion asks the CEC to urge caution in the matter of Incapacity Benefit Testing. The benchmark for Incapacity Benefit Testing should be fair, caring and compassionate and not a matter of finance.

*(Carried)*

BRO. C. ANDERSON (London): Congress, I am sure most of us in this room know someone who is claiming incapacity benefit and if we are to believe certain sections of the media they are all swinging the lead and costing the taxpayers millions of benefits payments. Some of them are

fraudsters who could work but instead are choosing to work the system, but the vast majority of the 2.6 million people claiming benefit do it for a very good reason, either through physical or mental illness they find it hard or impossible to work. Most would rather be in some kind of gainful employment if only the Government made proper funds available and employers made genuine efforts instead of paying lip service to making reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

How much is incapacity benefit? This can vary from £61.35 a week for those on short-term lower rate, rising to a massive £81.35 a week for those claiming the long-term higher rate. It is hardly a fortune in this day and age. So what is the Government's answer? Is it to show a bit of compassion and fairness, the sort of thing you might expect from a Labour government? No, it stigmatises them as lazy and work-shy so that when they announce that all the claims have been checked by a doctor it would seem to be a way of rooting out these fraudsters and saving the taxpayer money, not as persecution of the sick.

Let us not kid ourselves, this is not being done so people get the benefits they are entitled to. It is being done purely to save the Government money. We do not want to get to a situation where people find themselves pressured into returning to work when they are not ready or capable of holding down a job.

We ask the CEC to urge caution in the matter of incapacity benefit testing. The benchmark should be fairness, and caring and compassionate, and not as a matter of finance. We remember Norman Tebbit telling the unemployed to get on their bikes and find work. I would hate for this government to be remembered as the one that told the disabled to get on their mobility scooters and find work. Congress, I move this motion. *(Applause)*

BRO. G. MAYFIELD (Northern): Congress, in the North East of England we have a very high number of people on incapacity benefit. May I suggest that this is because we have very high numbers of people who have been employed in heavy industry over the years, in engineering, shipbuilding, and coalmining. Working in these types of industries takes its toll physically. The reason for having incapacity benefit is to give people who are incapable of working any more a higher level of benefit. I believe that is right and just.

The Government's proposals are to introduce a new assessment to see if people are able to do any type of work. This must be done very sensitively as people who have not worked for a long time will lose confidence in their ability to work, on top of the reasons that placed them on incapacity in the first place.

Congress, we believe that the attacks on the most vulnerable in society are totally unjustified. While we welcome genuine attempts to help people back to work who want to and are able to, like some of the Pathways to Work projects, we totally reject any compulsion to do this. Congress, I second this composite. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? No. Can I call Linda Clarke on behalf of the CEC? Linda?

SIS. L. CLARKE (CEC, Public Services): Congress, the CEC wholeheartedly supports our members' concerns about the impending changes to the incapacity benefit system. In the Autumn a new work capability assessment will replace incapacity benefits for new claimants. We are not confident that the principles that underpin the reforms are anything but a cost-cutting exercise. Of course, we agree with the principle of helping people who have been ill for some time to get back to the workplace and, of course, we support the principle of making work more accessible to disabled people. Look at the fight we put up to do just that on behalf of Remploy workers being thrown on the scrapheap but somehow all the rhetoric about empowering sick and disabled people did not seem to apply there.

The CEC is very concerned that sick and disabled people, including ex-Remploy workers, will now have to undergo work capability assessments to keep their meagre benefits.

The GMB does not and never will support bullying and coercion of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and we do not support target-driven decisions made by people who have no idea what it is like to be long-term sick or unable to get or keep a good job because of discrimination, prejudice, and exploitation. There is very little evidence that vulnerable people in receipt of benefits are claiming fraudulently. The problem is more one of lack of access to jobs that they could perform with their health problems and disabilities. Current proposals to put conditions on people to seek work for which they have no aptitude or ability is not the answer.

Congress, the real barriers to work are the employers' attitudes, the organisation and accessibility of workplaces, and the inflexibility of working arrangements. Congress, we want opportunities for people who can work and protection for those who cannot. Support Composite 10. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. I put Composite 10 to the vote. We are supporting.

*Composite 10 was carried.*

THE PRESIDENT: Can I remind Congress that their free Congress T-shirt can be picked up at the Marx Memorial Library stall just outside the hall. Please pick up your T-shirt.

## **SOCIAL POLICY - Education**

### **EDUCATION, SKILLS AND LIFELONG LEARNING: THE EARLY YEARS MOTION 150**

#### **150. EDUCATION, SKILLS AND LIFELONG LEARNING: THE EARLY YEARS**

Congress welcomed the Leitch Review of Skills and endorsed the view that a radical step change is needed for the UK to remain competitive.

Congress however in recognising the need for workplace training for all employees and the increase in modern apprenticeship as a means to addressing the skills shortage needed to compete within a rapidly changing global economy. We also need to recognise our role and responsibilities for the workforce of the future by ensuring that lifelong learning means what it says.

Congress believes that we cannot allow our future generations to fail because of the price of that failure to the Society as a whole will be too high.

Congress therefore is calling on the UK Government to:

Increase the investment in pre-school learning.

To support early years interventions to support those children with greatest learning difficulties; and

That early year interventions is an investment in skills development during a child's most important years and an investment in the future prosperity of the UK.

Congress is therefore calling on the UK Government to ensure investment takes place in this vital area.

The value of such investment in today's children's early years educational development will go beyond improving learning and skills alone; and precede into increased employment prospects, reduced levels of crime and improved health by using these early years to address a widespread series of problems for those who risk being disadvantaged.

SCOTTISH PRIMARY CARE NURSING BRANCH

*GMB Scotland*

*(Carried)*

SIS. A. DEAN (GMB Scotland): Congress, for too many years the Government has paid lip service to the needs for quality investment in the education of our youngest children. True, there have been some improvements and speaking from Scotland the input of the initial two Scottish Labour Executives has had an impact with more new schools built and refurbishments than ever before and many more planned, up until the last Scottish parliamentary elections. Now we have been cast back into the wilderness of broken promises and empty rhetoric with the new nationalist regime resting on the successes of the previous Labour administrations.

So, it is with deep concern that we ask you to support this motion on the need for year-on-year investment in quality education for our youngest children. This will be critical if the UK is to maintain and improve its position within the demands of an increasingly competitive global market. It will be vital for the coming decades when immense pressure will be brought to bear on the younger working generation to provide vital proper services and economic security as social dependencies escalate as growing numbers of older people, who will be us by then, will inevitably reduce the capacity of working generations despite creative human resource policies, such as flexible working and carer support measures. These will only help up to a point.

Those working children, our children and grandchildren, will need to have a new resourcefulness, resilience, and reliability, maturity in other words, which does not necessarily come naturally with age. They will need it by the bucketful. Many children are without the ideal parental role model that helps to instil such characteristics in children so it falls on the rest of society to fill this gap. This has to be the first building blocks in the acquisition of appropriate education and skills to meet the demands of lifelong learning, a prerequisite for the flexible ever-changing jobs market of the future. International research has clearly demonstrated that children who receive appropriate high-quality support in their earliest years are less likely to go on to be tomorrow's problems. We must, therefore, call on the Government to increase the investments in pre-school learning and to prioritise those early interventions for all children, including those with learning difficulties. I move.  
*(Applause)*

BRO. J. FAULDS (GMB Scotland): Afternoon, President, colleagues. We call for reasoned attainment and achievement strategies in all establishments, all schools running a teaching policy in all establishments, learning to play, all children reading functionally as entitled by the end of primary 3, a high achievers and talented young people strategy, an improved outcome to look after the children, closing the inequality gap, transition policy from the nursery, early years, primary, secondary, and leaving school. I second Motion 150. (*Applause*)

## **TRADE UNION EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS COMPOSITE 7**

(Covering Motions 152 and 153)

**152 – Education – (London Region)**

**153 – Education for Youngsters (London Region)**

### **TRADE UNION EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

Congress, young people are not being educated in the principal function of the trade union.

We should be looking into educating our younger generations before they get into the workplace and we urge the GMB to develop a strategy to address this problem.

Congress instructs the CEC to initiate a campaign to compulsory include Trade Union history and activities in the National Education Curriculum.

(*Carried*)

BRO. D. BYRNE (London): President, Congress, colleagues, probably everybody in this room has experienced the black looks you sometimes get trying to recruit young people to a trade union. Many school-leavers have absolutely no knowledge of the principal functions of the unions. They often have no perception about how a trade union could help them throughout their working life. They often do not realise the unions negotiate pay rises, improvements to terms and conditions of employment, better health and safety regulations, and so on. Equally, they have no knowledge of the history of the Trades Union Movement and of the men and women who dedicated their lives to improving the lot of working people or of the original reasons that led to the creation of the Labour Party. Instead they are taught a lot of nonsense about kings and queens and ancient battles that will be about as much relevance to them when they leave school as the train timetables to Timbuktu.

Hence this motion calls upon Congress to instruct the CEC to initiate a campaign for trade union history and activities to be taught to our children as part of the national education curriculum. I move. (*Applause*)

BRO. K. HENDERSON (London): Trade union education in schools is so important. Our children get to learn stuff about the Royal Family, the Queen, all that crap, but they do not get to learn about the important stuff, which is our great Movement, the Trades Union Movement, and all the great work that we have done over the years and what we still do now, and how strong we are today. If they did know, I believe that later in life when they get jobs, like I did, they will join a trade union. I second. (*Applause*)

**BASIC LIFE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN  
MOTION 154**

**154. BASIC LIFE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN**

Congress urges the Government to introduce a mandatory education program in all schools on a 'Basic Life Support' qualification for children before leaving school.

MANSFIELD CENTRAL BRANCH  
*Midland & East Coast Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. M. COPPIN (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, teaching children basic life support: figures show basic life support performed by bystanders improves outcomes in cardiac respiratory collapse all the time yet less than 1% of the general population can perform this basic life support. Out-of-hospital mortality could be significantly reduced. The most effective way of achieving this is to teach this technique in schools as a life skill, a study to assess the effect of a basic life support programme and the ability of children to administer effective chest compressions. Children aged over 13 could perform chest compressions as effectively as adults and even younger children could place their hands in the correct position and perform basic life support. Several examples of a successful scheme teaching emergency life support exist but these are all voluntary, and differ. We need a formal mandatory short course that all kids could achieve before leaving school, and that is it. Most Western countries have already adopted this approach and have had phenomenal results. We are one of the worst countries in the world for heart attacks and breathing diseases are on the increase, and knife crime appears to be out of control. We need more people around with the basic skills.

Just before I finish, what are most of you going to do if someone collapses near you now? You will probably call 999 and wish you could do more. The Cat.1 8-minute response for UK's ambulances is at best ambitious, achieved on average 74% of the time in England, 59% in Scotland, and 57% in Wales.

Back to the collapse. The ambulance is on an 8-minute response, at best, and depending on where you are that may be a little bit longer. After five minutes the brain starts to die and with that any chance of a long-term survival outcome. You already wish you could do more, do you not? The casualty is someone's loved one, it could be your loved one, and they are going to die; trust me, they are going to die. If someone can perform basic life support, which I can teach anyone in this room in less than five minutes – yes, that magic five minutes again – depending on the cause of collapse, that patient will have a very good chance of a survivable and quality life. I move. Please support.  
*(Applause)*

SIS. S. FARMER (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, Mick has spoken about the importance of basic life support and why quick action is necessary. I think we can all agree how wonderful it would be to have able-bodied expertise at the scene when it all goes wrong, but why kids? Well, they learn fast and retain that knowledge and skill for all of their life and they even teach their parents. All we seem to hear about teenagers is negative, how they have learned to take drugs, binge-drink, have sex, and even kill each other, so why do we not teach them the basic skills

to help keep someone alive until expert help arrives. Please support this motion. I second.  
(Applause)

## **SKILLS, EMPLOYABILITY AND TIME OFF FOR BASIC SKILLS COURSES COMPOSITE 8**

(Covering Motions 155 and 156)

**155 – Skills and Employability – (GMB Scotland)**

**156 – Time Off for Basic Skills Courses – (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region)**

### **SKILLS, EMPLOYABILITY AND TIME OFF FOR BASIC SKILLS COURSES**

Congress welcomes the success of the UK Government and the historically high levels of employment however, we also recognise the unacceptable levels of uneconomically and educationally inactive young people across the UK.

Congress recognises that to date too little attention has been paid to the role of the Government and employers to deliver quality employment opportunities supported by an ongoing training provision by employers.

We therefore call on Government to create a funding mechanism supporting in-work training ensuring that employers invest and support a statutory right for all workers to be trained, developing the individual skills and employability.

Congress we call upon you to ask the Government for paid time off for employees to attend basic skills courses.

(Carried)

SIS. C. LAVERY (GMB Scotland): Congress, building the skills base of the workforce of tomorrow is vital to the economic success of the UK. Investing in the nation's future is not just about government investment in training, important though this certainly is, it needs both government and employers to provide the framework for investing in and developing our young people. We can already see this has been recognised to some degree with the development of modern apprenticeships. Congress, I am convinced that better government support for employers would see those smaller employers taking on more young people whilst at the same time establishing the framework that employers have a liability to invest in young people.

The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, in a speech on 28<sup>th</sup> January this year set out plans to enable a major expansion of apprenticeships to encourage the inactive to get new skills. The global economy is driving the need for skill development at an unprecedented pace so reaching out to and engaging those young people into learning will be vital.

We know that the UK has a skills deficit. We know that we have 6 million unskilled workers in the UK with projected figures suggesting that the UK will only need half a million soon. Government are currently offering a credit of £3,000 to employers to help cover the cost of taking on modern apprentices. We, Congress, need to be demanding from employers that this is their moral and social responsibility, take on young people out of unemployment and provide them with skills for life and

jobs. With 600 vacancies, according to government, many of which need skilled people, it is a travesty that we as a nation have so many young people on the edge of the labour market with no hope or opportunity.

Congress, our challenge from today should be that we all return from Congress calling on employers to take the opportunity to employ young people today. Making a commitment to today's unskilled young people must be one of our priorities. I move. *(Applause)*

**BRO. S. HATTON (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire):** The number of adults taking publicly funded education courses has fallen dramatically over the last two years. The recent government announcement of the right to request time off for training does not go far enough. The organisations and employers that offer no opportunity to train employees will have the right to refuse the request. What is required is a statutory right for paid time off for basic skills courses. This should be developed in a way that allows employees that have never had the opportunity to take time off for training in basic skills to have that right with pay.

We should not allow business and financial institutions to influence this right. This right should help low-paid workers develop their knowledge and skills and, hopefully, increase their quality of life by improving their pay. Anyone familiar with job evaluation will agree that one of the main factors in determining the pay rate is the level of knowledge and skills a worker has developed to carry out their job. That is why it is absolutely necessary to have the statutory right for paid time off for training in basic skills. Please support. I second. *(Applause)*

## **CAMPAIGN TO SAVE TRADE UNION EDUCATION AT KEELE UNIVERSITY MOTION 157**

### **157. CAMPAIGN TO SAVE TRADE UNION EDUCATION AT KEELE UNIVERSITY**

This Congress condemns the decision of Keele University to arbitrarily close its world renowned school of Economic and Management studies, which includes The Department of Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations, which provides a valuable research facility for the trade union movement and has undertaken work to support and inform on such issues as public sector pay, industrial relations, trade union organisation, and industrial relations in both the UK and the European Union as well as providing professional qualification for trade union activists and officials, and is one of the few remaining universities that provides these courses.

Congress therefore instructs the CEC to actively support the campaign of the UCU and the wider Trade Union movement to prevent the closure the school and stop the threatened redundancies.

GMB@PCS BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

**BRO. M. AKBAR (London):** President, Congress, there are very few things in this world which can be deemed to be world-class, excluding GMB because we are. In the field of industrial relationships it is even scarcer, such as the Keele University decision to close its School of Economics and Management Studies, which includes the Department of Human Resource and Industrial Relations,

strongly condemned by Congress. It is because the issues exist that conferences like this take place. Without a dedicated school to the study and application of public relations the trade unions will find it difficult to maintain credibility, without continuing academic advancement in the field; added to that there is the potential redundancy of 80% of the department of HR. Keele University is on the brink of making a decision that will be detrimental to the cause of the trade unions. There is a saying which goes, *If it's not broken, don't fix it*. In an attempt to fix it Keele University run the risk of breaking it.

I call on Congress to put pressure on the CEC to take this matter as far as possible in order to stop the closure and redundancies at Keele University. Please support the motion. I move. (*Applause*)

SIS. F. HARDIMAN (London): Research, audit, statistics, survey, evaluation, trends, polls, evidence, these are all methods of measurement and these are the fundamental skills that people learn when they go to university. Trade unionists go to the university to learn how social policy is put together, sampling techniques, and survey techniques, and research methods teach us how to take apart the statistics, statistics, numbers and damned lies, that government like to use to do us down.

This was in the *Guardian* only a few weeks ago: critical thinking under attack in universities. Hundreds of academics have signed a letter asking Keele University not to close this department down. I am asking you here today to support this motion, to stop 38 out of 67 academic staff, and an unknown number of residual staff and support staff, from being made redundant at Keele University, to help us to access the information that we need as trade unionists to fight the fight that we need to continue to support our workers and to make trade unionism a well-qualified and accurate resource for the workers of the UK. Congress, I second. (*Applause*)

BRO. I. KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, I can tell you now that Keele University does work for the Trades Union Movement and for individuals who want to further their education, and actually for the first time be able to take a university course, and not just get a Bachelors Degree but actually a Masters Degree. I am the living proof. I left school with no thought of me going to university but through trade union courses I was able to get to Keele. Just to prove how useful it was, earlier this year I had to attend a disciplinary for one of my members and the young guy from the HR department who was handling it, I got talking to him after the initial investigation and asked him which university he had come from, "Keele," he said. "Oh, through the degree in HR?" "Yes, I got my Bachelors Degree." "Oh, that's funny," I said, "I did a Masters." This guy, 6'4", and I am barely 5'6", literally visibly shrank.

So, colleagues, support this motion because it is a damned good university offering damned good support to us. (*Applause*)

BRO. A. GOODFELLOW (Southern) responding to and supporting Motion 150 and Composite 7, said: As I said before, I am a school governor and I sit on the Early Years Development Partnership in Southampton. We have Sure Starts in Southampton. We have following on infant, primary, junior school, and the policy is now every child matters, every disabled child matters, and they are passported through every year of their development. Their skills are monitored and of course I can

only say that happens in Southampton. Whether they do it properly in your area, you will have to investigate.

Composite 7, as I said I sit on Southampton Governors Forum. We meet quarterly. I am going to suggest at the Governors Forum, because there is also debate on British history, economics, I am going to suggest that trade union history and the functions of the Trades Union Movement be associated to British international and social history, and I think I am going to start with the *Air of Freedom: the Birth of the GMB*. I also understand that Ed Balls, Schools Minister, is putting in place a network of Labour school governors and I suggest that CEC follow that up and take the opportunity of linking up and putting the motion in practice. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Alan. Anyone else? Can I call Kevin Flanagan on behalf of the CEC on Composite 8. While Kevin is coming to the platform, Kevin, can we congratulate you on becoming the President of the Commercial Services Section this morning. Well done. (*Applause*)

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (CEC, Commercial Services): Thank you very much. Thank you, Congress. Just before I give you the qualification from the CEC let me just say that we often forget that 25% of the UK workforce has functional difficulty with numeracy and literacy. It is a major issue. This is not just about a skills deficit, this is about a life deficit. Skills exclusion actually leads to social exclusion, it leads to economic exclusion, and I on your behalf actually thank the many Union Learning Reps up and down this union who are bringing the skills agenda to the bargaining table and making employers – making employers – join in partnerships to address the skills deficit and sometimes dragging the employer kicking and shouting to that table. That is good trade unionism. That is about addressing the needs of our members. That is GMB at work through education and training.

We have a new generation they call the NEETs, the not in employment, education, or training. Do you know that one in six of our young people still leave school with functional difficulty, mainly young men with functional difficulty in numeracy and literacy? It is a disgrace. What we need to do is not just pass this motion but take it to heart. Funding for basic skills is not just about the higher level skills, it is about making sure those who do not have the foot on the ladder get their foot on the ladder and we help them to progress it.

Congress, we are calling on you to support Composite 8 with one qualification. The intent of the motion is in line with GMB policy on skills. The qualification is that the Government recognises this issue following the Leitch Report and now provides the right to training up to Level 2 for all employees.

Furthermore, last month the Prime Minister announced that the Government will give the right to ask for training in the proposed Education and Skills Bill. GMB is pressing for support to Level 3 as well. Earlier this year the Government consulted on Skills for Work and world-class apprenticeships and as a way of improving skills at work the Government intends raising the number of apprenticeships in England to 400,000 and to half a million in the UK by 2011.

GMB supports these proposals as a way of improving skills in the UK. In our submission from the GMB we ask that apprenticeships should be linked to employment, have a fair wage, and be available for adults over the age of 26 who need retraining or are made redundant, as well as for

young people. Congress, we hope you will accept that qualification and support and act upon Composite 8.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Kevin. Can I now put Motion 150 to the vote. The CEC are supporting.

*Motion 150 was carried.*

THE PRESIDENT: Composite 7 - support.

*Composite 7 was carried.*

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 154, Basic Life Support, the CEC are supporting.

*Motion 154 was carried.*

THE PRESIDENT: Composite 8, does GMB Scotland accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you very much. With the qualification to Composite 8, we are asking you to support.

*Composite 8 was carried.*

THE PRESIDENT: Motion 157, the CEC are supporting.

*Motion 157 was carried.*

### **EMPLOYMENT POLICY: Migrant Workers**

THE PRESIDENT: As you can see, I have been joined on the platform by Michael Mazurek.

### **A BETTER SERVICE TO MIGRANT WORKERS MOTION 118**

#### **118. A BETTER SERVICE TO MIGRANT WORKERS**

In the past few years, Trade Unions have increased their efforts to recruit members from the growing market of Migrant Workers' Communities; however, although where the Union achieved an increase in their membership, they lacked a supporting provision of service that meets their Migrant Workers members' benefits and aspirations.

This is not just the huge language barrier, but also the cultural codes that have to be taken into consideration, as well as the changing in the employment structures that affect how well organised a Trade Union should be and to service their members appropriately, which will encourage and retain their membership.

It might be appropriate to use members of those communities to act as interpreters in workshops and other events, in order to pass information and recruit new members from those communities,

but when it comes to service those members on legal issues, other factors have to be considered to avoid poor outcomes and, probably, a loss of membership as well.

On the other hand, there are no life long jobs anymore and workers have become more mobile than ever. There's not always a shop steward or a ULR Representative in a place where his/her Trade Union has recognition. Agency workers can be transferred over night from one workplace to another. A full workforce can be laid-off or made redundant and replaced by agency workers.

Many vibrant migrant communities accommodate educated and talented people that can be recruited and trained as union officers and/or outreach organisers to help the GMB Union and its branches to better exercise their roles and achieve their responsibilities. The integration and social inclusion of Migrant Workers' communities will provide a better service in protecting them and also augment their relationship with the local workforce.

*The organising of migrant workers can no longer be focused only at the workplace; it also has to be done in their communities.*

GMB LOWESTOFT BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Carried)*

BRO. A. GUEDES (London): President, Congress, comrades, due to language barriers in different cultures migrant workers have put an additional pressure on services the whole time and trade union services are not an exception. Together we have acknowledged their rights in employment legislation and timescales. Migrant members suffer with those barriers when they have a problem at work and cannot be understood on the other end of the line when they are calling for help or advice. Under these circumstances they end up resigning from trying to get some much needed help from their union, turning themselves into disposable assets and vulnerable targets to unemployment, questioning themselves, why have they joined the union in the first place.

GMB has a goal on membership equation and branches have been requested to be proactive in recruiting, but concerning migrant workers recruitment a different approach is necessary as branches lack infrastructures in funding to take that step. Membership always can be achieved having branches working in partnership with local community groups and voluntary organisations, promoting Know your Rights courses, setting up and keep running community oriented union courses whilst maintaining those communities engaged in and actively participating in trade union activity. On the other hand, we must recognise that most of the organisers do not speak any language other than English and the truth is that when a migrant worker rings up for advice they will not get much help. The same applies to representation and these are the critical moments when membership passes.

Recruiting and maintaining membership is very much needed at all costs but that is not achieved through an eternal practice of checking the till every 10 minutes to find out how much money is there so far, instead of focusing on improved services to clientele. Let's forget the till for now and focus on good and better services to our members in general and we will see a fast and sustained membership growth.

Congress, at the moment the GMB is stuck in its policies. It is time to recruit and train bilingual officers to fulfil the gaps. It is time to provide branches with resources, expertise, and funding streams to support projects aiming to increase and retain membership. It is time to stop putting migrant membership into jeopardy and show employers that GMB members are not disposable. Congress, please support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

BRO. A. McLEAN (London): President, Congress, over the past few years we have seen an increase in the number of migrant workers in the UK and we all acknowledge the important contribution that they all make to the British economy. It is essential that they are afforded the same rights and conditions as other workers in the UK. An important element is to ensure that any barriers, including language issues, are identified and addressed. To achieve this the GMB needs to address the levels of support required and the most appropriate means of addressing these needs is to ensure parity with other union members. I therefore trust you will support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

## **STEWARDS TRAINING IN RELEVANT LANGUAGES MOTION 45**

### **45. STEWARDS TRAINING IN RELEVANT LANGUAGES**

Congress recognises the influx of migrant workers and the need to get them organized. Some GMB regions have set up migrant workers branches. Such Branches can isolate these members. So we call upon Congress to provide relevant training in languages to stewards in areas where there is a influx of migrant workers thus being able help integrate these members and to give the correct advice about UK employment issues the GMB should be trying to integrate these members into organised work places.

CAMBRIDGE 2 BRANCH  
*London Region*

*(Referred)*

BRO. D. LINDSAY (London): President, Congress, this motion calls for extra training for shop stewards recruiting new migrant workers into the Union. Of the many migrants coming to this country many arrive with a background and understanding of trade unionism and socialism, particularly from Eastern Europe where they are looking to join a trade union. We need to think carefully about the communication problems that they will experience. It would be useful, therefore, for stewards to have a small amount of language training at a basic level and an understanding of the cultural differences of the people they will be representing when they first join the Union. Experience has shown that migrant workers come to us with their problems at this point. The training steward will then form a partnership with the migrant worker and both could work together and learn from each other. This would improve the migrant worker's English and also help the steward to understand the cultural and social needs of the workers he represents. From this point on migrant workers would bond together with union membership in a cohesive unit. This occurs with many workers that join our union and always a leader comes from this group who tends to be respected. This is when the language barrier is breached, leader and steward work together with full regional support in education and steward training, and then recruiting can begin. This is always better done by the migrant leader who has been trained to be a steward. We see this process in all areas of recruitment in the Union and with branches with migrant workers it is most important that

as many as possible participate in branch meetings on a regular basis. This is to help with their housing and social security problems. This should increase recruiting by word of mouth by new members. This, I feel, is slowly falling into place with the new organisational system that our regions are implementing. This motion, I feel, will focus the Union on the issue which Cambridge 2 Branch feels needs to be highlighted. Get it right and we grow even faster. I move. (*Applause*)

*Motion 45 was formally seconded.*

BRO. S. McKENZIE (London): Strongly supporting 118. Comrades, in the absence of our dear friend, comrade, and brother, Hiten Vaidya, he had to leave us in such tragic circumstances along with Bro. Shailesh, I think it is incumbent upon me to come to this rostrum to explain that last year when we had people from Bakkavor here and we were still campaigning to get that place organised, it was the work in the community that those comrades did, those two, and Sis. Khan and Bro. Nilesh. Each Saturday, and a lot of Sundays as well, they used to run basic skills courses in English for people with English as a second language, week in, week out, from February '06 right round and they are still going on today. We also used to run industrial surgeries down there. It was real work in the community because people were frightened to be seen and associated with the Union. They wanted it away from work's time. They wanted it away from the workplace.

That work in the community from those comrades in particular is what led to successful signing of the recognition agreement and the recruitment of 1,000 workers, mainly Asian and Polish. In all situations like this where you have a big influx of workers it is all starting to come on top, especially when a couple of weeks ago the immigration people raided a factory and I think they took away over 40 people, it was questionable whether their papers were right, and what have you. Now, despite the fantastic back-up that we had from full-time Bro. Tahir Bhatti, and all the other comrades in the London Region, it is all coming on top, and what has happened to Hitan has not helped. I think we really do have to pass this resolution and act on it because I think if we fail to do that we are going to be losing people from migrant communities. We need to get them in but we need to service them well as well. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: I call Ronnie Waugh on Motion 45 and while Ronnie is coming up I congratulate Ronnie on becoming the President of the Manufacturing Section. Well done, Ronnie. (*Applause*)

BRO. R. WAUGH (CEC, Manufacturing): Thanks, Mary. We got there in the end, didn't we! Congress, all the regions have met under the auspices of the National Organising Team and agreed a consensus on the integration versus migrant worker branch debate. Therefore, the CEC seeks referral of this motion in order to prepare a statement which described the GMB's policy direction on this issue in finer detail than allowed for in the motion. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ron. I move Motion 118 to the vote. The CEC are supporting.

*Motion 118 was carried.*

THE PRESIDENT: Does London Region accept the reference back? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Congress, the region has accepted reference back. Agreed? (*Agreed*) Thank you very much. We got there in the end.

*Motion 45 was referred.*

THE PRESIDENT: I now welcome Michael Mazurek, Vice Consul from the Polish Consulate. The GMB has organised thousands of Polish workers over the last few years, in particular in Scotland, on the South Coast, and in London and the South East. We want to make sure that Polish workers know that they are welcomed by trades unions into the UK and we want them to be organised against exploitation. As part of the campaign to win trade union rights for migrant workers in the UK, the GMB and Unison have linked up with the Polish Cultural Institute to bring Polish artists to the trades union-run Left Field Stage at the Glastonbury Festival 2008. I ask Michael to address Congress. Michael? (*Applause*)

### **MICHAEL MAZUREK, CONSUL, POLISH CONSULATE: ADDRESS TO CONGRESS**

MICHAEL MAZUREK: President, Congress, I would like to apologise for my voice. I am fighting a losing battle with a cough.

It has been my great pleasure to accept the invitation to participate in this Congress and meet with you. Some of you may be surprised to see a Polish Consulate officer deliver a speech at the Congress of a British trade union but seeing it from my perspective as well as the office which I represent this is pretty obvious, both the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland and you, the British trade union, we are close allies.

While the main task of every consulate office is to protect the citizens which it represents, your main concern is to fight for workers' rights. Since the majority of Polish citizens have arrived here to work hard, both our institutions have become natural allies, united by the same goals, which are to enable all working people in Great Britain to be treated honestly and fairly, to be paid decent wages equivalent to their input, and not to be exploited.

The Polish Government as well as the Polish people is very grateful to the Labour Government for the decision taken in 2004 to open the market for workers from the new member states of the European Union. Speaking from a perspective now, I must say it was a brave decision which only two other countries in Europe decided to follow at that time. Although British politicians have been sometimes criticised for that decision, all economic data available now clearly shows that it was with mutual benefit. Since then it has also been proved by the decision of other countries to open the market.

Polish workers have become a vital part of the British labour market, especially in the areas where it has been difficult to find local workers, such as agriculture. Many of our citizens are working in public services as doctors, nurses, bus drivers, and care workers. If it had not been for the hard work many of those sectors would have been a lot worse off. Thanks to their efforts Polish nationals in the UK are now associated not only with their bravery during the Second World War but also are regarded as very able people, willing to build their prosperity through honest and decent work.

This generally positive picture has a darker side as well. With such a great number of migrant workers currently in the UK, they have been sometimes seen by local workers as a potential threat to the employment chances. This has occasionally led to the manifestation of aversion and caused conflicts. On the other hand, however, there have been individuals and companies who tried to take advantage of vulnerable newcomers who did not have the knowledge of the British system and regulation. The Consulate has been informed of many occasions about dishonest employers who provided low paid and insecure work, made unfair deductions from wages, and did not pay taxes or National Insurance contributions. In such cases our role as the Consulate and yours as the trade union is to fight and eliminate those practices as well as dishonest employers from the market. Such employers are abusing the most vulnerable people and are unfair competition towards other employers and their workers.

The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland is making every effort to cooperate with every British institution which acts for the benefit of workers and protects their employment rights. We have been closely cooperating with the Gangmasters Licensing Authority. We keep them informed about any breach of employment law in the areas which are under the supervision of the GLA. We organise common projects with the Citizens Advice Bureau which are directed to the Polish community living and working in Great Britain. The Consulate also cooperates with the Trades Union Congress with which we have issued and distributed a brochure written in Polish about workers' rights in Great Britain. Recently in cooperation with GMB and the Polish Culture Institute we are engaged in the promotion of Polish bands during this year's Glastonbury Festival. As you see, we are open to new initiatives which are organised with trade unions.

I read with great interest the report on vulnerable workers prepared by the Trades Union Congress with the contribution of representatives of the GMB. One of its recommendations for trade unions is to recruit new members from the migrant workers communities. I know that your organisation has been already joined by many Polish workers, which is very positive news from my perspective.

I wish to declare that the Consulate is very eager to support any initiative undertaken by your organisation which aims at the wellbeing of the migrant workers, among them Polish nationals.

Being in touch with many Polish organisations in Great Britain we would like to offer our assistance in reaching Polish communities. I do trust that my presence here today will contribute to the new common project. I do realise that over the last months one of the major concerns of your organisation, as well as the British Trades Union Movement, has been temporary and agency workers' rights. Speaking from my experience as a Consulate officer, I must admit that on many occasions we have been informed by the Polish nationals about the breach of employment law in those agencies. The statistics show, however, that most Polish workers start their employment careers in Great Britain with employment agencies and many of them, luckily, involved the permanent workers. In my opinion, the recent agreement which levels the right of agency workers allowing them to obtain the same status after 12 weeks of employment is very good news and a huge step forward. I do hope that an agreement will be achieved within the European Union regarding agency workers directives. Polish regulation has already been adjusted to the product of this directive.

Being a person directly involved with the protection of the rights of the migrant workers I greatly welcome such initiatives as well as I highly value the creation of such institutions like the Gangmasters Licensing Authority and I wish for them to be extended in future. We all do realise that in the area of globalisation Europe must try to be more and more competitive but, knowing that, we must not forget about the workers' rights, which are an important gain of the modern civilisation and can serve as a model to follow in our lives and work.

Finally, I would like to thank you for all actions undertaken for the benefit of workers, including those who have arrived from Poland. I wish to assure you once again that the office which I represent here today is your close ally and we are willing to cooperate with your organisation whenever possible. We do hope that as time goes by the majority of Polish nationals will return to Poland where they will build a future and contribute to the development of the Polish economy, making good use of the know-how they gained here in Great Britain. But we do hope that there will still be a place for cooperation between the institutions of various countries for the mutual benefit of our workers and citizens.

Once again, I would like to thank the General Secretary for inviting me here and I do hope that I meet many of you in the rest of today's events. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Michael, I understand that the Temporary Agency Workers Bill was carried in Europe this week, Tuesday night.

Michael, on behalf of the GMB and in memory of your visit to us, which I hope will be one of many, could I present you with *this* made by our members.

*Presentation of gift amid applause.*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I think it is only right that we thank Browell Smith & Co. for their sponsorship of the President's Night tonight and could I welcome Philip Browell, Managing Partner of Browell Smith & Co. to receive a gift. Thank you.

*Presentation of gift amid applause.*

THE PRESIDENT: Could I remind Congress that the President's Night is in the New Continental Hotel, the doors open at 7 p.m. and there will be a buffet and live band. Could I also remind delegates to bring their Congress credentials with them.

I would like to announce that if anyone is checking out of their hotel tomorrow morning there are secure cloakroom facilities here at the Pavilion in the Cotehele Suite, so you can leave your bags and cases there safely.

Congress, that is the end of today's business. Congress will reconvene at 9.30 tomorrow morning. See you later.

*Conference adjourned.*