

GMB

CONGRESS 2013

.....

SIS. MARY TURNER MBE
(President)
(In the Chair)

.....

Held in:

Plymouth Pavilions,
Plymouth

on:

Sunday, 2nd June 2013
Monday, 3rd June 2013
Tuesday, 4th June 2013
Wednesday, 5th June 2013
and
Thursday, 6th June 2013

.....

PROCEEDINGS
DAY ONE
(Sunday, 2nd June 2013)

.....

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

.....

FIRST DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

SUNDAY 2ND JUNE 2013

MORNING SESSION

(Congress assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, Congress. Welcome to Plymouth. Could I welcome all delegates to our GMB Congress. Before we start, could you, please, either switch off or put your mobile or other devices on silent. There is a £10 charge if it rings. Remember. I think I should put it up this year.

VIDEO MONTAGE

THE PRESIDENT: We start Congress with a short video montage showing our events and campaigns from the past year.

(Video Montage shown) (Applause)

That, Congress, is just a part of what our Union has been doing in the past year.

BANNER CEREMONY

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I now move to the Banner Ceremony. We have asked the North West & Irish Region to form the Banner Party this year. Congress, please stand to greet the National Banner. This year we also welcome all the other Regional and Branch Banners into the Congress Hall. *(Congress was upstanding for the Banner party to the singing and music of Jerusalem)(Applause)*

Congress, you will find details of the fire evacuation procedures on page 131 of the Final Agenda and Congress Guide document. Please take time to those at those and familiarise yourselves with your nearest exit.

WELCOME TO DELEGATES AND VISITORS

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, could I now introduce members of the platform party. On my right is my great friend, Malcolm Sage, who does a lot of work, our Vice President. Next to him sits our European Officer, Kathleen Walker Shaw, who will be assisting the Vice President. On my left sits the General Secretary and Treasurer, Paul Kenny, and I would like you to give a special welcome this year to Ida Clemo, who is now sitting on the platform and is our Executive Policy Officer. If you have a problem, don't see Ida, see Paul. *(Applause)*

I welcome the following guests and visitors. The General Member Auditors, who will count the votes, are Ian Burkett and Steve Dery. Albert Haynes is unable to attend Congress this year.

I would like to give a special welcome to ex-Regional Secretaries: John Cope, from the London Region; Bill Smith, from the North West & Irish Region, and, last but not least, the man with my phone, Allan Garley, Wales and South West Region. Welcome to all three of you.

We have some Regional guests. We have Vinny Bloor, President of the Birmingham & West Midlands Region and his wife; Frank Rowberry, Wales & South West Region, and John Needham, the Midland Regional Vice-President.

Congress, we have not had any requests for signers this year. I welcome our Verbatim Shorthand Writers, Michael Thear and Phyllis Hilder. Welcome. The Congress hall has an infra-red system. If you need a headset, please go to the Congress office and they will arrange it.

Congress, I extend a warm welcome to all first-time delegates. Could I remind all delegates that all Congress sessions are transmitted on live GMB Congress TV. This means that your speech will be shown live over the internet through the GMB National website. Please make sure you remember to state your name and Region clearly for the verbatim record and so that your name can be shown on the screen. Please also mention if you are a first-time speaker.

Could I ask delegates to take a moment to check that you have three important documents. The first is a one-page running order. The second document is the Income & Expenditure Report, and the third is your Final Agenda & Congress Guide. The Final Agenda & Congress Guide is a combined document. It is information on motions and rule amendments, SOC guidelines for Congress business, including time limits for speakers, Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1, representation statements for Congress, composite motions, fringe meetings, exhibitions and seating plan. All Congress documents are printed on environmentally friendly paper and there are recycling bins in the Hall for paper and plastic.

Free tea and coffee is available from the Café in the main Exhibition Area. This has been sponsored by Liverpool Victoria. Please remember to show your Congress credentials.

I would like to thank our main sponsors: Pellacraft for the refreshments in the Congress Hall, Thompsons Solicitors for the delegate bags and lanyards, Digby Brown Solicitors for sponsoring the GMB Internet Café in the Exhibition Area and Simpsons Solicitors for the Congress T-Shirts.
(Applause)

ROLL CALL

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to the next business. Would all Regional Secretaries please notify the Congress Office if there are any changes to their delegations.

OBITUARIES

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I now call on you to stand in silence as a mark of respect for departed GMB colleagues. Names will be shown on the screen and a copy of the Obituary list can be found on page 130 of the Final Agenda & Congress Guide. Additional names not on the printed list are Bill Dempsey, London Region, who was very much involved in the RMA, and Steve Featherstone, ex-officer at Midland & East Coast Region. I ask Congress to stand.

Congress stood in silent tribute

THE VICE PRESIDENT (Malcolm Sage): Colleagues, could I inform Congress that the names of the Regional Tellers who have been appointed are now being shown on the screen. Could I, please, emphasise that Tellers must remain in the Congress Hall whilst Congress is in session and that delegates must be in their allotted seats when a vote is taken.

I will now give a demonstration on eligibility for voting. I would like everyone in the hall to put up your hands, please. Could the following now, please, put your hands down: visitors, guests, auditors, full-time officials and regional secretaries, national officers and national secretaries, GMB staff and members of the CEC. Only those of you who still have your hands up are eligible to vote at Congress. Thank you.

The members of the Standing Orders Committee and the CEC Observers are now being shown on the screen.

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, could I congratulate Helen Johnson on her election as Chair of the Standing Orders Committee for a sixth year. Well done Helen. (*Applause*)

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1

THE PRESIDENT: I call on Helen to move Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1.

SIS. H. JOHNSON (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): Congress, I formally move Standing Orders Committee Report No. 1. President and Congress, you will find a copy of SOC Report No. 1 in your Final Agenda, starting on page 23. I formally move adoption of that report and, in doing so, the SOC would like to thank delegates and their regional secretaries for agreeing the 23 composite motions that also appear in your Final Agenda on page 107. Would colleagues also please note the long-standing guidelines for Congress business on page 17 of the Final Agenda. This will help all of you, especially new delegates, in understanding the procedures and guidelines that the President and the SOC work to.

Withdrawn motions. The SOC has been informed that the following motions have been withdrawn. Motion 1: National Equality Conference: Ability to Submit Motions to Congress, in the name of London Region; Motion 54: Youth, also in the name of London Region; Motion 55: GMB Young Members and Apprentices Members Rates, in the name of Wales & South West Region; Motion 56: Apprentice Recruitment Rates, in the name of Midland & East Coast Region; Motion 57: Apprentice Contribution Rate, in the name of Midland & East Coast Region; Motion 60: Funding of the Equality Agenda, in the name of London Region; Motion 69: Engage With Our Young People, in the name of Birmingham & West Midlands Region; and Motion 122: Apprentice Rates, in the name of Midland and East Coast Region. Would delegates please note that Motions 55, 56, 57, 69 and 122 have all been withdrawn in favour of the CEC Finance Report.

Would Congress delegates please note that if, during the week, any further motions are to be withdrawn the following procedures should be adhered to. The regional secretary should be notified and the regional secretary should then inform the SOC in writing that the motion has been withdrawn. The SOC will then report the matter to Congress so that all delegates are aware of the position and will be able to follow the Congress agenda.

Existing policy motions. President and Congress, in accordance with recommendation 14 of the *Framework for the Future of the GMB Moving Forward*, the CEC Special Report, endorsed by Congress in 2007, the SOC is recommending that motions which are existing policy are endorsed by Congress without the need for debate. As has occurred at each Congress since 2008, the SOC is recommending that the same approach is taken for Congress 2013.

The Central Executive Council has advised the SOC which motions are in line with existing policy and the SOC has accepted this advice and is recommending that these motions are put to Congress to be endorsed without the need for debate. Delegates will find the existing policy motions listed in SOC Report no. 1 at page 26 of the Final Agenda. You may also find it helpful to refer to the detailed report from the CEC, which is at page 124 of your Final Agenda, as this explains when the policy in question was reached. The letters “EP” also appear at the side of each such motion in the Agenda.

Motions out of order. The SOC has ruled that the following motions and rule amendments are out of order for debate: Motion 34, Retired Life Members to be a Full Financial Member, and Motion 35, Retired Life Members, Eligibility for Office Within the GMB. Both of these motions would require rule amendments as they seek to change the rules on eligibility of retired members to hold office. Both of these motions also make incorrect references to rules which are no longer in the GMB Rule Book. Motion 36, GMB Branch Health Officers, requires a change to Rule 35.3, since it seeks to establish the office of “Health Officer” in the branch structure.

Congress, as you know, the CEC Special Report on GMB branches invites comments and suggestions on the way forward for the branch structure and the branch moving Motion 36 can, of course, still contribute its ideas to this national branch review.

Motions 88, 159 and 200 are three motions which the SOC believes should be dealt with by a more appropriate body, and they are, in relation to Motion 88, Pensions; Motion 159, Protecting Local Government Terms and Conditions, and Motion 200, Fair Pay for a Day's Work.

Motion 241: De-Affiliation from the Labour Party. The motion says that the Union must debate whether the union stays affiliated to the Labour Party. In order to do so, rule amendments to Rules. 12.1 and 19.1 are listed in your Final Agenda. However, the SOC has reviewed this decision to rule Motion 241 out of order on these grounds and has recognised that in doing so the SOC would be pre-empting the outcome of any such debate. So the SOC, therefore, withdraws these original decisions on ruling the motion out of order. (*Applause*) However (*Laughter*), on further discussion, the SOC still believes this motion to be out of order for debate on the grounds that it is instructing Congress to debate the issue. The SOC believes that it is not within the remit of any branch or region to instruct Congress on what it debates.

Rule amendments also believed to be out of order by the SOC: Rule amendment 327 refers to Rule 17b Organisers, and rule amendment 329 refers to Rule 17f Procedure for electing organisers. These two rule amendments should be read together since they seek to delete the requirement to elect organisers under Rule 17b and to delete the procedure for electing organisers under 17f. On its own, rule amendment 327 would leave the Rule Book deficient because it would leave the procedure for electing organisers in place. However, rule amendment 329 seeks to delete the whole of the relevant rule and not merely amend those qualities which relate to the elections of organisers. This would also leave the Rule Book deficient, since the procedure, under Rule 17f, is used as a procedure for other Rule Book positions, for example, the election of General Members Auditors under Rule 29.

Rule amendment 357, also out of order, relates to Funeral benefit. This amendment seeks to amend words in connection with Funeral benefit which were removed by Congress 2012. This is deficient in that it seeks to amend rules which are no longer in the Rule Book.

Congress, the SOC has noticed this year that there have been three motions that have referred to out-of-date rule books. We would like to remind the branches that, when submitting motions, they check that they are working from the current working rule book because the SOC does not wish to have rule motions out of order for minor technicalities.

Finally, election of President and Vice President. As to the election of President and Vice President, no election is required. There was only one nomination for each position, namely, Mary Turner for President, and Malcolm Sage for Vice President. Therefore, they are both elected unopposed. Congratulations to both of them. (*Applause*)

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

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Oh, here comes the queue. Vaughan.

BRO. V. WEST (London): London Region thinks that the SOC has made an error in ruling Motion 159 out of order for debate at this Congress. This motion is not about the nuts and bolts of a pay claim or the negotiations for local government pay. It is about a general attack on local government workers, the vilification of local government workers and the attacks that we are facing across the public sector. We believe that Motion 159 is about supporting our brothers and sisters in local government and in showing that this union is fully behind the campaign for decent wages for local government staff. It is not about

the nuts and bolts of such a claim. We, therefore, believe it is important that such a campaign is debated so that the full weight of the Union is behind our colleagues.

THE PRESIDENT: Vaughan, this is not an opportunity to make a speech. It is for you to make a point. Thank you.

BRO. M. LANCASTER (London): I would like to support the reference back on Motion 36 – the introduction of health officers into our branch structure. Congress, the CEC referred this motion so that a review of branch structures could be carried out. The London Region delegation fully supports the CEC proposal for this motion to be referred back on that basis. Please support this reference back. Thank you.

BRO. T. PLUMB (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): This year I am speaking with the support of my region. (*Applause*) I am seeking reference back to the decision of the Standing Orders Committee on Motion 241, De-affiliation from the Labour Party. Anyone who was present at Congress last year would have seen and heard me speak about this subject. We purposely changed the wording this year to say “must debate” rather than “must affiliate”. Our region still believes it is a matter for Congress to decide whether we debate this matter. We believe that the wording has been played with to stop us from speaking about it this year. I would like to seek your support that we do debate this subject this year. I believe that Congress should decide whether we can debate the motion or not.

The second motion that I have been asked to refer back concerns Rule 17f, which is clearly headed: “Election of Organisers”. There is no mention whatsoever to the election of General Member Auditors. Colleagues, the reference back I am seeking is not, at this stage, on whether or not you think this rule should be deleted, but it is on whether the reason given by the Standing Orders Committee is right or wrong.

In ruling both of these motions out of order, I believe that they SOC is wrong. Both myself and my region asks for your support on both of these matters. Thank you. (*Applause*)

BRO. R. REEVES (Southern): Congress, I am seeking reference back as a matter of principle. Ten out of the 16 motions ruled out of order were done so because they were deemed requiring a rule change. This is a rule-change Congress ----

THE PRESIDENT: Colleague, which motion are you asking for reference back on?

BRO. REEVES: I am seeking reference back, without getting the book out, on the motions that were deemed out of order, as I have just said, on a matter of principle. I am sure you understand.

THE PRESIDENT: Carry on.

BRO. REEVES: The motions that were ruled out of order were done so because they were deemed requiring a rule change. This is a rule-change Congress, so these motions should be allowed to be debated in the normal way. So it is Catch-22. If these motions were passed, the CEC would be required to produce suitable rule change to enact them. It is part of the job of the CEC to carry out the wishes of Congress. Motion 35 was amended because of a technicality by the region, yet it was still ruled out of order as unamended. If accepted, this report would severely restrict the role of lay members in bringing change to our Union and would be an attack on the democratic process. Please oppose this report and refer back.

THE PRESIDENT: Is that it? (*No response*) I call Helen.

SIS. H. JOHNSON (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): I am responding to the challenges to SOC Report No. 1. In relation to Motion 36, this seeks to establish a Branch Health Officer into our branch structure. Congress, Rule 35 currently lists the positions that each branch will have; for example, a president, a secretary, an equality officer and so on. The establishment of the officer of Branch Health Officer would require an amendment to the Rule 35.3. As you know, the CEC Special Report on GMB Branches invites comments and suggestions on the way forward for branch structure, and that the branch and region supporting Motion 36 can, of course, still contribute. However, Motion 36 is still out of order for debate in view of the fact that the rule amendment required to achieve its aim has not been submitted.

On Motion 159 – Protecting Local Government Terms and Conditions – the motion agrees to defend local government employees in respect of their terms and conditions. This motion ought to be dealt with by a more appropriate body which, in this case, is the National Joint Council for Local Government Services, since it relates to a specific element of their terms and conditions, which is their pay.

Motion 241 asks for GMB's de-affiliation from the Labour Party. Congress, as explained the SOC has looked again at the decision to rule Motion 241 out of order on the ground of requiring rule changes. However, we still believe that Motion 241 is out of order for debate on the grounds that it is instructing Congress to debate the issue. The SOC believes that it is not within the remit or any branch or region to instruct Congress in what Congress decides to debate. The SOC, naturally, keeps the order for motions under review and this is what the SOC has done with Motion 241. We still believe that it is out of order for debate.

In relation to rule amendments 327 and 329, as I have previously explained, these two rule amendments need to be read together. The simple removal of one does not, in effect, remove the need to elect officers. This would not leave the Rule Book deficient since this procedure is used for the election of other officials within the Union, and an example we have given is the election of Member Auditors under Rule 29. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Colleagues, I am going to put each one to you in turn, and then I will put Standing Orders Report No. 1 to the vote. Reference back has been called on Motion 36. All those in favour, please show? All those against? I will take the vote again. Please put your hands up if you are in favour of the call for a reference back on Motion 36? All those against, please show? That is lost.

The reference back on Motion 36 was LOST.

THE PRESIDENT: I now come to the vote on Motion 159. All those in favour, please show? All those against, please show?

The reference back on Motion 159 was LOST.

THE PRESIDENT: All those in favour of Motion 241? All those against, please show.

The reference back on Motion 241 was LOST.

THE PRESIDENT: We now come to Rule Amendments 327 and 329. These two amendments must go together. All those in favour, please show? All those against, please show?

The reference back on Rule Amendments 327 and 329 were LOST.

THE PRESIDENT: Rule Amendment 357. All those in favour, please show? All those against, please show?

The reference back on Rule Amendment 357 was LOST.

THE PRESIDENT: I now put Standing Orders Report No. 1 to the vote. All those in favour, please show?

Standing Orders Report No. 1 was CARRIED.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT – MARY TURNER MBE

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, it now gives me great pleasure to call on our President, Mary Turner, to address Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, before I start, I would like to say a special “thank you” to all of those who have been so supportive of me and my family during the past few weeks and months. I would like to say to my region, the Executive and everyone, thank you so much, indeed. Being in a union, at times, you know who your friends and helpers are. Thank you very much for all that support.

Congress, I welcome all delegates, visitors, staff and exhibitors to Plymouth, which we are so pleased to see is back under Labour control. I, particularly, would like to welcome all the first-time delegates and we are delighted that there are so many of you. Be assured that there will be a warm welcome in this hall. I don’t know what you thought of earlier. Once again, we have a packed agenda. We are well aware of the challenges facing our members, our public services, our living standards, our families’ hopes and prospects, our safety at work, our pensions and our unemployment rights, all of which this Coalition Government is threatening to slash and burn.

Congress, I am proud to be the President of the GMB and, as a powerful union, together we can take on any battle. You heard it here first. At Congress 2011, Tom Watson MP spoke up about the phone-hacking scandal and other dirty tricks, and updated us last year. Through his persistence and GMB support, the Culture and Media Select Committee pushed for the Leveson Inquiry to be set up. You will recall that a compromise on press regulation was finally reached at the 11th hour. At Congress last year, GMB members in dispute with Carillion at Swindon’s Great Western Hospital came to speak to us and their feet haven’t touched the ground since. Their fight continues.

We continue to be the lead union in highlighting the illegal corporate bullying that takes place due to blacklisting. We have recently taken our blacklisting message to Europe, to the Skanska headquarters. You will have the opportunity to check whether you or anyone who you know is on that list. I know about blacklisting first hand as I, too, was on a blacklist, so I know what it does to the victims and their families.

GMB has led the way in exposing tax avoidance, such as that by Starbucks and Amazon. I remember we told Gordon Brown all about this even before he became Prime Minister. The Political Report to Congress last year gave us a more focused and determined political strategy, which our national and regional political teams have been delivering. We will hear more tomorrow.

We have David Miliband’s resignation to thank for the proof that our political strategy is working. We are so pleased that with our support, GMB member, Emma Lewell-Buck, a social worker, and the first ever female MP for South Shields was elected. We are aiming to get more working-class MPs, such as Emma, into the ivory towers of Westminster.

Congress, last year I told you that the Tories were the nasty party. Well, nothing has changed as they have got even nastier. Let me tell you of some of the things that they have continued to do. They have continued to attack pensions, continued to close down Remploy factories, continued to cut welfare

benefits, continued to cut our public services, schools, local government and health services, but they one thing they should have been cutting is their throats. (*Applause and cheers*)

Congress, unemployment continues to rise, especially youth unemployment. What sort of legacy do our young people have with no hope of getting a job, no hope of paying back the rise in tuition fees at £9,000 a year? As our members are being forced into unemployment or forced into benefits, this Government make it more difficult for them to qualify for those benefits. You could say that the tick-box organisation, which checks work capability, ATOS, actually stands for Abysmal, Tory, Outsourced System.

Those who know me know that I like to include a musical reference in my speech. Well, how about this one: “Ding, dong, the witch is dead!” (*Applause*) Congress, some talk of the legacy left us with, but we know it is no use in crying over the spilt milk that she denied our children. She left us with privatisation of our Health Service and utilities, anti-trade union legislation, high unemployment, the Big-Bang deregulation of the banking system, no steel or mining industry and no manufacturing industry. Don’t forget that she drove garment manufacturing abroad, and we can see the effects of this from the tragic events in Bangladesh. Together with her friends, they sold off our public assets. Alongside her was Tesco heiress, Dame Shirley Porter, a great friend of Thatcher, who sold off council homes and moved families into asbestos-ridden flats just for votes. Even our dead were not respected or safe. She sold our cemeteries for 5 pence and the land was sold for private housing. Those of you who can remember Virginia Bottomley, whose name is actually an anagram for “I’m an evil Tory bigot” (*Laughter*) started the destruction of the NHS, and now her cousin, Jeremy Hunt – talk about nepotism – is continuing in the family footsteps. I am sure that you can think of another name for him, because I do on many a days. They know nothing about the NHS because they don’t need to use it. Even Virginia Bottomley, dear Golden Virginia, thought a Tory MP was an intravenous drip. She might have been right there. The very NHS that we celebrated at the opening ceremony of the Olympics is being dismantled brick by brick. This Government are trying to take the “National” out of the NHS. They are trying to privatise everything that they can lay their hands on. Hospital and A&E closures are forcing our members into unemployment or more stressful jobs. It was great to see so many of you at the NHS marches last month, and I was also proud to see a great GMB presence at the TUC march last October. Congress, we must continue to fight for our NHS, our hospitals and to keep the A&E and maternity departments open.

I’ve got a message for all our MPs and councillors. You, too, should be marching shoulder-to-shoulder with our members and the community. Vital services are being slashed to the bone with further cuts to the police, police stations and the fire service. I could go on but, as you can see, *this* lot aren’t any better. We’ve got Cameron, Clegg, Osborne and now Farage. To carry on my horsey theme about the Coalition, we could call them the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. “We’re all in this together!” I don’t think so. They attack vulnerable people who bear the brunt of benefit and tax changes. Families are being forced out of their homes by the bedroom tax and communities are being destroyed. One Gideon Osborne – you can change your name but you can’t change your policies – gives his millionaire friends tax breaks worth £54,000, but his gift to the rich is a raid on the poor. The average family is nearly £900 worse off because of his cuts.

From this April, the poorest 10% are losing £127 on average, whilst the richest 10% get 10 times that amount. Thatcher once said, “This lady is not for turning”. Well, *this* lot have had more u-turns than a dodgy plumber. (*Laughter*) Plans to set up flood defences were scrapped, plans to give consumers the lowest energy tariff were discovered to be unworkable, the decision to award the West Coast Mainline franchise to FirstGroup was scrapped, plans to limit payments to victims of minor assaults were scrapped, and even their own party votes against them on gay marriage, the EU budget votes and plans to reform the House of Lords.

Congress, beware the rise and dangers of supporting UKIP. Their flagship policy to withdraw from the European Court of Human Rights is flawed. The ECHR has guaranteed many working rights which we

take for granted, such as equal pay and sex discrimination. Congress, it is essential that we remain part of Europe. Many of the rights we enjoy today originated from Europe. Never underestimate how powerful the EU is; protecting GMB members and their families, protecting agency workers and giving them the same rights as permanent staff, guaranteed paid holidays and ensuring that employers can no longer demand more than a 48-hour week. These protections have all come from Europe. Sadly, one thing that is returning from Europe this year is Stephen Hughes MP, a man of integrity and someone who cares deeply about working-class people.

Congress, UKIP's policies are destructive and divisive. They will never be and can never be the party for working families. Their policy is less tax for the rich and more cuts for public services. Also the promise of a referendum is, essentially, a bribe. Be careful of the wolf in sheep's clothing. Be careful of what you wish for.

Our basic employment rights, which have been fought for throughout the last century, are in danger. In the last 12 months this Government have put our rights at work up for sale. There have been cuts in trade union facility times, cuts to legal aid, cuts to the employment tribunals, cuts to redundancies and cuts to consultations. Pensioners are being targeted. Iain Duncan Smith – what a great idea! – said that working pensioners could hand back their winter fuel allowance, free TV licences and bus passes. How ridiculous! He is and always has been on another planet. This would achieve little and would turn the young against the old and the rich against the poor. This is an assured warning that the Government's intention is to take away those benefits completely. Remember when the Government removed subsidized travel from the over-60s and disabled! Surprise, surprise. It backfired on National Express. The company lost nearly one million journeys, which just goes to prove that "Ye cannae shuv your granny off a bus". (*Applause and laughter*)

Congress, it was a great honour for me to receive the TUC's Gold Badge, and I am proud to be included as one of the women who helped to shape our Union. I, personally, want to say "Thanks" to all of you. I was very proud that day and very humbled. Thank you.

The General Secretary knows as well as I do that behind every man there stands a great woman. Paul, let me compliment your wife, Pat, who is a great woman – she would have to be to put up with you at times. I mean, God Almighty! (*Laughter and applause*) – but it is glad to see her here and that she is back to good health. Well done, Pat. We are proud that half of our Union is female and proud of the fantastic work that our women members and officers do. Congress, it is only right that this year one of our Special Reports looks at the representation of women in GMB and plans to progress women through the organisation. You will hear more about this project later in the morning.

Congress, we have some very important debates this week. You will get a chance to hear and question Andrew Burnham MP and Owen Jones. You will hear about the effects of the benefits cuts from Alison Garnham from the Child Poverty Action Group, and from Margaret Aspinall, who speaks for the Hillsborough Family Support Group, who never gave up their fight for justice in the same way that that proud woman, Doreen Lawrence, never gave up. (*Applause*) You will also hear updates on blacklisting, the living wage, public services and all of our union campaigns. I do hope that you enjoy all aspects of Congress. Use this time to make new friends, re-vitalise your fighting spirit and find out more about what is happening in our great Union, the GMB. Thank you, Congress. (*A standing ovation*)

VOTE OF THANKS TO THE PRESIDENT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, it now gives me great pleasure to invite David Noble, CEC and Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Region, to give the Vote of Thanks to the President.

BRO. D. NOBLE (CEC, Public Services): Congress, it is a privilege to come to the rostrum today to move a vote of thanks to our National President, Mary Turner, but whilst it is a privilege, it is also a bit tricky because there is not much that hasn't already been said about Mary. I will just speak from my experience of knowing Mary.

Both Mary and I have worked in local government for many years and over that time we have seen many changes, some for the better but, sadly, most for the worst. The one constant that I have seen over the years in fighting for change is our National President, Mary Turner. Some of the more positive changes have been more equality time and more trade union facility time, although that is under threat now. Colleagues, these are not given to us because the employer or the Government are being generous. They have been fought for by workers and members who follow leaders in campaigns and battles, and there has been no better leader than Mary Turner. Do you know the most remarkable thing of all is that when you watch or chat to her, you think, "What a lovely woman, what a kind and compassionate woman she is." Well, she is, but underestimate her at your peril, as many an employer and Government Minister have done to their cost. As you watch her this week and on stage because you will see her giving speakers and visitors such genuine and warm affection. Only last year my region had a delegation of striking workers invited to address Congress. To say that they were nervous is an understatement. You could hear their knees knocking, but afterwards they said to me, "Who was that woman who made us feel so welcome, settled us down and then gave us a standing ovation?" I said, "That's our Mary." That is the mark of the person. She is as tough as granite in negotiations on behalf of working people, but as soft and warm as anyone when in working people's company. She is someone who, throughout all the challenges that life has thrown at her, has remained devoted to her family. Mary, you are a true inspiration. Congress, please join me in saluting our President, Mary Turner. *(A standing ovation)*

THE PRESIDENT: I need the Kleenex early in the week. Thank you, David, and thanks to Congress. I now move on. Congress, before we begin our first debate, I would like to explain a few points of procedure. Please listen carefully. You will find reserved chairs in front of the rostrum which are for the movers and seconders to wait for their turn to speak. To save time, I will take motions in groups. Your session programme will show the grouping. When I call motions you will need to come up to the chairs ready to speak on your motion. This saves time. At the end of a group, I will call the CEC speaker to reply, rather than deal with each motion individually. Where the CEC is supporting a motion, I will advise Congress. Where the CEC has another position, for instance, Support with Qualification or Refer, the CEC speaker will give the reasons for the decision. We will then move to a vote of all the motions in that group. Finally, I remind Congress that a large cross – it is not a kiss – in front of a motion in the Final Agenda and Programme means that the SOC has ruled the motion "Out of Order" as reported in Standing Orders Report No. 1. Existing policy motions are marked in the Final Agenda with a large "EP" against them. These, as outlined by the SOC Report No. 1, will be listed in the detailed programme as they will not be debated.

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL RULE AMENDMENTS

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, the following CEC Rule Amendments can be found on page 122 in the Final Agenda & Congress Guide and the CEC is supporting all of these amendments. I now call Malcolm Sage to move the rule amendments.

CECRA1

Rule 29 – Audits

At end of clause 2 insert:

“No region will have more than one auditor. The auditors elected will be the first three candidates from different Regions according to the number of votes cast.”

Clause to read:

2 Our accounts will be examined by three of our members, who will be elected every four years in line with the appropriate rules for nominating and electing officials. No region will have more than one auditor. The auditors elected will be the first three candidates from different Regions according to the number of votes cast.

CECRA2

Rule 35 – Branches

Clause 15, line 16, after “rule 5.8.” insert:

“The Regional Committee or Central Executive Council may order an appeal to be struck out for scandalous, vexatious or unreasonable behaviour by an appellant or for excessive delay in proceeding with the case. Before making such an order the appellant will be sent notice giving them an opportunity to show why the order should not be made.”

Clause to read:

15 The regional committee will have the power to suspend or remove from office any branch officer who:

- acts incompetently or dishonestly; or
- fails to carry out any instructions or decisions of the Central Executive Council, regional council or regional committee; or
- for any other reason it considers reasonable

In giving its decision, the regional committee must tell the member, in writing, of their right to appeal.

Branch officers who are suspended or removed from office can appeal in writing within one month to the general secretary. If successful, the general secretary will refer the case to the Central Executive Council, who will make the final decision. Before the regional committee and the Central Executive Council, the branch officer will have the rights set out in rule 5.8. The Regional Committee or Central Executive Council may order an appeal to be struck out for scandalous, vexatious or unreasonable behaviour by an appellant or for excessive delay in proceeding with the case. Before making such an order the appellant will be sent notice giving them an opportunity to show why the order should not be made. A member who, for any reason, has been disqualified from holding a particular office will not be eligible to be nominated for and elected to any other office without the regional committee’s approval.

CECRA3

Rule 52 – Victimisation benefit

Delete Rule 52 from rulebook

CECRA4

Re-number rules 53 to 67 as 52 to 66

CECRA5

Rule 18 - Qualifying for office, and the definition of officers

Clause 3, Line 10, after “within the last 5 years” insert:

“(other than a temporary contract of less than 6 months)”

Clause to read:

3 With the exception of employees going to authorised conferences, employees acting temporarily as branch secretary (under rule 35.4) or other branch role, employees standing as candidates for public organisations, members in receipt of a spouse’s or dependent’s pension from us (and no other pension from us), any member who has or has had a written contract of employment with us within the last 5 years (other than a temporary contract of less than 6 months) or who receives a pension from us will not be eligible to be elected to any office in list ‘a’ of clause 2 of this rule.

People who receive a pension from us will not be eligible to be appointed or elected as an officer of the union as defined in rules 14, 17b, 17c, 17d and 17e.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, moving Rule Amendments CECRA1 to CECRA5.

CECRA1 changes the procedure for electing general member auditors to ensure that the auditors are always representative of separate regions. This will apply to the next election for the lay auditors which will be held in 2014.

Last year’s Congress introduced a strike-out clause to our appeals procedure, and this has helped make our procedures more effective. CECRA2 extends the strike-out clause to cover a branch officer’s appeal under Rule 35.

CECRA3 deals with victimisation benefits in Rule 52. This rule has been overtaken by events. Its provisions are now out-of-date and are never used. The Rule Book gives GMB all the powers they need to stand up for victimised members. The best recent examples are the magnificent work that we have done with Carillion workers in Swindon and the fantastic broader campaign on blacklisting. The CEC is recommending deleting the rule.

CECRA4 changes a number of rules following on from the deletion of Rule 52.

Lastly, CECRA5 amends the qualification for office in the GMB. At present, to protect the Union’s lay democracy anyone who has had a written contract of employment with us, with specific exceptions, prevent that person from standing for office within five years. Sometimes lay members are taken on to the payroll for specific short-term tasks. The rule changes allow this to happen in exceptional circumstances within a lay member losing their rights to participate in our democratic procedure. The CEC is absolutely committed to maintain GMB as a union run by its members. Permanent or regular employees will not be able to stand for election as Congress delegates or as members of the Executive, and nor will anyone in receipt of a GMB pension. This rule change is aimed at genuine lay members being able to help the Union strictly on a temporary basis, with a contract of no more than six months long.

Congress, on behalf of the CEC, I urge you to support each one of the CEC Rule Amendments 1 – 5.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Malcolm. Can the proposed rule amendments be formally seconded?

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: I formally second.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to speak on Rule Amendments 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5? (*No response*)
In that case, I now put it to the vote. All those in favour, please show? All those against?

Rule Amendments CECRA1—CECRA5 were CARRIED.

RULE AMENDMENTS

RULE AMENDMENT 323

RULE 9 BUSINESS OF THE CONGRESS

4 Any branch or regional committee or the Central Executive Council can put forward motions for inclusion in the agenda of the Ordinary Congress. Branches must put forward their motions to reach the appropriate regional secretaries by no later than 31 January. Regions must pass the motions to reach the general secretary by no later than 7 February. Any branch or regional committee or the Central Executive Council can put forward proposals to amend rules at Congresses named in clause 3 above.

RA323

Clause No: 4,

Insert after first sentence

“In addition the National Equalities Conference can select one motion for submission to ordinary Congress. That motion will stand in the name of the National Equalities Conference and be moved by the region that originally submitted the motion to the NEC”

GMB@PCS BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

SIS. H. PURSELL (London): Congress, I am moving Rule Amendment 323 on behalf of London Region. Our Union has made leaps and strides over the past few years with regard to promoting equality and made huge process with regard to improving engagement and participation for our under-represented groups of members. All regions now have in place Regional Equality Forums with national structures in place to support them. Self-organised groups like GMB Shout and the London Regional Women’s Network, GMB Sisters, have been established and continue to flourish. These networks are pivotal to improving equality for inclusion. They build confidence and encourage under-represented groups to become active in our Union.

Rule 8.7 has been a step in the right direction, too, with many new delegates attending Congress through this route. The carrying of this rule amendment will allow the National Equality Conference to select one motion from its agenda to go forward to Congress each year and would move the equality agenda to the next level. Yes, it is an unusual proposal and seen as somewhat controversial in some quarters but, let us be clear, the motion leading to the formulation of this rule amendment has already been debated at the National Equality Conference, and it was unanimously supported by delegates from all regions. Indeed, our General Secretary has even articulated his support in principle, as I understand it, when he attended the conference just a few months ago. So why, then, should the National Equality Conference be able to submit a motion to Congress? Currently, the Conference has no policy-making remit and all motions debated and carried solely provide an advisory direction. Yes, our branch already has the power to submit motions on equality to this Congress, but the reality is that we are not yet at a stage where some of the motions on equality would be carried at some branch meetings. If we were at such a stage, there would not be a need to debate such motions at a separate equality conference each year. For branches to submit such motions pre-supposes that they are not only aware but understand and are supporters of the particular issues facing their diverse membership.

Let us just take out to think about this. Imagine the scenario where a gay male member, who works in a local authority, and wants to influence our Union's policy on, say, homophobic bullying, and that individual works in an environment where bullying is prevalent and not even viewed as an issue because people have become desensitised to bullying or just see it as a bit of banter, is that member really likely to submit a motion via his own branch? Probably not. What the member might be inclined to do, though, is to submit a motion to his regional equality forum or through the GMB Shout network because he feels more confident with that approach and more assured that the motion is likely to be understood and supported at the National Equality Conference. The point is that the equality agenda will only ever move forward if members feel confident that the issues specific to them are aired and heard in an environment where people feel safe and supported.

To sum-up, for this rule amendment to be carried, it would build upon the already improved equality for inclusion agenda. It would, perhaps, bring to the fore issues about which some members are not aware. This, in turn, would promote a better understanding of the diverse nature and experience of our members. Congress, let us take the equality agenda in our Union to the next level and give our diverse membership the opportunity to have their many different voices heard. Please support this rule amendment. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Secunder?

BRO. T. NOKES (London): Congress, I second Rule Amendment 323 on behalf of London Region. There is no better union in this country than the GMB for commitment, drive and passion when it comes to embracing a challenge and a project. A 110% commitment is given every time to achieve its targets. There is no better illustration of this than our vastly improved equality structure that we now have in place. Given where we were a few years ago compared with where we are today, there is no comparison whatsoever. That improvement is down to an enormous amount of hard work and commitment for so many people, people who are passionate about equality and who, wholeheartedly, believe in equality in the workplace. It would not make sense, therefore, after so much hard work and effort has been put in by so many people to get to the position we are in today with our equality structure, then to say, "Yes, you can have your LEF, REF, NEF and equality conferences", and then put limitations or restrictions on what they can or cannot do. If you are going to be committed to a policy, let's be 100% committed to equality and the forums that operate within the structure, and not be committed with limitations. This rule amendment is about seeing the project through and using the forums to their full capacity, giving them the tools to achieve their full potential, to be able to submit a motion to Congress and, indeed, to see the job through. Please support this rule amendment. *(Applause)*

RULE AMENDMENT 332

RULE 18 QUALIFYING FOR OFFICE, AND DEFINITION OF OFFICERS

2 During their whole term of office, the following holders in both lists 'a' and 'b' below must pay the full amount of their union contributions in line with rules 45 and 46.

- a**
- **President**
 - **Vice-president**
 - **Central Executive Council members elected under rule 11**
 - **Congress representatives**
 - **General member auditors**
 - **The regional president**
 - **Regional council members**
 - **Regional member auditors**
 - **Regional trustees**

- Branch presidents
 - Branch secretaries
 - Branch equality officers
 - Branch youth officers
 - Branch member auditors
 - Collecting stewards
 - Representatives going to authorised conferences
 - Candidates for public organisations
- b
- The general secretary and treasurer
 - Senior organisers
 - Organisers

RA332

Clause No: 2, Line 2

Insert: After, ".....holders", insert "(with the exception in list 'a' of retired life members as defined by rule 47a)".

AMEND Clause 2 then to read:

"During their whole term of office, the following holders (with the exception in list 'a' of retired life members as defined by rule 47a) in both lists 'a' and 'b' below must pay the full amount of their union contributions in line with rules 45 and 46."

YORKSHIRE COPPER WORKS BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Withdrawn)

BRO. W. HINSLIFFE (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President and Congress, this is the first time I have spoken at Congress, and I am 77 years old. In that time, I have done a lot of things in my life. I have been a governor for 20 years, and I have been a member of my local Labour Club for 30 years. When I had been in for 25 years, they let me off. They said, "You've no more dues to pay. You've paid enough money."

Now, moving forward on to the Union, which I have been in for 47 years, when I retired, I joined the RMA. I also went on to the regional council. I got a letter to say that I've got to pay £11.70 because I am retired member and also a branch president. I could have said, "Right, that's it. I'm going to walk away, go into my garden and forget about the Union", but I wanted to stop on and fight and represent the Union, which I have worked for quite a long time. I think this is a bad rule. The Rule Book in place. A lot of clever people have compiled our Rule Book to make the Union operate properly. I think that *this* is a terrible rule. I know of people who have walked away from the Union just because of this ruling. I think it definitely wants changing. I mean, how can you penalise people for wanting to continue being a part of the Union when they are, maybe, 80 or 90 years old. There has been a big swing against this ruling because there is a lot of talk now about ageism, age discrimination and things like that. That is what this rule is doing. It is actually turning people against the Union and making it difficult to want to carry on. When you are earning £26,000 a year, and you drop down to half of that, that £11.70 a week is a lot of money. I think this rule definitely wants Congress. I ask Congress to support doing away with this stupid rule and change it. Thank you.

BRO. G. WARWICK (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): I second Rule Amendment 332. The purpose of this rule amendment is quite simple. It seeks fairness for our retired members by allowing them to remain active in old offices within the GMB when they have already paid their retired subscription of £25. At present, retired members must pay the full GMB contribution rate to hold any office at branch, regional or national level. This is a significant disincentive to retired members on fixed incomes. We

recognised several years ago that it was right to allow members to pay a £25 retirement fee and enjoy a lifelong membership of the GMB. Yet, when it comes to members who have paid this fee, we demand of our more active members that they pay the full contribution rate if they wish to play an active role within the Union and hold any office. Many of these members have considerable expertise and experience which we can benefit from. Yet we make them make this difficult decision, to continue to play an important role within the GMB and pay a significant contribution rate or withdraw from a GMB-officer role. Surely, it is natural justice and fair to allow our long-serving activists to continue to play an important role in the life of the GMB. Please support this very important rule amendment. Thank you. *(Applause)*

RULE AMENDMENT 336

Rule 18 Qualifying for office, and the definition of officers

3 With the exception of

- **employees going to authorised conferences,**
- **employees acting temporarily as branch secretary (under rule 35.4) or other branch role,**
- **employees standing as candidates for public organisations,**
- **members in receipt of a spouse's or dependent's pension from us (and no other pension from us),**

any member who has or has had a written contract of employment with us within the last 5 years or who receives a pension from us will not be eligible to be elected to any office in list 'a' of clause 2 of this rule.

People who receive a pension from us will not be eligible to be appointed or elected as an officer of the union as defined in rules 14, 17b, 17c, 17d and 17e.

RA336

Rule No 18

Insert: New clause 7

"7 Retired life members as defined in rule 47a may stand for election as branch officials only and are exempt from paying full contributions."

SOUTH YORKSHIRE RETIRED MEMBERS' ASSOCIATION BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

BRO. I. KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, when is a branch official not a branch official: apparently when they retire. This great union of ours, quite rightly, for a reasonable one-off payment offers lifetime membership for those who stop grafting for their pounds, shillings, and pence, yet perversely if that member wants to keep active by being a branch officer they have to pay full subs for the privilege, this despite their income reducing. These members who have been through the University of Life have a lot to offer and are willing to give. I am sure we have all learnt a great deal from those who have been there, seen it, done it, and bought the T-shirt. As a union we should be taking advantage of the wealth of experience these members have to offer. In return we should allow them to retain their lifetime membership without having to continue to pay their subs. I ask Congress to support this amendment to Rule 18. It is a win-win situation. The union retains and utilises a pool of experience and knowledge as well as having an upfront payment in the bank. The member in return maintains a healthy active mind and active body. Let's give something back to those who gave their all to this union and still want to give. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian.

SIS. P. ROSS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): When I retired three years ago I assumed that having paid a one-off retired life members contribution I would still continue supporting the branch, among other things, in my role as Branch Equality Officer. However, I soon found an obstacle. Apparently, although according to the Rule Book a retired life member will be a financial member within rule 46.4 and may be a full financial member, my status does not allow me to hold any position within the branch. If I or the branch wished me to continue to play an active role I would have to pay full subs. So we have in the union lots of members with possibly time on their hands, although being retired I know that is not actually the case, with the experience, inclination, and the wisdom which comes with age unable to contribute these to the union as activists unless they pay for the privilege. On top of that, now that branch officials cannot be paid expenses but have to be paid honoraria, instead I find that, unlike Amazon and Google, the taxman is after me and wants his cut of that for the time and effort that I put in on behalf of the branch. We need perhaps to look more closely at how we continue to keep these skills within the union or lose them. After all, I for one have plenty of cheaper ways of keeping myself occupied in my retirement. Please support this rule amendment. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Pamela. Does anyone else wish to come in on the debate on any three? No? Thank you. Can I call Ken Daniels? Ken.

BRO. K. DANIELS (CEC, Public Services): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC replying on RA323, 332, and 336. RA323 seeks to allow the National Equalities Conference to present the motion direct to Congress. The CEC asks that you oppose this. If any delegate to the National Equalities Conference wishes to submit a motion to Congress they can do so through their branch. Only branches, regional committees, and the CEC, can propose motions for Congress. The CEC believes that experience shows this is the best way to ensure that all opinions and ideas may get to the Congress floor.

RA332 and 336 oppose the longstanding rule that if you seek office in GMB you must pay full contributions. RA332 is not very well worded and may cause confusion in future if adopted. However, it seeks to allow retired life members to take up a whole range of offices, including CEC membership and the vice presidency, and presidency itself of the union, without paying any current contributions. This, we believe, is out of step.

RA336 is more modest in seeking to exempt only branch officers from current contributions. Colleagues, retired life membership under rule 47a is an option for those who have retired and do not wish to pay full contributions. It is not automatic. It comes with restrictive access to benefits. The rule provides that if any retired life member returns to work they should start paying contributions again. The CEC is fully aware of the contribution made by retired activists to the life of our union but we are not convinced that there is any argument for exempting them from current contributions when they take up office, any more than we should exempt students, young people, the low paid, or unemployed members who must pay the appropriate membership rate. The CEC asks you to uphold the basic principle in GMB that office holders should pay full contributions.

Congress, on behalf of the CEC I urge you to oppose RA323 and 336. We ask for the withdrawal of RA332 and if it is not withdrawn we ask you to oppose it. Thank you, President. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ken. London Region, do you wish to have your right to reply? While London is coming to the rostrum, could I ask those moving 332, from Yorkshire, and 336?

SIS. H. PURCELL (London) exercised the right to reply. She said: Congress, in terms of the opposition that has been articulated, it seems very weak, to be perfectly honest. We know what the current structures are and the processes in terms of submitting motions to Congress but this is why we are submitting the rule amendment in the first place. We do believe that to take the equality agenda to the next level it is important that, as I said in my moving speech, motions on equality come direct to Congress. Some of these motions, as I said, would not come through the usual channels, so I think it is

really important that we do support this rule amendment. Again as I said in the moving speech, all regions were present at the National Equalities Conference and voted in favour so I urge you to support the rule amendment. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Yorkshire, do you wish to have the right to reply? Need I ask?

BRO. I. KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Mary, I agree to withdraw 332 and go for 336. That is the best option for us to take. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much indeed. We have had this before, haven't we? Colleagues, Yorkshire Region is withdrawing 332 in favour of 336. Does Congress agree? (*Agreed*)

Rule Amendment 332 was WITHDRAWN.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Can I now ask, 336? Come on, Ian.

BRO. I. KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire) exercised the right to reply. He said: Congress, one of the objections that have been raised is about retired members returning to work. This motion is not about whether they return to work; we fully accept a working member should pay full subs. What it is talking about are those who have probably spent a lifetime at work paying their subs and giving something back in return. That is the main objection we have to the CEC stance. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian, very much. Congress, I am now going to put 323 to the vote. The CEC oppose. All those in favour please show? Those against? That is carried. (*Applause*)

Rule Amendment 323 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I had my glasses amended, George! Oh dear, dear, dear. Right, RA336, moved by Yorkshire Region. The CEC is opposing. All those in favour please show? All those against? That is carried. (*Applause*)

Rule Amendment 336 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: You can pay me the tenner later! (Laughter) Could I please remind delegates that motions 34 and 35, as you agreed in Standing Orders Report No.1, have been withdrawn?

Now can I move to the next two items, Motions 38 and 71, which are complementary to the CEC's Special Report on Branches? I intend to take the movers and seconders of these and then we will vote on those motions with the CEC Special Report. Can I now have the movers of Motion 38, Activist Title, Yorkshire Region, and 71, Domestic Violence (DV), London Region?

UNION ORGANISATION: REPRESENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

ACTIVIST TITLE

MOTION 38

38. ACTIVIST TITLE

This Congress agrees that any names/titles used in any GMB correspondence, publications, forms etc. shall be the names/titles used in the rule book e.g. shop steward

If no name/title exists in the rule book then national/regional advice (if any) is to be followed.

This rule covers all forms of communication including electronic.

(Referred)

SIS. S. CARTER (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, this motion goes to the fundamentals of democracy within the GMB. In 2010, a motion was put to Congress by the CEC to change the name of Shop Stewards to Workplace Organisers. This motion was defeated and Congress had made its decision. Unfortunately, this matter has not gone away and the term Workplace Organiser has slowly but surely crept into a large number of GMB publications. Here are just three examples of this, a worksite recruitment poster, a credentials card, and the Spring 2013 edition of *Pulse* magazine. In this edition of *Pulse* magazine there are 13 mentions of the term Workplace Organiser. Why has this happened? We believe this is because the Rule Book is not clear on this matter, therefore what we have done is produce a rule for Congress to decide upon which makes it clear what name to use in all forms of publication, including electronic. To keep it simple, if it is in the Rule Book as a title then you should use it and not anything else. We are not against change so if in the future names do require updating or changing, all you have to do is bring the matter to Congress and let them democratically decide. This demonstrates that the GMB is a fully democratic union and that this body, as we are so often told, is the ultimate decision-making body of the union. Congress, we are happy to refer. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

SIS. J. WHITAKER (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, ladies and gentlemen, the GMB has many communication ways. They have forms with job titles and names on them. In the Rule Book it does state, Shop Steward. In 2010, Congress made the decision not to change the Rule Book to Workplace Organiser yet this has happened in numerous GMB publications, including the GMB websites. This is clearly wrong. All this motion does is make clear what name should be used in publications of all types. It also allows for change because if Congress wishes to change a name from what is in the Rule Book then a motion to Congress can change this. This is democracy and as Congress is the highest decision-making forum in the GMB this is where it can be changed, if you wish. I second this motion but we are happy to refer it.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Anyone wish to speak? No? Congress, the region wishes to refer. Congress agree? *(Agreed)* Thank you. Don't all speak together.

Motion 38 was REFERRED

THE PRESIDENT: Can I have the mover of 71, London Region to move and second.

UNION ORGANISATION: EQUALITY AND INCLUSION
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (DV)
MOTION 71

71. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (DV)

Congress, since it is estimated that one in four women report being victims of domestic violence to police, it is reasonable to assume that the incidence of domestic violence is much higher, as many will not report it to anyone. Many of our members will suffer from domestic violence (including one in six men) and suffer in the workplace because of it, as they will have poor sick records and be isolated and depressed. Up till now GMB has not offered any assistance or campaign to support these members. Congress resolves therefore to:

- Put a page with advice and information on the GMB website
- Include a session on Domestic Violence Awareness in all workplace organizer courses
- Advise and assist branches to elect DV Officers who will be able to assist members and workplace organisers on this issue.

- Include policies on supporting DV sufferers in all agreements with employers
- Produce and publish an information leaflet to be circulated widely.

This is an issue affecting many members in all our workplaces and GMB should make sure that they do not need to suffer in silence and isolation any longer.

LOWESTOFT BRANCH
London Region

(Referred)

SIS. A. COUSIN (London): Congress, many of our members have been or are at risk of being victims of domestic violence. They suffer in silence and their ability to work can be affected. They feel isolated, depressed, and they may have poor sick records and feel unable to explain absences to management, which leads to disciplinary action as a result. A recent article in *The Guardian* highlighted worrying new figures compiled by the Citizens Advice Bureau. These figures reveal that 13,500 people, of which 80% were women, reported domestic violence to Citizens Advice last year. There were 3,300 reported incidents between October and December 2012, an 11% increase on the same period the previous year. Citizens Advice is sufficiently concerned to open specialist centres for victims in 10 of its UK offices. Gillian Guy, the Chief Executive of Citizens Advice, called on the Prime Minister to honour a promise made on International Women's Day to tackle the problem. She said, "As the scale of the government cuts starts to bite we are concerned that our trend highlights how levels of domestic violence could get even worse. We need to see the government doing everything it can to deal with the problems of violence against women in our society and ensure they get the support they need."

Congress, this is where the GMB can help. We need a page on the GMB website with advice for those suffering domestic violence and for their shop stewards. It should have details of organisations that can help, for example Women's Aid, and Refuge, who operate a 24-hour free helpline. GMB needs to train shop stewards to recognise the signs of possible domestic violence and how to offer support. As most women who are murdered by abusive partners are killed when or shortly after they leave the abusive relationship, it is very important that reps should not feel they should be advising the women to leave however much they may feel this should happen. The thrust of the training would be the possibility of introducing a workplace policy, dealing with the fall-out that happens at work in the normal representational context, but with a consciousness of the particular patterns of domestic violence.

Congress, domestic violence is a major issue, it affects members in all workplaces and GMB can ensure that they have support and no longer have to suffer in silence. Please support our motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Allison. Hello, Mo.

BRO. M. AKBAR (London): This motion speaks for itself. It tells us what we need to do to achieve our goal. Domestic violence does not just suddenly happen. It happens to those who are bullied, intimidated, and feel that they are alone. This is where the GMB must stand together and provide strength to those who are vulnerable. We must give them support, backing, and legal help wherever it might be needed. The GMB has always proudly provided facilities for assistance on the road, at work, and now we should extend this to the home and wherever it is needed. We should address this problem, particularly in the workplace, as abuse affects people in the workplace, their working life, which then impacts on the people around them. By organising our dedicated staff to deal with the issues, provide services such as counselling and legal advice to those victims of abuse, the GMB can make an impact on people's lives.

Working in the ambulance service gave me the opportunity to see this effect firsthand. I have seen how simply one act of violence alone can destroy a family's life. This cannot go on in the 21st century. The people who are affected the most are the people who keep silent. This is where the GMB should be to let the silent know they are not alone. Congress, I implore you to support this motion. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Mo. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? Midland & East Coast; yes.

SIS. T. CHANA (London) spoke in support of motion 71: First-time delegate. (*Applause*) Congress, under this Government women are bearing the brunt of the cuts. If I am a victim of domestic abuse at 4 o'clock in the morning, my local A&E will be closed. If I want to seek refuge at my local police station, it will be closed. I will have to take a bus for an hour to my local police station to seek refuge as a victim of domestic abuse. Now, as a victim of domestic abuse, I am being denied the access to justice, a fundamental right, Legal Aid, to be able to defend myself. In April 2013, this Government prevented many women going to court to fight over custody of children, divorce, and financial issues. They are not eligible for Legal Aid any more. What that means is that low income women cannot fight their corner in the courts.

Now this Government is introducing what is called a residence test. As a victim of domestic abuse, if I have not lived in this country for 12 months I cannot have access to Legal Aid. Congress, if you are a part-time worker, your first language is not English, and you are a victim of domestic abuse and you have never reported it, you cannot have access to Legal Aid.

Congress, I support this motion than ever before because as a victim of domestic abuse you cannot go to court and you cannot fight your corner, you will find yourself representing yourself against someone who has more money than you. We support this motion because our workers need the support, especially if the language is not English. Thank you. (*Applause*)

SIS. J. SMITH (London) spoke in support of motion 71. She said: Congress, this is a very important resolution but we also must remember domestic violence does not only happen with our female members and workers, it also happens within the male membership, and they are equally vulnerable. Can I also say we need to support this because of the lasting effect it can have on members, especially members' children who witness domestic violence. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jan. Colleagues, I want to call the Midland & East Coast delegate.

SIS. K. HUMPHREYS (Midland & East Coast) spoke in support of motion 71: First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Domestic abuse is not just violence, it is about power and control. It can present itself in many forms, mental abuse, financial abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and honour-based violence. It does not discriminate based on gender, race, culture, sexuality, physical ability, or social status. One in four women and one in seven men will be affected by domestic abuse in their lifetime. This could be as a survivor, a witness, or a perpetrator of domestic abuse. Witnesses and victims do not choose to be in this situation they find themselves in and then may struggle to flee this situation. A victim may not know in the first instance what they are experiencing is domestic abuse due to the way a perpetrator of abuse establishes control. It may start with constantly wanting to know where the victim is, not letting them wear certain clothes, not allowing them to see friends and relatives, not allowing them access to money until the victim is left to feel isolated and completely reliant on their partner. Physical abuse may occur on a number of occasions before help is sought from an agency, such as the police or Women's Aid.

So, what can we do? Midlands & East Coast Region has committed itself to support the *Man Enough* campaign. This campaign was set up by Women's Aid in Nottingham and asked men and women to sign a pledge not to commit, condone, or remain silent about domestic abuse. This campaign is part of a nationally run white ribbon campaign to make a stand against domestic abuse.

My region has further shown its commitment by submitting a motion this year to the National Equalities Forum to develop a domestic abuse workplace policy, and this motion was overwhelmingly supported. Our aim is to ensure that branch officials and activists receive training to recognise domestic abuse and

the effect this may have on workers. We are also aiming for recognised workplaces to adopt a domestic abuse policy to enable support and signposting to services that are available to victims.

What else can we do? Currently in the UK there are four police forces piloting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme also known as Clare's Law. This scheme enables you to contact the police to request information on a partner relating to any domestic related convictions, which will enable you to make an informed choice on whether or not you remain in a relationship with that partner. You may also contact the police if you are a concerned relative or friend. In this instance, however, if there is any information relating to convictions this will only be passed to the person at risk and not the person making the request. A request for disclosure can come from the police if they are aware of a serial perpetrator engaged in a new relationship for which there are concerns. The pilot for this scheme will end in September 2013 and it is vital that legislation is passed to ensure this scheme is continued so it can be used nationally in an effort to prevent domestic abuse and, more importantly, safeguard its victims.

Congress, when you return to your regions, promote the white ribbon campaign and lobby your MPs to support the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme so that it is implemented nationally. Thanks for listening. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kerry. Who's next? Anyone else on 71?

BRO. P. DUFFY (GMB Scotland) spoke in support of Motion 71: I come from the East End of Glasgow. My Dad is dead now but when he took a drink, when he took alcohol, he was never physically abusive but verbally, and the matter affected me and by the time I was 14 I was a basket case. I was nervous, I was paranoid, and the sad thing was I followed the same line, I took a drink and my wife told me I became a verbal abuser. That was through alcohol and blackouts. So I ask you, please support this motion because as well as women the children also suffer really badly from this. We need zero tolerance on this. Thank you. Support the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Hang on, Pat. Can I thank all the speakers on this very, very serious issue of domestic violence. Can I now call John McDonnell?

CEC SPECIAL REPORT: GMB BRANCHES - A FUTURE THAT WORKS

GMB BRANCHES – A FUTURE THAT WORKS

GMB functions as a strong independent union because we have a dedicated solid lay member's organisation built around workplace and branch activity.

The world of work has changed dramatically in the 120 years since the union we know today, struggled into life as part of the birth of new unionism at the end of the 19th century.

Union structures, political landscapes, travel and communications have all changed since those early formative years.

The one constant has been the union branch. Its position in GMB is pivotal.

All elements of internal democracy stem from the branch. Its importance to our future is as great as it has been to our past.

But we have to face up to some difficult challenges around branch activities or risk putting our progress and growth at jeopardy.

The union is blessed in having some wonderful branches in every region, most of which go way beyond the rule book expectations and their membership activity bears witness to their efforts.

Those branches who always turn up, banners aloft, for demonstrations, whether at the local hospital under threat or on the Embankment in London, maybe travelling hundreds of miles, to bring the voice of working people from Hull, Durham or Dorset to political enemies in Whitehall.

Those branches who always nominate delegates for Congress, Regional Councils or external affiliated bodies; whether in Camborne, Mansfield, Wembley, Kings Lynn or Cardiff, branches bring members and communities together, a strong bond of comradeship and support.

The time honoured way of dealing with change is to wait for a brilliant idea to emerge!

For GMB we already have a blueprint for further and wider success. The trick is to raise branch organisation to the level of the best.

No need to re-invent the wheel just fit a couple, to certain branches, that just are not rolling at the moment!

It is possible of course to suggest that no problem exists; real activists know that is not a credible position to take. Some may even argue that if we just dismantle the whole union structure and create one thousand five hundred mini unions that will do the trick.

Equally and strangely some of these same people used to advocate scrapping all the branches and centralising power.

Both these types of suggestions are stupid, wrong, and undemocratic and frankly belong in the compost bin.

If the union is anything it is about

- **People, fighting together for social justice**
- **People banding together for a better future for themselves and their families.**
- **People who get angry about exploitation, discrimination and greed.**

But we have to face up to certain facts, trade unions have always functioned because of a core level of lay activists.

There has never been a time when everyone in the union clamoured to become a shop steward, branch officer or a delegate to Regional Council.

The problem we have encountered in the years since the 1980's has been to bring through that new generation of activists, that group that make the union tick.

The branch model is roughly the same for all, but the levels of activity between the best and the worst are simply miles apart.

It is time to conduct the largest consultation on branch activities we have ever undertaken. It is time to examine the whole structure of branch office holders. Although we have added some new rule book additions over recent years, some branches want new roles, reflecting changes in the world of work or our society.

However, creating a new branch post does not mean we can fill it, or the hundreds of current unfilled branch positions scanning the length and breadth of the union.

Financial organising tools already exist, but they go mostly unused. Regions struggle to fill delegations and turn out for our internal elections for offices like the CEC or even the General Secretary, are poor.

We know some of the reasons revolve around the legal restrictions which shackle our voting procedures but, more willing candidates for Branch, Regional, Congress and Executive Election must be our goal.

This Special Report proposes to:

- Consult with all Regions.
- Consult with all Branches.
- Seek the views of all GMB post holders, employees and CEC.
- Conduct membership surveys.
- Constitute a Working Party at least half of which will be lay branch officers, to examine the findings of the consultation and, report back to Congress 2014 with preliminary recommendations for widening lay member participation in union activities and democracy.

The significant progress we have made in expanding Congress delegate numbers and embracing the equality strands does give us a platform to build on.

A growing healthy combative GMB has nothing to fear for its future existence. The key here is to bring into play just a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of members who currently just do not bother to participate in their own union's future.

BRO. J. McDONNELL (CEC, Manufacturing): President, Congress, visitors, moved the CEC Special Report on Branches and replied to motions 38 and 71. A few years ago, a very senior official in our union told a newspaper that GMB branches were out of date and irrelevant. Congress, if this had happened, this union would have gone back to the Dark Ages. It would have returned to the time when every region was mandated to vote against the motion that the regional secretaries disagreed with. There would be no Perrivale 257 Motion on page 2 of your Final Agenda to alter that policy. That resolution was the start of democracy in the GMB. I would also like to thank the CEC who made that very senior official out of date, irrelevant, and as the branches are still here, he is not, he has gone. *(Applause)*

Congress, the basic unit of our union is democracy, it is the heart and soul; it is the oxygen that anchors our union to communities and to the workplace. In every region there are dozens of branches easily meeting requirements of rule and doing a whole lot more, and pulling all the levers available to help the members and promote our union the GMB. Political, financial organisations, tools, are there for all the branches to use. Great political opportunities for branches to communicate with our Labour MPs, what policies they agree or disagree when we get some, and remind them that it was the trade unions that formed the Labour Party many years ago because some of them seem to have forgotten. But, Congress, none of us should be blind to the problem that as well as the active branches there are many which are, frankly, inactive weak branches from our members, people who should finding their way through to be active, to come to Congress, to play a bigger role in the union, but they do not have the roadmap to help them, and when a branch is weak, we lose out and talent is lost to our union. Congress, this report calls for real consultation across all parts of the union to build a solid plan for branches in the future. It proposes a report back to our next Congress with concrete measures to secure the union's future at branch level.

President, if I could turn briefly to the motions, motion 38 confirms the need for flexibility over job titles so that activists are able to describe themselves in industrial appropriate terms. Motion 71 calls for a specialist domestic violence officer in each branch. The Special Report has a review of the structure of that plan, what branch officers there should be, and what they should be called.

The CEC is asking you to refer both motions so that they can form part of the working party's discussions. Colleagues, get this right and the GMB can look forward to a future as a local organisation with deep roots in the communities and workplaces across Britain. I urge you not just to accept the report but make sure this branch review is a resounding success for our union and confine to the dustbins of history comments such as, "out of date and irrelevant". Congress, please refer motions 38 and 71 and accept the *Special Report: GMB Branches - A Future that Works*. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John. Can I call Ann Leader to second?

SIS. A. LEADER (CEC, Manufacturing) seconded the *CEC Special Report: GMB Branches – A Future that Works*: Colleagues, there never was a golden age when branches always held packed meetings, when members were falling over each other to become stewards, and where every post was contested and election turnouts were one hundred percent. If we think that, we are kidding ourselves.

Building union organisation has always been about using the resources we have, no matter how sparse, and a well-run branch is like a goldmine and for those which are not run so well, as the Special Report says, the trick is to raise branch organisation to the level of the best. This is not the first time Congress has considered a new start for branches but too often before a report has been agreed with a claim and sent to gather dust on the shelf. I promise you, Congress, that if you support this report with your votes today and with your efforts in the year ahead, we will be back with an action plan which will make sure all the wheels are rolling in branches all across the country. This review gives us a chance to consult right across the union, not just with branches but with all post holders about what they want, and about what they need. Congress, I second the report. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ann. Congress, I will now go round the regions and ask if anyone wishes to speak on that report. Can I call Northern Region and then Yorkshire?

BRO. M. CARR (Northern): First-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am speaking in support of the *CEC Special Report: GMB Branches – A Future that Works*. Congress, this report has the potential to be one of the most radical in our union's operations for many years. The report lays out the constant within the GMB's past, present, and future, and that is the branch. Our branches are amongst some of the best in the Movement. Years of hard work and commitment have been devoted to the GMB, to our members and their families, by volunteers in our branches. Without the branch the GMB would find it harder to achieve our campaigning objectives or to deliver the fight for fairness at the heart of our very reason for existing. Some of our branches undertake tremendous work both in the workplace, as the report outlines, and outside in vital campaign activity. But, Congress, we need to build on the best and try and develop our branches wherever possible. To be firing on all cylinders we need to share best practice and ask ourselves difficult questions. We need to develop that regeneration process where activism reflects what we do, where we represent, and where we campaign. We have tremendous assets in our union. We bow down to no one.

We need to take this consultation out across the union so that when next year's Congress receives the report back we can have further confidence in our branches and in our future that they support. If we get this right, Congress, and if we keep to the GMB@Work principles and activities, we have a great future ahead and that is a prize that we should all aim for, a prize we can certainly win. That is why this Special Report should be given all the impetus it needs by being approved by this year's Congress. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Michael. Anyone else wish to come up, please? Do so now or forever hold your peace.

SIS. C. GAVIN (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire) spoke in support of the *CEC Special Report, GMB Branches – A future that Works*: I am really proud to say that of the five branches in Leeds all five of us

are represented here today. How many regions in this room right now can say that? How many regions can say the same of their towns and cities? How many regions can say they have active branches that turn out all the time, at all events, no matter what the cause and what the weather? My branch, L10, is very organised. We are an active group. We strive to keep our members up to date with events, policies, and change. Our branch works closely with others in our city and we band together for the cause. We bring together enthusiasm, commitment, highlighting the work of the GMB and raising its profile. We receive emails, texts, calls, we use social media to stay in contact and spread the word. My branch is like my family. They were there when I needed them after my accident, giving me support and encouragement the way families do; they give a personal touch from what is a large organisation. Together we raise the profile of the GMB.

Sadly, it is people like me and you, my colleagues here with me today, the same faces that come to meetings and events, the same people that volunteer and give their time to support the cause, the same branches being active and meeting others. I do feel that we have some branches out there that are becoming apathetic and need a kick up the rear. We need to give the sleeping branches an alarm call, shake them out of their beds and inspire people again. They need to be organised and they need to be active. Forget disbanding the branches and centralising power, that is just silly. We would lose that personal touch, that family feeling, and members would get left behind and forgotten. Branches need to be healthy again. A healthy branch is an active one. Active branches mean active people. Active people have a louder voice and louder voices mean we will be heard. Thank you. (*Applause*)

SIS. L. MOORE (Wales & South West) spoke in support of the *CEC Special Report: GMB Branches - A Future that Works*: Mary, Congress, during the past 20 years or so the industrial and political landscape has changed dramatically for many of our members. Those changes necessitate that we adapt and adjust in order to make the GMB a stronger and more effective union with greater meaning and relevance to our members. Proposals for change are usually challenging and often a little controversial but it is vitally important that we carry out a thorough and extensive consultation exercise with the key stakeholders in order to move forward in such a way that ensures our internal structures are suitable and meet our future needs.

Congress, it is absolutely essential that we make sure that our branch structures provide opportunities to participate in the internal democracy of our union; not only that but more crucially we have to ensure that we group members together to realise our recruitment and organisational objectives. Testing the views of different groups of people who make up our union is an important way of determining how our own structures should be revised in the context of the ever-evolving external world in which we live and work. As the report says, there are several good examples of how branches operate openly and effectively with good member engagement and activity levels but the reality is that these are too often in the minority and in isolation from the mainstream with very little consistency evident. The goal must be to make all branches relevant and accessible to members and to encourage participation.

Our union is firmly based in its foundations. Branches allow rank and file members to direct how the GMB works and to organise themselves without over-dependency upon full-time officials. Although we have rightly placed an increasing emphasis upon recruitment and organising, few branches in my region have succeeded in increasing membership. The overriding task for us is to reinvigorate those branches that have been struggling to enable them to participate in our wider democracy and to stimulate organising and campaigning work. The report proposes what is a sensible and sober assessment of where we are structurally and practically with branches, and quite rightly recommends a study by a balanced working party to address the problems faced by inactive branches. It must go further than previous studies and focus clearly upon how we can support and strengthen self-sufficiency within this pivotal part of our organisation. President, Wales and South West Region is pleased to commend the report to Congress. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. Next?

BRO. V. WEST (London) spoke in support of the *CEC Special Report: GMB Branches – A Future that Works*. I came from a branch. I became active in this union because somebody asked me to go along to a branch meeting. Then somebody else said, “You’d make a good officer of the branch.” All of you became active in this great union because you became active in your branch. We need to ensure as a union that our branches, as has been said, remain the lifeblood of our organisational structure.

We all became active because we got involved in a branch, we all became active because we had a sense of social justice, and we all became active because that branch encouraged that amongst us. If we are going to ensure that the next generation of people that are going to be represented by this union have those same principles, those same structures in place, we have to ensure that our branches are fit for purpose. As somebody said early on in this debate, some people were saying some years ago branches were irrelevant. If branches are irrelevant, where are our campaigns going to come from? All those people we saw this morning out on the streets, out on the streets campaigning for the NHS, campaigning for a decent education for their kids, where are they going to come from if they do not come from the branches? Our branches are the place at which we encourage our members to get involved in those campaigns. If we are going to go forward as a union, colleagues, we have to ensure that our branches are there, are strong, and we learn by best practice.

My branch is not a perfect branch, I know that I can learn things from other people, from other parts of London, from other regions, but I know that the way that I get the members of my branch involved is by having a structure that is in place that allows them to get involved in our campaigns, that provides them with support when they have a problem at work. Let’s ensure that we go forward as a union strengthening our branch structures, strengthening the very foundations this union is based on, and ensuring that we have a structure in place that allows our members to get involved and feel proud of us. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vaughan. Next?

BRO. G. HARVEY (Birmingham & West Midlands) spoke in support of the Report. I am speaking from experience of why we need this report. Last year our branch secretary resigned because of all the bureaucracy that is going on, because of the cuts in our area, various things. We had a branch meeting at a regional office to elect a new branch secretary, which we did. We had 15 members travel over 30 miles to attend this meeting. We found somebody to do the job. Two months later I get a letter telling me that our branch is disbanded, that we have been amalgamated with another branch, and for 27 years we had a delegate, S51 Shropshire, so we had a delegate here. Today, S74 have a delegate here because that is where it has moved to. I just want to say, although I have read everything and I think it is good, Paul, we definitely want no more closures — he is not even here — he is not even here — we want no more closures without consultation. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Glyn, mother nature called suddenly.

BRO. HARVEY (Birmingham & West Midlands): Perhaps I should have been up here speaking on the women’s one, I am the right age and profile.

BRO. C. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland) spoke on the CEC Special Report: Mary, before I start I am going to disagree with the seconder of the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, dear!

BRO. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): She mentioned golden years. I thought we were living in the golden years with the leadership of you and Paul.

THE PRESIDENT: What did you say, Charlie?

BRO. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): We are living through the golden years with you in the leadership with Paul.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. (*Cheers*)

BRO. ROBERTSON (GMB Scotland): That was an aside. GMB Scotland welcomes this report and endorses fully the people's proposals. There has been a fundamental change within our branches through communication and consultation with all GMB regions. It is important through consultation to seek the views and opinions of post-holders and employees and through agreement with the constitution of the working party to ensure we achieve the widest possible engagement. For this reason it is only appropriate that Congress endorses this Special Report. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Charlie.

BRO. R. REEVES (Southern) spoke in support of the report: President Congress, this report recognises there is a problem with branches, the problem being not enough lay members are taking an active interest in the running of the GMB. We agree. The solution is to consult with all the interested internal bodies and members. We agree. However, the remit must not just be based on best practice but suggestions about incentives and disincentives that may require a rule change should be welcomed and examined on their merit: examples, difficulties in changing the rules; the penalties imposed on retired members.

There is a need for a fundamental change in the way we organise ourselves. If it carries on like this, we will end up a call centre union dispensing insurance and nobody wants that. This opportunity must not be lost. Southern Region supports. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Roy.

BRO. R. MORGAN (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, I have read the report, *GMB Branches – A Future that Works*, several times. The report says very little but does highlight there are many branches that already perform at a high level and it also states that we have a blueprint for further and wider success. The trick is to raise the branch organisation to the level of the best. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, just fit a couple to certain branches that are not rolling at the moment.

Congress, on the face of it a revision of branches seems a reasonable proposition but when we examine how the fundamental review of branch finances has been carried out we should treat it with great caution. The finance review has been a list of minor and major errors and has resulted in confusion for some and despair for others. We now have a system so complex that even the most experienced amongst us have difficulty applying it; indeed, without considerable assistance from our Finance Officer many branch secretaries would have simply stood down from their posts.

All the objectives the report seeks to achieve can be carried out within the regions with proper, firm management, and it is not very often I say that, but if the regions are not able or willing to do so, then the General Secretary and the CEC already have the tools they need to restructure the regions at fault. This can be done without tearing up the Rule Book and having a new version instead. I and my region feel the GMB is a bottom-up union, unlike other sister unions. We see the strength of the union being the members, the branch, the region, and the CEC, and also in that order.

With this review there is a great danger that we may lose that democracy, despite any assurances to the contrary. These rules were made for good reasons after years of debate. The danger is that we move towards a centralised top-down system and lose our local and regional democracy. Beware, Congress, it

is easy to let it slide by doing nothing to protect your members. My region's view and my view is that if it ain't broke, don't try and fix it. We are not simply opposing this, merely urging great caution on Congress. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Richard. Colleagues, I am now going to proceed to put the Special Report to you first. Then I will take motion 71 as you have already agreed, and the region has agreed, to refer motion 38. Okay, clear as mud? All those in favour of the Special Report, please show? Anyone against? That is carried. Thank you.

The CEC Special Report: GMB Branches – A Future that Works was ADOPTED.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I now move back to motion 71, Domestic Violence. London Region, are you prepared to refer? (*Agreed*) Congress, motion 71, the region has agreed to refer. Congress agree? (*Agreed*) Thank you.

Motion 71 was REFERRED.

CEC SPECIAL REPORT: GMB WOMEN'S PROJECT

1 Introduction

In April 2012 the GMB commissioned TCC to undertake a research project into the representation of women in the union. We were charged with developing a set of recommendations that would be sensitive to the history and culture of the union and build on some of the recognised progress that has been made in recent times. From the onset it was appreciated that in order to make the necessary further progress – particularly in respect of the lack of women holding senior positions – the report would make significant proposals.

We set out below our summary findings having undertaken a significant body of primary research with women in the union. More documentation relating to the desk research and quantitative and qualitative surveying is available and will be published in the final full version of the report when the research is concluded.

The union will wish to consider these findings and take a view as to which of the recommendations they judge prudent to implement, in what order and at what pace.

We also include in this report the research that is still outstanding and the areas that we feel need further examination before the final report is submitted.

The following quotation from a recent study into representation of women in trade unions neatly encapsulates the context and why this project is urgent and important:

“For unions in most industrialised countries to thrive and more importantly to survive, they must recruit and retain women members and this means having an agenda that is fit for purpose – one that serves the needs of a diversity of workers – and this in turn means ensuring that unions are inclusive of diversity at all levels. This need not be a zero-sum game with existing, long-established leaders losing out to newcomers, but it does mean that the established hierarchy – women as well as men – might need to be prepared to concede power bases and positions for what we might call the greater good.”

Women and Union Leadership in the UK and USA: First Findings from a Cross-National Research Project. Gill Kirton, Geraldine Healy, Sally Alvarez, Risa Lieberwitz, Mary Gatta

Our view is that this project is timely and has captured a mood for change. Indeed, we further believe that there is a strong business case that the union will be able to realise the expertise, commitment and energy of a large

percentage of its workforce if these recommendations are implemented. This will give it a competitive advantage in relation to employers and other trade unions who may be competing over the same territory.

Part of our work involved examining what other unions have done to tackle this issue. We are aware of the unique historical development of the GMB and appropriate best practice will need to be tailored to suit the GMB. We are also aware that unlike several other major British trade unions the GMB has not had a merger to contend with that has forced major structural and cultural change.

It is important to emphasise at the outset that we have been charged with examining an identified problem. We have therefore sought to focus our research around that issue and have explored barriers and the underlying reasons that have prevented women from achieving to the same level as their male counterparts, rather than seeking to present a completely balanced view.

Some of the reasons for this are generic and not specific to the GMB. The GMB cannot operate in a vacuum and it would be unreasonable to expect the union to tackle every aspect of gender-based discrimination in society. We have therefore concentrated on what we believe is within the scope of the union to tackle. We would also want to note that whilst we have identified some serious issues for the union to tackle, we found an almost universal recognition that significant progress has been made in recent times and a profound confidence in and loyalty to the union. This leads us to believe that there is a firm foundation on which to build a programme that will have significant impact.

Our report sets out proposals that would represent a concerted and coherent initiative. But sustained progress will require a change management procedure that will take years, rather than months. It will also need consent and consensus to be built around the programme for change. This is why we recommend the creation of a Task Force with representation from the key stakeholder groups inside the union and appropriate contributions from external parties.

The set of actions that we outline below represent a major undertaking for the union. It would be tempting to see them as too difficult or secondary to some of the other fundamental challenges that the union currently faces in this difficult political and economic climate. Furthermore, there are some immediate challenges ahead with the imminent prospect of changes in senior personnel in the union. The question to pose to the leadership is can the union afford to allow this process to proceed without being seen to actively promote an increase in the representation of women? This must be a key leadership issue.

2 Summary of the research undertaken

The following is a brief summary of the substantial and detailed research that was conducted and contributed to the key findings in the next section:

- 2.1 **We undertook desk research that involved examination of the available literature on interventions** that have been taken in similar organisations to tackle the issue of representation of women.
- 2.2 **We conducted a programme of deliberative events and depth interviews in five selected regions:** Southern, North West, Northern, Yorkshire and Scotland (as well as Wimbledon, Euston and the National Administration Unit). We subsequently conducted depth interviews with 46 women and the deliberative events were attended by a total of 114 women staff and officers.
- 2.3 **We attended and presented at CEC, NEF and NNC (formerly ONC/NSRC) meetings.**
- 2.4 **We attended the new Southern Region Women's Conference and subsequently attended the regional Equalities Forum.**

- 2.5 **We designed and implemented a survey for all women staff of the union that was completed by 171 participants.**
- 2.6 We have yet to undertake the survey with women members or the analysis of social networks. This is in part due to technical issues but also that we feel the survey will usefully form part of the delivery of the proposed interventions. However **we have conducted interviews with a number of women activists** that has given us sufficient insight to make the recommendations set out below.

3 Key Findings

The key findings here summarise the insight that came from the combination of desk-based, quantitative and qualitative research. More details of the elements will appear in the final full report at the end of the project.

3.1 Culture of the union

The culture of the union derives from its history, purpose and operating environment. There are many aspects of it that are seen as strengths. We have explored it only from the perspective of this project. In that regard, the Culture is identified by a large number of women as something that is exclusive and a barrier to fairness. It is often described as 'male, working class, and old fashioned'.

"There is a macho culture in the union by many men. I have personally found the top line management very helpful in some personal circumstances however there are many occasions where the talk from the male side is unhelpful and downright rude. We are better than that. However as it is acceptable to the most in the workforce - posturing is also a common trait. Moving forward I believe we need to practice what we preach so that we can all fulfil our potential without a feeling of being made to feel inferior when an objection is made."

To make detailed recommendations as to how the culture of the GMB impacts on the issue and crucially what can be done about this we intend to supplement the work we have done so far with further detailed research (including talking to selected male officers).

Organisational practices are learned through socialisation at the workplace. Work environments reinforce culture on a daily basis by encouraging employees to exercise cultural values.

Organisational culture is shaped by multiple factors, including the following:

- External environment
- Industry
- Size and nature of the organisation's workforce
- Technologies the organisation uses
- The organisation's history and ownership¹

A major component of the culture of the union derives from its purpose as a campaigning organisation. Like many other such organisations it is externally focussed and how people behave within the organisation towards each other are secondary to the 'struggle' to defend and represent the members.

¹ Schein (1992)

This is understandable and to a degree inevitable. As we have stated elsewhere there is much about the culture of the union that is positive and we believe that it further work could ensure that the core values of solidarity and fighting injustice are harnessed behind the change process here.

“There is a stark difference in the way we act when we are working for our members and how we behave with each other. We just don’t talk to each other enough.”

3.2 Need to measure reality as well as perception

In order to support the change process the union needs to be able to point to a robust evidence base. Gathering information about perceptions (which we have done in the course of our research so far) is necessary. But this needs to be supplemented with hard data on the representation of women at all levels. This should include every level from members, to branch officers, to regional committees through to the most senior level. A lot of this information does exist but it is not examined and does not form the basis of current reporting systems.

3.3 Identifying opportunities

The relatively few opportunities for career progression within the union was cited as a significant barrier. Of course this is not intrinsically a gender specific issue, but together with other barriers it exacerbates the problem for women. There is limited scope to increase the opportunities for formal career progression but there may be opportunities to improve reward and recognition, specialisation and professional development that would go some way to satisfying the desire to progress. This would help retention and morale.

Other organisations have created positions and amended job roles to provide opportunities for career progression for underrepresented groups. Indeed, the creation of top up places for GMB Congress has resulted in freeing up places that have actually been taken up by a higher proportion of women.

Creating additional positions would need to be considered as part of the union’s human resources strategy (and may have to be funded through rationalisation in other places). Furthermore, any such initiative would have to be accompanied with other measures to support the people who undertake the roles and the process.

“From my experience being involved with campaigning and being encouraged to use skills beyond my job description has made me want to move on in GMB. Without being praised or recognised for what I am capable of I would not be moving up. I think if some of my colleagues had this opportunity when they started at a younger age they would have had more ambition to move on in the organisation. Some colleagues are quite happy to have the security of a job with good benefits but others who have great potential have been downtrodden for too long. Some women also do not have a desire to be an officer in the future but have the opportunity to progress in “staff” roles.”

3.4

Support for women members

Support for women members – whether in the form of formal mentoring or a more informal approach does provide a key opportunity. A large number of women spoke about how they had been informally mentored and supported to apply for posts (often in the face of explicit discouragement) and how this had been decisive in achieving success. Informal support already takes place (not exclusively by women – there are many examples of men acting in mentoring roles), but not in a systematic fashion that makes it available to

everyone who can make use of it. Indeed, more than one woman we spoke to acts as a mentor to someone outside the union. We believe that there is a strong case for strengthening informal support networks and processes for all staff of the union but particularly for women.

3.5 Training and networking

It is worth highlighting two regionally driven training/networking events by way of example – one is focussed purely for women and other for all active members. These were highlighted by Regional Secretaries, Officers and lay members as exemplar events in assisting women to grow in confidence and effectiveness. They are the North West Regional Women's Conference and the Yorkshire Region Residential Branch Weekend. Both events are firmly focussed around the core objectives of the union and provide both formal and informal means for women to participate, learn and develop networks. We heard much anecdotal evidence that these events were hugely beneficial to progressing women in each region.

3.6 Branches

Whilst an increasing proportion of the union's members are women, this is not reflected in the number of women coming through to attain branch officer positions or indeed undertake training through the union². Branches are the base building block of the union and the gateway into further activity and progress. There are of course many shining examples of strong, effective and powerful women who have succeeded in securing prominent positions, but we believe further work needs to be undertaken to understand in detail the precise state of play in a quantitative sense. We heard stories of women being helped greatly through branches (and by both male and female officers), but we heard just as many stories of women being deterred by the culture and practical arrangements in branches.

We would recommend that the issue of how the structure, practice and culture of branches can be harnessed to support change should be central to the work of the proposed Task Force. We would propose that an asset-based approach (where we seek to identify best practice and then spread and amplify it) should be adopted. The union may wish to consider the scheme used by other unions whereby branches are given a bursary to support pro-active interventions.

3.7 Career into employment from activism

Some women activists (and women officers) talked about the gulf between the role as an activist and working for the union. We talked to women on both sides of this issue – those who are currently activists and considering potential opportunities to move into employment with the union and those who had already made the move.

Women yet to make the move expressed concern about the level of support that would be available. Some described an, 'us and them' feeling, that is probably inevitable in any member based organisation (but something the union should be mindful of). This will be explored further in the proposed survey with members. There may be hidden barriers that are discouraging women activists from considering applying for jobs with the union that would be relatively easy to overcome.

3.8 Tackling sexism

It would be remiss not to include in the report reference to instances of overtly sexist behaviour by members and colleagues in the union that have been reported to us. There have been some notable cases where such behaviour has been challenged and successfully dealt with, but others where those we spoke to believed it was not. Our view is more needs to be done to ensure a consistency of approach. Action to implement the recommendation we make about reaffirming the Union's commitment to zero

² This is anecdotal and requires further detailed research to establish the facts.

tolerance towards sexism is already underway. Ensuring it applies across the union is an important next step.

“We are a large organisation and in some ways reflect society as a whole. There is sexism in society and therefore threads of this also run through the union. Because of what we claim to be (a trade union which promotes equality in the workplace) we have to be the best at setting an example and our employees but also our members must be left in no doubt as to exactly what types of behaviour constitute sexism particularly when they represent the GMB in their workplace. More targeted, detailed training materials may be one way forward.

“I have received sexist abuse from members in the course of our work, for example when supporting members on a picket line. The number of women coming forward may not improve until such incidents are regarded and dealt with in the same way that an incidence of racist abuse for example would be.

“The union is a safe and positive place to work but there is still progress to be made while women can be made to feel objectified or vulnerable when working for a trade union. Making a complaint about a member/colleague doesn't always feel appropriate or possible therefore it may be necessary to find a way to create a culture where such treatment isn't acceptable before raising issues with individuals.”

3.9 Staff to officer programme

The recently instituted programme where staff can try officer positions on a secondment basis was universally popular. Awareness of the scheme was reasonable although patchy in some areas. Some drawbacks were mentioned such as:

- Limited availability of places
- Possible resentment of others
- Resentment from lay members and potential external candidates
- Accusations of tokenism

But these were far outweighed by the positive feedback we received from both women who have benefitted from participating and reports of their progress from line managers. Indeed, there is nothing that has had comparable impact in terms of accelerating the proportion of women in more senior roles.

The changing role and operating environment of the union's staff is itself an opportunity and a threat. The extent to which the union is able to embrace the use of new technology will be key in efficiency and effectiveness. The means are now available for Officers to be significantly more self-servicing than ever before. Whilst such change may cause problems and training needs it should also open up opportunities for those (predominantly younger and more likely to be female) who are more comfortable using the technology. Indeed, although this goes beyond the scope of the work we have done so far, it is easy to imagine that the union will need to transform the way it works (including roles and responsibilities) if it is to meet the needs of its members in future. A rigid staff/officer division of labour in 10 years time will surely be outmoded.

“There is a glass ceiling between administrative roles and attaining a proactive position within the GMB organisation - staff will always be disadvantaged by being office based and activists working outside the organisation will always be better placed to get the jobs due to their 'on site experience' which it is impossible at present for an administrative person to attain. There are also very limited administrative roles that have a progressional route - i.e. there's nowhere to go.”

3.10 Career opportunities

Like many trade unions, the GMB has only limited opportunity for career advancement. There are probably fewer than 20 positions at the top of the organisation. This creates a bottleneck for all staff – not just women. This is compounded by the pattern of relatively long service in senior positions. The union therefore has the problem of retaining those with ambition and aspiration.

There may be some scope to create additional posts (but these would have to be justifiable in delivering the union's objectives). But there may be even more scope through facilitating personal and professional development aligned to performance management. Consequent reward and recognition of enhanced contribution to the union would help to improve job satisfaction and go some way to satisfying the currently unmet need for advancement.

“An annual one-to-one with the line manager, giving an opportunity to discuss aspirations, work programme, and future plans and possible opportunities. A professional analysis of a person's qualities and skills rather than assumptions based on gender, age and appearance.”

3.11 Lay structures

The lay structure and democracy of the union is one of its great strengths. Any change must be consensual and enjoy the formal and informal support of the membership through the CEC, Congress and the Regional Committee. We believe there is a compelling case for change – and indeed a case that change is urgently needed if the union is to live up to its expressed core values of fighting for fairness and against injustice. Ultimately there needs to be a rebalancing.

Regional Committees will play a pivotal role in the maintenance of the status quo or effecting change. Active steps should be taken to engage regional committees in the process.

3.12 Equality processes and procedures

The issue of ensuring that there is transparency of process around job advertisements and appointments was raised in all quarters. This perceived lack of transparency exacerbates the underlying view that there may not be a level playing field. It potentially undermines morale and acts as a disincentive for women to take what they believe to be a risk in applying for jobs when they arise.

“Jobs have to stop being earmarked for individuals before they are advertised. The mates system of appointing has to cease and jobs should be given on merit rather than the politics behind it.”

3.13

Internal communications

Poor internal communications featured prominently as a barrier and a source of discontent. This was mentioned particularly in relation to information about opportunities to apply for posts but also more broadly in terms of knowing what is going on within the union (staff moving on, etc). As stated elsewhere, this can lead to the perception (rather than necessarily the reality) that certain people are 'in the know' and others not.

The idea of an internal staff bulletin was very well received and could form a key part of the communications strategy. It could be a vehicle through which to spread best practice, counter 'misunderstandings' and advertise opportunities for jobs but also other professional development. It would enhance the sense of team for the union's staff.

We have moved on considerably over the last 5 years but women are still under represented and where promoted seen by colleagues as token. Until we address the imbalance by providing roles within the structure as a transition from staff roles to officer roles and organisers to seniors and regional secs we will always be seen as token. Could do more on advertising the success stories within the GMB for women which in turn motivates others to apply for senior positions.

3.14 Differences between regions

The five regions we focussed on gave us a broad sense of how women across the union feel about the issue of representation. There were inevitably key differences. Each of the regions has developed its own strategies and procedures within the nationally set framework. Some regions have had major upheavals to contend with and others have had a more stable operating environment. Broadly speaking we found the most consistency in the views and attitudes of staff. Probably in part because there are fewer women officers, working in more isolation we found greater variance here. There is also more difference in the way each region operates in an operational sense.

There were quite marked differences in the way regions are operating the appointments process and how the regional committees are involved. There would be merit in candid discussion at senior level as to how greater consistency can be achieved and also how this consistent approach should be communicated throughout the union. Moreover, any set of interventions to tackle representation of women should be applied with consistency across regions.

3.15 National Administration Unit (NAU)

Our findings from the NAU were significantly different from most other areas. This is partly a product of the distinct function of the unit and the consequent staffing implications. But it is difficult to ignore the high levels of morale and job satisfaction expressed from the women who work there.

There was a 50/50 gender split at NAU right from the beginning. There was a concerted effort to make it happen from senior management. We also made sure we had a mixture of age groups as well by hiring in staff from elsewhere in the GMB and recruiting externally.

3.16 Task Force or Commission to see through the changes

When we asked about the change process needed we found a consensus of support around the proposition of a Task Force or Commission to oversee the process. This was in recognition of the scale of the change necessary. There was also a strong view that if there is appropriate external representation on the Task Force that would send a strong message that the union was committed to the process. It would be a sign of confidence that the change process would be robust, far reaching and stand up to external scrutiny.

3.17 Social networks

Social networks are a key feature of how any organisation works and are a dimension of the culture. Mapping, understanding and analysing the social networks in the GMB is an area that would be useful to undertake further work in and we intend to carry this out in the next phase of the project. Anecdotally we

found that there was a pronounced view that the social networks that tend to dominate within the union are excluding to most women.

“the region used to be a boys club, but our regional secretary has gone out of his way to challenge that. He is comfortable around women. He always has time for you. He makes sure that in social situations he acts appropriately at all times. He is a role model for other male officers. You wouldn’t think it to look at him but he has done more for women in this region than anyone”.

Dealing with this aspect of the issue is complex and difficult. It will require behaviour that is excluding to be challenged but in a constructive and reasonable way. It will also need support to be given to create new, inclusive networks.

3.18 Equalities Structures

There is considerable variance in how effective and relevant the equalities structures of the union are seen to be. In some regions they are being actively used to align equalities work with the mainstream aims and objectives of the union and in others greater emphasis is being put on other measures.

The following quotation from the CEC Progressing Equality Report to the 2007 Congress appears to be relevant and accurate today,

To be direct, the equalities structures are seen by some (including some members of the key groups who they are designed to represent) as a distraction and tangential at best. This is not to take a view as to the merit of this perspective, but to state that this is an issue that the union should address as considerable resource is devoted to the equality structures and there is a political imperative for the union to be actively promoting the equalities agenda.

It is perfectly legitimate for the union to seek to ensure that the work of its equalities forums and other structures supports the main objectives and priorities of the union. Indeed, to do so would only increase their relevance and status.

3.19 Performance management

This is a complex and challenging issue for the the union. And performance management is clearly broader than the scope of this project. But it is so fundamental to the success of any measure that we must include some reference to it. Clarity, transparency and good communication around the management and measurement of performance was cited at all levels as a key issue.

“Having support and backing from other colleagues, given confidence and feedback, given a clear structure of what is expected from you and a clear path of how you can progress into another role with support and backing from the appropriate line manager - and communication between staff and seniors on a regular basis. “

I’ve never had an appraisal or a line manager or had a meeting about my performance. I have never actually had a formal job description since I was in the admin support pool, which is one reason why I’ve been moved up and down so easily – there’s nothing formal in there.

3.20

Flexible employment practice

There are issues – not unique to the GMB – around caring responsibilities that fall to women. We heard many instances of flexibility being exercised and it creating space and giving confidence to women to flourish in officer and staff roles. But this was felt to be counter to the culture that predominates.

There is a case for capturing these examples and evidence of the impact they can have on productivity. Again a universally applied and transparent approach to how the particular caring responsibilities that affect women (but also men) would be beneficial.

“Although for me caring responsibilities are not a real issue at the moment I do believe they are a massive barrier to women accessing role within the union at workplace level let alone becoming employees. Mentoring programs are really important - there needs to be a move away from the macho culture - more of a recognition that the old way of union officials having to be aggressive and macho and never showing their flaws is not helpful to encourage women (and some men) into the organisation and isn't actually healthy.”

3.21 Quotas

We tested the possible application of some form of quota system (notwithstanding political and legal constraints). This was overwhelmingly rejected as way forward by most women, even those who were most strident in arguing that there needs to be swift and concerted action on the issue.

“Lots of male officers will never tell you what is going badly. More recognition of the emotional drain the job can have on you I think if there are not formal quotas there should be real pressure put on regions to be at least appoint 50% of all new job to be women. At the rate are going our organisation will continue to be old, male and pale for a very long time.”

The full range of options for positive action in terms of employment and representation should be explored further by the task force.

3.22 GMB@Work

GMB@Work is the key driving force for the union. Any plan that seeks to address the issue of under representation of women must be relevant to GMB@Work. Indeed it must become intrinsic to it and be part of the everyday life of the union. If it is not, it will be seen as an additional objective that will inevitably become secondary.

4 Recommendations

Decades ago GMB identified significant problems with the under representation of women. Various reports have been produced, such as a major policy document “Equal Rights for Women” in 1972 and “Women within the GMB 2002” and recommendations have been brought to Congress consistently over the years. Whilst there has been some progress it is limited and the issue remains one of the most serious facing the Union.

The set of recommendations below signify a commitment of the scale necessary to make fundamental lasting change. We set out a process that will transform the representation of women in the union. Like any large-scale change process it will be challenging and difficult. But the potential benefit to the union is immense.

- 4.1 There needs to be a full change management programme that embeds the necessary changes at all levels of the organisation. The General Secretary should champion the change and oversee an annual equalities audit (to be included each year in a report to Congress), to ensure that all appointments, procedures, initiatives, services etc. should be accompanied by an equalities impact analysis. This should be replicated within each Region.
- 4.2 A Task Force, reporting to the General Secretary, should be established to implement the recommendations. This should have the full authority of the SMT to see through the implementation and should be sufficiently representative to ensure credibility. It is essential that the Task Force has a clear

time-line, senior management and lay-member involvement and external representation. The work of the Task Force should include the following elements:

- a) Working with appropriate officers and members to ensure that effective education, training and/or skills development are integrated into the core programme for the organisation such as GMB@Work training, branches, regional committees as well as staff induction and training.
- b) Identify, encourage and support women activists to take up opportunities to work for the union.
- c) Receive the submission of existing best practice around support for women within the union and then promote and publicise it.
- d) Research, develop and promote a programme of support for staff and officers that recognises the specific barriers that women face.
- e) Develop a programme based on insight from women members and activists to ensure that the union is addressing issues that are key concerns for women members (at all levels particularly at branches).

- 4.3 Whenever a vacancy occurs for a full time post all post holders in the union will be notified.
- 4.4 Existing equalities procedures around appointments at national and regional level including further training and support to be refreshed to ensure universally consistent application.
- 4.5 The union must actively pursue the objective of establishing universal performance management processes throughout the union.
- 4.6 Examine how reward and recognition and professional development can be enhanced particularly for staff. Moreover we will seek to introduce measures that break down the outmoded division between staff and officers within the union.
- 4.7 Institute an internal staff communications bulletin and process throughout the union including each region.
- 4.8 Gather data and use this to measure progress in areas such as the gender breakdown of such as workplace reps, GMB@Work training participants, other training undertaken, branch officers, regional committees, officers, senior officers, CEC, national officers, regional and national secretaries.
- 4.9 Explore the equalities impact of the various training programmes that the union provides and commissions and the potential for amplifying the successes.
- 4.10 Maintain, develop and expand the staff to officer programme that has been undertaken.
- 4.11 Re-emphasise the union's zero tolerance for sexism policy including effective communications strategy around it.
- 4.12 Consider structural changes to create more posts (possibly including assistant or deputy positions).
- 4.13 Build upon existing positive action programmes such as the established top-up seats mechanism and examine other forms which can be implemented.
- 4.14 Implement external monitoring and evaluation of the appointments process.
- 4.15 Conduct a review of branch structures and operations to foster inclusive practices through an asset based approach.

- 4.16 Conduct further research into how Regional Committees can be supported to foster a more representative union.

5 Conclusions

In conducting this project we have been asked to analyse the undeniably low level of representation of women at senior levels within the union. We have found that the reasons for this are several – some of them are simple and other more complex. Solutions will necessarily need to encompass all tiers of the organisation. There is almost nothing of any substance that we can recommend that will not be challenging in some quarters or easy to implement.

We are also keenly aware that this is not the first report or initiative that has been undertaken to tackle the issue of promoting equality and women's representation specifically within the union. So we have tried to be comprehensive but practical in what has been recommended. We also anticipate – and indeed recommend that the best course of action will be for the recommendations to be viewed as a menu of options that should be selected from with some key priorities chosen first. Any attempt to implement every recommendation at the same time will be a recipe for failure. Implementation needs to be focussed, targeted and properly evaluated.

The undertaking of the project has already had an impact. Inevitably expectations have been raised. It is also true to say that there is a degree of scepticism in some quarters as to whether significant action will flow from the report.

There needs to be a concerted, high-level and long-term intervention. But the requirement for a long-term perspective does not mean that there are not actions that should be taken immediately. Indeed, we would argue that the immediate measures we have highlighted could and should be taken now to signal commitment.

Our research has identified the 'culture' of the union as a central issue. This needs further exploration, as organisational culture is fundamental to the success of the union going forward. There is much about the culture of the union that is positive – indeed something to be proud of. The challenge is to develop enhancements to the predominant culture to ensure that it is inclusive rather than exclusive. This will require accurate insight and forensic implementation.

Fundamental change will only realistically be achieved in the long-term. For example, even with swift action, achieving an SMT that is representative of the union's membership in terms of gender is a decade away (and by then this may mean at least five of the nine regional secretaries being female as the union's membership is already over 50% female). The women who are going to challenge for those positions are possibly in their thirties and may not even currently work for the union – although they are probably in membership and learning their trade at the grass roots. It is therefore vital that pathways currently available are widened, others are created and kept open and that they are encouraged and supported as they take steps along them.

Progress towards this goal must become as embedded and universally accepted in the union as GMB@Work – indeed it must become an integral component of GMB@Work. The leadership of the union at every level must be completely aligned behind not only the high level objective, but also the practical steps (some of them difficult and controversial) that will be necessary to achieve it.

This could be crucial in securing the benefit of the doubt with internal and external stakeholders as to how seriously the union is taking the process. Drawing both groups into the process so that they are acting as change agents – working with the union – rather than being critical and potentially destructive from afar could be decisive. Finding roles and ways of engaging them will be important.

We believe that the change process has already begun with the launch of the project. Indeed, we have engaged with most women who work for the union in the course of the research. The internal communications strand that we recommend above should be applied to the implementation of the report – being seen to do and well as doing. The fact that this process is going to be taking place in the run up to the election of a new General Secretary is an opportunity rather than a problem as it should be seen as a significant issue for the agenda of any aspiring candidate. Improving the representation of women in the union will become part of the campaign narrative and securing the commitment of all interested parties to follow through on changes will help cement the necessary improvements.

Finally, the business case for these changes is overwhelming. The union has recently demonstrated creativity and resilience in overcoming big financial, political and organisational challenges. This represents a key component of the next phase of that struggle to equip the union to thrive as a modern 21st century organisation.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay, colleagues. Can we now move on with the next part of the debate and come to the second of our Special Reports. This is an important subject matter. We have a presentation, videos, and a number of motions which go together with this Report. I will now explain how I intend to take this debate. Firstly, we will hear from David Evans, who is on the platform, from The Campaign Company. The Special Report will be moved and seconded on behalf of the CEC, that is, the *GMB Women's Project*. We will then hear from women who have changed their roles. The remaining motions will be moved and seconded. I will then call on anyone who wishes to speak on the Report. The General Secretary will close the debate before moving to the vote on the motions and the Special Report. Thank you. Can I now call David?

David, before you give us your address, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our GMB Congress. David is the founder and director of The Campaign Company. Before that, he worked in politics as Assistant General Secretary of the Labour Party in the late 1990s and he was responsible for running the National 2001 General Election Campaign. By working with local authorities, charities, community groups and trade unions, he has learned about community engagement, motivation, behaviour change and the importance of good communication. David is also an elected director of — oh, dear! — Chester Football Club, a supporter-run social enterprise. David will now give a short presentation on the background, findings, and recommendations in the Report. David, please address Congress.

DAVID EVANS, DIRECTOR OF THE CAMPAIGN COMPANY, ADDRESSED CONGRESS

DAVID EVANS: President, Congress, thank you very much for this opportunity. David Evans, Labour Organisers Branch, 25 years GMB member, first-time Congress speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. It is a privilege to present the findings of the research that we had the pleasure of conducting for the union. We were asked to look at specifically the issue of senior posts within the union, although that is not to say there is not a recognition that there are issues around all levels and there are plenty of other barriers to other groups, not just women, to fulfilling their potential. That was the brief because of the irrefutable fact that the union has an issue in terms of the number of women who hold senior posts in the union. It is a fact, it is irrefutable.

What I am going to do in this very short presentation is just take a very quick look at the context of the work we did, what we did, what we found, and what we are recommending. You have the report before you. I do not have time so I am not going to go into detail but I am going to pick out some of the highlights and some of the most important issues. Before I do that, I think it is worth just pausing for one minute to look at the central role that women have played in the union from its inception to the present day.

(Video shown to Congress)

Congress, it is a hard act to follow, those women, but this report from a group of academics who studied a comparative study of leadership in the UK and the USA in trade unions I think was a very useful starting point for our work. It says for unions to thrive they must be inclusive of diversity at all levels. This need not be a zero sum game with existing long established leaders losing out to newcomers, i.e. if the union is diverse and enables the talent, and all the talent and expertise, and experience, to flourish through to the top of the union, in fact the union will grow and there is the solid business case beyond the compelling case around equality and fairness that exists around this issue. There is a strong business case for the union doing it. If we needed any more rationale for this project and the proposal before you, I think you have them there.

We have been here before, in 1972, 1991, and then further work done by Ann, who we are going to hear from in a minute with some very good cogent well argued reports that set out the case, set out the problem, and set out a number of solutions that the union should take, and here we are in 2013 and there has been some progress, and I will touch on it in my presentation, but there remains that irrefutable problem at the top of the union so we must do something different.

What did we do? The first thing to say is that the research and the project is ongoing. The report you have before you today does not mark the end of it, in fact if anything it marks the start of it. There will be ample opportunity for everybody to participate, in fact that will be a necessary condition for it to work that it becomes a fully inclusive project, but on the screen you have what we did. We carried out a major research programme, in addition to the desk research studying what else had been tried in other organisations, in other unions, in the UK and abroad. We did primary research with women staff, women officers, women activists, and that was the basis of our report.

I would just like to quote one quite inspiring woman member that we interviewed, who said, "I don't want special treatment. Everything I've had I've fought for. I just want the chance to have a fair fight to get what I deserve and what I can contribute to the union." It is not about special treatment, none of this is, it is about fairness, it is about equality, it is about everything that the union stands for.

These are our summary findings. As I say, I am not going to pick out every point. I hope you can see the screen. You have the documents before you that replicate the presentation. First of all, there is a firm foundation to build on. There is plenty of excellent work going on in the union, as indeed I am sure the women you are going to hear from in a minute will testify, there is plenty of encouragement, plenty of good practice, plenty of really positive work going on in the union, so a very firm foundation but there remains that problem that whilst 50% of the union's membership are women under 10% of the union's top positions are held by women. We have nine excellent regional secretaries and an excellent General Secretary, but they are all men. Nobody can argue that there is not some kind of issue going on that needs to be addressed.

The asset-based approach we refer to is simply that we think the research that we have done would suggest a positive strategy would be to find that good practice that I mention and seek to amplify and replicate it. Rather than looking at maybe what is going so wrong, a better strategy is to look at what is going right and try and amplify and replicate that throughout the union, the asset-based approach.

So, looking at what has happened, just three measures, membership, Congress, and CEC election, they back up my story that things are improving. They are. The proportion of women in membership of the union is increasing but Congress delegates and CEC membership is also increasing. It is not increasing quickly enough. If you look, the trajectory is actually steeper amongst the rising membership than it is amongst the other two, but the trend is up nevertheless. That is very positive and something the union should be proud of, but needs to do more of if that gap is not to widen.

In order to make sure that we are not replicating reports that have previously been put to Congress and have not had a terribly great impact, we will be keen to point out that we believe this project will take

years to implement rather than months. It must be done in a way that is consistent with the aims, the values, the ethos of the union, i.e. to build consent and consensus around the proposals, by going out and talking and communicating, and then, as the union does when it fixes on a goal that it wants to achieve, taking decisive and concerted leadership. We would contend that this is probably as core to the future success of the union as GMB@Work. We put it as strongly as that.

Moving on, this is just one of the very many snapshots from the research that we conducted with women staff in this instance. I would just like to pick out the two most popular answers to this question, which is what would help you achieve what you want. Kind of unsurprisingly, women pointed to training and to the opportunity to try things out. I will come on to the second one in a minute through the rest of the presentation. When we dug a little bit under that answer around training, we found that actually it was not so much the quality of training, in fact women who have been on training from the union, from its partners, from the TUC, and so forth, through the union, they were almost universally praising how good it was, how helpful it had been, how it had helped them, but it was more a question of access to the training and can it be framed in a way that might encourage more access. I will come on to the second biggest answer, which is the opportunity to try new roles.

Key findings, again I will just pick out one or two as we go through this. Culture, what is not written down, how things are done, is that as friendly and as encouraging to women in the union as it could be. I am playing back to you here the research that we did and what women said to us. They mentioned the cultural aspects of the union that could do with some examination.

Opportunities, inevitably the union has a quite flat structure, there are limited opportunities for women and maybe there can be some creative thinking around how to make more opportunities, maybe in different ways. We found that there were possibly quite a lot of barriers between women who had become active in the union in a lay member sense, but then coming into employment, a big jump, so maybe that is worth exploring.

The second slide of findings is mainly around things that the union is already doing but maybe need to be done on a more universal level and more consistently and maybe with more volume, but again a positive platform to build on. The union is doing most of the things that are on the screen and if more could be done then great returns could accrue from them.

Just very quickly to finish off, the recommendations, and again I am going to pick one off each slide, and you have them before you. The first one I pick off the first slide is probably the most important one of the 16 recommendations, that is, the establishment of a taskforce led by the General Secretary. This is not a taskforce designed to kick things into the long grass, far from it, the opposite. This would be a taskforce to grip the issue, to engage the whole union in the process, and to drive it forward. Without that, we felt that the necessary progress could not be made.

The second one I pick off here would be data, gather the data necessary not to check up on people so much as to be able to identify quickly what is going right, where are the success points, and then to seize on those success points and to amplify and replicate them where they can be usefully employed.

Thirdly, expand the staff into an officer programme which is having success across the country in getting staff to become officers. Again, I think we will hear a little bit about that in a minute and the story can be told much better by these women than it can be by me, but we would commend it as a successful scheme.

It is interesting that this follows the debates that we have just heard on branches but some tremendous stories in branches we found of success and encouragement, and women coming forward through branches and, indeed, encouragement from regional committees. Again, we just want to capture that

best practice and try and make sure that it is spread across and throughout the union so that it can be experienced everywhere.

What happens next? Obviously, we have this debate and Congress votes. I would not expect this to be completely without controversy but I would put it to you, Congress, very little that is worth doing is without controversy, and this is certainly worth doing.

Finally, I would just like to leave the last word to this, the lack of women organisers in the GMB is the most visible symptom of the failure of the organisation to realise and maximise the full potential of our women members, and it goes on. Congress, that is not our research, that is not about today, that was the CEC report that went to Congress in 1991. I would urge you to support the research, to support the recommendations that are based on the research, because in 22 years' time I hope Congress can look back on today and see it as an historic step in taking a great leap forward and making sure that that statement is untrue of the union as we go forward. Thank you, Congress. Thank you, President. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: David, can I say thanks for everything.

(Presentation of a gift amid applause)

DAVID EVANS: Mary, thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay, Congress. Thank you very much, David. I will now call Paul Kenny to move the *GMB Women's Project Special Report*. Thank you, Paul. Then I will be calling Nikki Sharpe to second.

CEC SPECIAL REPORT: GMB WOMEN'S PROJECT

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Morning, Congress, Paul Kenny delighted, absolutely honoured and privileged, and all the other adjectives you can think of, about moving this Special Report, *GMB Women's Project*.

First of all, I want to say a few things about what this report is not about. It is not about quotas, it is not about cheap gimmicks, and it is not about patronising the women in the GMB, give them a pat on the head, and send them back to the kitchen. That is what it is not about. What this report is going to do is what we have failed to do with the last two reports, as well meaning and as well written as they were identifying problems that existed within the organisation, effectively we failed to act collectively: good practice in some areas, not matched across the organisation.

This report is about opportunity, about unlocking potential, about equality. Half the members in this union are now women, half, and next year it is likely that they will be a majority. *(Cheers/Applause)* It's great. When you think back a few years when John Cope was maybe only 60 or 70 — *(Laughter)* — women were probably a quarter or 30% of the membership of the union and now they are on the verge of being a majority. The reason for that is simple, colleagues, the world of work has changed. It has changed. A number of years ago we all knew, everyone predicted there would be a lot more women in the workforce and our job and role was to go out and reach out to those women and say, "Get into a union. You'll be better off in a union. The union can help you, whether it's treatment at work, respect at work, or equality, or equal pay." That was our message and, you know, they did in their droves.

I will let you into a secret. I have been involved in two really bitter disputes in my time, long, long, long disputes, big long ones; I am talking 10-month disputes. Let me tell you something, the people

who stuck right through it were the women. They were absolutely determined, they knew about injustice, and they were determined to fight for it. The women in the GMB have earned their place at the top table, they need no apologies from anybody over a long tradition, and there are many people in this hall who carried this union when actually they were in a real minority in terms of the activists within the union.

This is the third time in 20 years we are having a discussion about this. I do not know about you but I feel we have had enough chat and now it's time for some action. What is great about this is that senior management team, those blokes, actually sat around saying, "We have got to do something about this." It was not something that was being foisted upon them. It was actually saying, "We don't look like what the union looks like. What are the root causes? How are we not fostering a process that is bringing more and more people through so they are able to challenge for senior positions in the organisation?" The senior management team and the central executive have recommended this document to you after the research and what their own eyes have told them.

The setting up of the taskforce, which will include women from various levels and roles in the union, and I have a shock for you, there is not a man on the taskforce, not even one to make the tea; not even me. (*Laughter*) That taskforce will be charged to look at how after Congress, if Congress agrees, how we look to implement some of those ideas that have come through from the campaign group. We are going to trawl every post-holder in the union for their views and their input. We are going through the national magazine and through discussion groups around the union encourage contributions from members. We want people to tell us what they need. We know that certain things can be done straightaway, the anti-sexist statement or a code of conduct for post-holders, and we can reach out to women and all under-represented equality strands by ensuring every permanent officer's post goes to all post-holders within a region, hopefully giving a larger and better choice of candidates by increased interest.

But we have to look at our own current procedures and practices to ensure not only are they consistent but they are also encompassing. The challenge for the task-group and Mary will be presiding and chairing the task-group, the challenge for the task-group and for all of us is to unlock and harness the great energy, passion, and life experiences of our women members. I am not under any illusion, and neither should you be, that this does mean change. Not everybody relishes that prospect. There are going to be blockers and there are going to be twisters, there are going to be snipers, and there are going to be those who feel threatened by this challenge, even those who may have climbed the ladder of office and then want to pull up the ladder behind them.

This union, our GMB, has met challenge head-on. In the last decade we have not been frightened of anything. We have looked at the problem, we have said we need to challenge this, we need to do something, and we have done it. We are not frightened by change and we are not worried by challenges, or anybody else. The staff to officers programme, which I hope you are going to hear about in a minute, was an initiative the SMT came up with to start the process of giving more people opportunity, moving resources, actually, from traditional office-based out into more face-to-face membership issues. Technology gave us that opportunity.

When Frances O'Grady was elected as General Secretary of the TUC last year I was President of the TUC, good job I was, and the press said to me, "What do you think, what do you think about it," and people were going round saying, "Oh, it's wonderful, marvellous, it's brilliant, 175 years for the brothers to realise a woman could do the job as well; brilliant, wonderful." I said, "You know what, I look forward to the day when nobody takes a blind bit of notice because actually it will be just the norm, it will not be unusual that a woman occupies a role like that."

The GMB is the best equipped organisation. I stand up here, some of you should come up here during Congress and sit where we sit and what you will see is what has happened to this organisation, this

Congress, in the last eight to ten years. It has changed. Colleagues, it has changed. It is incredible. Look at the amount of women, look at the amount of black faces that we see in our delegations that we never saw before. It is absolutely inspiring when you are sitting up here and you see the changes evolving in front of you. This is a natural conclusion from that.

So, we are getting there. We are. There are some good things to talk about, and this hall shows that, but we have to reach out, we have to reach out and we have to grab that initiative, we have to encourage more women into the GMB, we want more women to join GMB, of course we do, we want lots more people from every walk of life, every gender, to join the GMB. We also want the women in the GMB to take their rightful place and their rightful roles as office holders. We need more shop stewards, we need more branch secretaries, more regional council delegates, and more Congress delegates. Basically, we need to show an enthusiasm because, in effect, and this is why I say it is not about quotas, it is not going to happen overnight. When jobs come up in the organisation we need as wide a breadth of candidates with the appropriate experience as possible. That is how it will change. What we are not getting is people coming forward for those senior jobs and the way to do it is we change the system, we accelerate it. We do not want to get into a scenario, frankly, where we patronise people and that is not what women in this organisation want, it is not what they deserve. What they want and what they deserve is to be seen and treated as equals in our union. I will tell you this much, as long as Mary is the President, as long as I am the General Secretary, as long as the SMT and the CEC are in office, they bloody well will be. Mary, I move the report. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Paul. Can I have Nikki to second?

SIS. N. SHARPE (CEC, Commercial Services): I am pleased that this report has the full support of the senior management and the CEC. We are pleased that women's representation has been taken seriously and are pleased to hear from our General Secretary, Paul Kenny, that this is not going to be a paper exercise. Be assured that together with our dear President, Mary Turner, the women in the union will drive this initiative forward. We have many skilled and capable women at all levels of the organisation; we just need to unlock their potential and offer them the necessary support and mentoring.

I welcome the excellent work done by the Campaign Company, pulling together the research, facilitating meetings, identifying weaknesses, making recommendations, and by basically starting the ball rolling. I am proud to support this exciting challenge which will spin into all workplaces, industrial and equality strands of the union. On behalf of the CEC we look forward to further work with the Campaign Company to dispel the myths and change perceptions. We do understand that some recommendations are easier to implement than others but, just as Rome was not built in a day, change takes time to take effect. We will start with small steps. We are aware that barriers will need to be identified and removed, or at least lifted, and then we just need to stand well back.

As you have heard from David Evans, the next stage is for Congress to endorse this report and the taskforce can be set up to drive the project. I urge you all to enable the work to begin by supporting this report. In the meantime, I urge you all to read the report and get involved. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Nikki. Colleagues, can we move to the next part. We will now hear about the staff to officer scheme and from a number of women speaking about their experiences. This session will be facilitated by Ann Lafferty from National Office, who will be coordinating this project. You will now see a short video.

(Video shown to Congress)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Congress. Ann, you are sitting over there in the middle. Ann is going to proceed from there in discussion with four others. It's all yours now, Ann.

SIS. A. LAFFERTY (National Office): Thank you, Mary. Congress, I would like to introduce you to the women who are sat with me here today. First of all, we have Karen Lennard from GMB Scotland. Karen worked at the Scottish Region and the NAU in an administrative capacity doing various roles. She did that for a total of 27 years before taking on an organising role, which she has been doing for just 10 months.

Next, we have Ruth Bennett from the South West Region. For 10 years Ruth was a branch secretary and then for three years she was a workplace representative. Ruth became an organiser and after four years in that position she became a senior officer, in fact she has just celebrated her one-year birthday of being a senior organiser.

Next, we have Rachel Harrison, who hails from the Yorkshire Region, where she worked in administration for nine years until she became an officer three-and-a-half years ago.

Last but by no means least we have Sue Hackett from the London Region. Sue has been with the GMB since she left school. She spent about 31 years doing a variety of jobs within admin until three years ago when she became an organiser.

Now that we have set the scene, perhaps we can have a chat. You have all made a really strong move. It has been something entirely different that you have taken on board. Tell me, if we could start with yourself, Karen, what made you do that, what made you go for the change?

SIS. K. LENNARD (GMB Scotland): As a previous staff rep I have known for a long time that this is what I wanted to do so far as my role in the organisation, had I been given the opportunity. Then when the General Secretary was going round the regions, the admin unit, he talked about the secondment opportunities so I jumped at the chance to have a go at that, so I would like to thank Paul for that. This organisation plays such a big role in people's lives, people that are working, and I think it is dead important that they are a member of a union, and I just wanted to be part of representing them and encouraging others to join.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Thank you. How about yourself, Ruth?

SIS. R. BENNETT (Wales and South West): I worked for a manufacturing automotive company in South Wales and I was quite content in my role. I was there 20 years and I suppose secure, but with my role as an activist in the union and representing my colleagues, that was a passion and I knew when the opportunity came up I needed to take that. I needed to follow what I believed in.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Yourself, Rachel.

SIS. R. HARRISON (Yorkshire): When I started working for the union on reception I did not really know what a trade union was, I did not understand trade unionism, I had gone through college, university, not been brought up in a trade union background. I developed my passion for trade unionism actually on the job. I got a passion for employment law and the more I did the more I wanted to do, so I knew for me the only way I could get more involved would be to make that change, get out there and meet the members, meet the people, and inspire them the way that I was inspired.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Now you know the question.

SIS. S. HACKETT (London Region): Yes, I do. To be honest with you, it never occurred to me to become an officer, to change that role, because I joined the union when I was 16 and staff did not become officers, not female staff. I started in the post room with Tim Roache, Regional Secretary of Yorkshire Region, and women staff never became officers, so it did not occur to me. I loved what I was doing and I always had a passion for being in the GMB, it was my home, it is where I live. When it was

suggested I thought, me become an officer, what, a proper officer? I have never looked back. As much as I love what I did, I am still there with all the people that I like being with but I have an opportunity to do something that I never would have been able to do before, and it has brought me out from a very shy person into being able to deal with things that I never thought I could do. I am very grateful for that opportunity and I hope other people will take that chance.

SIS. LAFFERTY: It sounds like other people had more faith in your ability than you had in your own, is that true?

SIS. HACKETT: Yes; still do, I think.

SIS. LAFFERTY: So, if we can go back to Karen, having made this choice, having made this change, did you encounter any problems?

SIS. LENNARD: If I am being honest, not so much problems, I felt that maybe some people doubted my ability to do the job because I was Karen from the National Admin Unit, but I had great support from Harry, the team organiser, Mick, and the organising team, they gave me great encouragement and I do not feel like that any more. I just kind of think now I am actually not doing a bad job. I do not feel it was problems but any of the issues I felt at the beginning I no longer feel.

SIS. LAFFERTY: I have spoken to Harry and he thinks you're doing a great job as well.

SIS. LENNARD: Thanks, Harry.

SIS. LAFFERTY: How about yourself, Ruth, any problems did you encounter?

SIS. BENNETT: The only problems I encountered was my own self-belief, to believe that you can do the role, you can go out there and you can stand with your colleagues and be better or equal to them. When I started as an officer, I have to be honest, my previous regional secretary, my current regional secretary, the regional president, and all the regional colleagues, the support and motivation that I had from them just made me want more and want to succeed.

SIS. LAFFERTY: So, really, the support makes a big, big difference?

SIS. BENNETT: Absolutely, absolutely.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Rachel, any problems you encountered?

SIS. HARRISON: I would not say problems as such. Very much like you, I felt the only hurdle I had was to get over my self-belief and believe I could do it. I had a very supportive senior management team, very supportive colleagues around me, and I think I just had to learn to believe in myself. I felt I had a point to prove and I had to show others I was capable. Thankfully, now I feel like I may have done that and settled into the role and loving every second of it now.

SIS. A. LAFFERTY: I have spoken to Tim as well and he thinks you are certainly doing a grand job. (*Applause*) Sue, problems you have encountered?

SIS. HACKETT: There were hurdles and I think that there has to be hurdles because it is something completely new. I was pre any kind of scheme so really people did not know what to do with me, they did not know where —

SIS. LAFFERTY: Did you feel a little bit like you were neither fish nor fowl?

SIS. HACKETT: Yes, where was I. I did a dual job for a little while but I have to say at no time did I feel that no one wanted me to achieve that, and the regional committee were incredibly supportive. We had a new regional secretary who has been incredibly supportive and I am really lucky because the people I work with are brilliant. There will be hurdles, there has to be, and there will be in the future, but you can only learn from them. You have to have them to make things better.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Yes. Again, support, it is coming over as there.

SIS. HACKETT: Yes.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Having taken on this new role, what do you think is the best part of it, what is it that you really enjoy doing?

SIS. LENNARD(?): I love it. I absolutely love everything about it. I love the buzz of recruitment, I love the sense of satisfaction representing people, the sense of satisfaction when you recruit somebody and you know that you are building the growth of the union. I know that sounds a dead cliché but I do enjoy it, I really do. Even if you go into a room and you have disgruntled members, to be able to sit and chat to them, talk things through and leave there knowing that they are not going to leave the GMB, I think that gives you good satisfaction as well.

SIS. LAFFERTY: I know we talked about going to meetings that are not always warm and welcoming and sometimes you get a meeting together and you feel like everybody is looking and saying, “How long is this going to last for,” and, “What am I cooking for tea,” or, “Am I going to catch the last bus,” and you were talking about how much you enjoy doing those meetings and turning it around.

SIS. LENNARD: I think that was Rachel but, yes, I would agree with it.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Rachel, my apologies. I think we are pretty much getting to know what the questions are going to be. There is no surprise. The best part of the job, Ruth?

SIS. BENNETT: The very first day I started, one of my colleagues said to me, “I get up every day and I love coming to work.” I never really experienced that in my previous employment but I can tell you I experience it now. Looking at the challenges every day, every day is different, it is fantastic. You are making changes to members and families’ lives and that is just inspirational. I absolutely love it. I love motivating people, the same that I was motivated and supported when I started.

SIS. LAFFERTY: So you have more chance to motivate people now you are doing a senior organiser’s role?

SIS. BENNETT: Absolutely.

SIS. LAFFERTY: And support them too.

SIS. BENNETT: Yes, absolutely.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Rachel, I think I stole your thunder a little bit, haven’t I?

SIS. HARRISON: Yes, you have covered it, really. I love nothing more than going into, say, a school support staff meeting, getting a group of people sat in front of you who do not really want to be there, they have just come along, and you get the meeting going speaking about issues that are relevant to them and get them involved, and soon the meeting takes off and they are getting actively involved in that meeting. There is no better feeling than at the end of that meeting when they are recruiting their colleagues, it is not me doing the recruiting, they are telling their colleagues they need to join the union

and then they are electing a representative, and when they realise that they are actually the union, not me, I love nothing more than enthusing people about trade unionism and just getting active.

SIS. LAFFERTY: It is not just having them interested in the meeting, it is having them empowered and having them doing the work that will enable you to assist.

SIS. HARRISON: Yes, having them want to go out there and have the fight themselves.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Excellent. Sue?

SIS. HACKETT: For me my first case I did was the start of my motivation, really. I did a case on my own, an appeal for a member who had been sacked, and he got his job back. I can't tell you what an amazing feeling that was. (*Applause*) I knew him, and he had two young kids, and he had been treated really unfairly, and made the employer eat crow. That was an amazing feeling. But moving on from that, I think that this has been the luckiest part of my life, really. I have got involved with equalities in the region and we have this most amazing regional equality forum and I do not need to motivate anybody there because they motivate me every day. We have amazing reps that are in our equalities, REFs, (the Regional Equalities Forums) who actually when you go round the room and say, "Oh, this needs to be done," they are putting their hands up to do jobs and they get them done, so they motivate me and I am having a wonderful time.

SIS. LAFFERTY: I am sure you motivate them as well, Sue. Sue, I am sure you will be forgiven from the top table but wearing your equality hat you wanted to give a quick advert, didn't you?

SIS. HACKETT: I did. The GMB sisters have a fringe meeting tomorrow at the Duke of Cornwall, across the road, hoping that you will all come along to that and make sure women members are filling out their survey and posting it on the equalities stall, but all members are welcome to the fringe. We want to hear from you. Thank you.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Somebody is glad you got the advert in! I think the last question I would like to ask people is, for women out there rewind and think of yourself before you made this change and what you were thinking, women out there that are in the same position, what would you say to them about what they should do or any advice you could give them. Rachel?

SIS. HARRISON: I would say just go for it. Have that belief in yourself that you can do it. Speak to your managers; you will be surprised at how supportive they can be. Be willing to put the time in and go on the training, get out there and get some experience but, ultimately, believe in yourself, believe in the union and that they want to support you. Just go for it.

SIS. LENNARD: Yes, not to be put off by any historical cultures or whatever you want to call it. Don't be put off and go for it.

SIS. BENNETT: If you are members of staff, if you are lay members, go for it, have the belief in yourself to move forward and change.

SIS. HACKETT: If Congress adopts this report, there has never been a better time for women to be in the GMB. So, come and have a go. You can do it. Support the report.

SIS. LAFFERTY: Yes, support the report. Thanks very much. Who was the first-time speaker at Congress this time? (*Applause*) Didn't they do well and aren't they a shining example to other women within the organisation? I would like to share this with all of those that were involved, both in the video and chatting here today, Karen, Ruth, Rachel, Sue, Katie, Elaine, Norma, Anna, and Emma, thank you

for sharing your experiences. We know the talent is out there. I hope that their words have encouraged others to think in the same line that they thought about making that change. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, can I say thank you for that and can I thank all the union representatives who were over there, especially that one who plugged her own meeting tomorrow. *(Laughter)* Well done, and I am extremely proud of you, and keep up the good work. You are an advert for staff in the union that they can progress. Thanks. Because we are running a little late, Congress, I think I will now call a halt and continue this afternoon with the rest of the debate. Could you be back here about 10 past 2? I have nicked five minutes.

Hang on, hang on. Don't forget to go to the stall, Ethical Threads, and pick up your free T-shirt. Okay, colleagues? Congress adjourned until 10 past 2.

Congress adjourned.

AFTERNOON SESSION

(Congress re-assembled at 2 p.m.)

THE PRESIDENT: Conference, come to order, please. We will now take the business carried over from this morning's first session. We now take Motion 5, Composite 1 and Motion 67.

UNION ORGANISATION: CONGRESS WOMEN'S UNDER REPRESENTATION MOTION 5

5. WOMENS' UNDER REPRESENTATION

This Congress is proud that almost half of GMB Union members are women. This GMB Congress is distressed that so few GMB Union Congress delegates are women.

This Congress calls on the Central Executive Council to put forward proposals for discussion to enable a Rule Change in 2015 to make half of all future GMB Union Congress delegates women.

EDMONTON/ENFIELD BRANCH
London Region

(Referred)

SIS. D. PETERSON (London): President and Congress, I move Motion 5 – Women's Under Representation. This Congress is proud that we have managed to achieve 50% union membership who are women. At the same time, it is very disappointing that so few of Congress delegates are women, although this situation is slowly improving. We need to strive to get more women delegates into Congress to reflect the Union's 50% female membership. We know that this can be difficult due to women with small children or childcare responsibilities. Also there are some cultural restrictions, but we can achieve this. To this end, Congress calls on the CEC to put forward proposals for discussion to enable a rules change in 2015 to make part of all future GMB Congress delegates women. Women have come so far but we need to go further. Sisters, let us do it for ourselves. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Is there a seconder?

SIS. M. BARTLETT (London): Congress, I am a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* President and Congress, when you think about the devastation wreaked on women across the country through the Coalition's harsh and inconsiderate cuts, there must be millions of women out *there* feeling that they are being ignored. I am proud to be part of this great Union, one which has campaigned long before I was born to ensure that women are heard and gain an equal status not just in the workplace but in all walks

of life. It shook me, as a first-time delegate, to be warned that our Congress, our most important event on the calendar, is heavily male dominated. Why is it, Congress, that despite women forming 50% of the membership, we cannot deliver 50% of the Congress delegation? Although it is true that women's representation has increased in recent years, why does our great Union, which has equality at its heart, still only have a delegation comprising of 32% women? That is two men for every one woman. Although I am aware that no women candidates were rejected by ballot for this year's Congress in the London Region, as I am sure is the same with other regions, different organisations have rules which ensure that each branch sends a woman every other year, and I cannot understand why we don't do the same.

Following the demise of the Clothing & Textile section, which four of our CEC members are from, by far the biggest influx of women into the GMB has been teaching assistants. Perhaps a form of positive action could be to move Congress to half-term week, thereby enabling some very passionate and active members to be candidates. This motion moves a rule change to ensure equality and representation, and I welcome the CEC's commitment to look at ways of increasing the number of women here at Congress. As a woman, I am proud to second the motion. *(Applause)*

**UNION ORGANISATION: GENERAL
EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN WITHIN GMB
COMPOSITE MOTION 1**

C1 Covering Motions 6, 7 and 8

6. Promoting Equal Representation of Women within GMB)(London Region)
7. More Women in the GMB (London Region)
8. Legacy of Sexism Within the Unions (Midland & East Coast Region)

EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN WITHIN GMB

This Congress notes that:

- Unions have always been associated with working class Northern Men. More female officers are required to help and to alter this perception. The image needs to be updated and the unions as a whole need to be more representative of those that they represent
- Membership of the union is roughly 50/50 between men and women.

This Congress recognises the under-representation of women's participation in the GMB Lay and full time structures and Requests the CEC looks at under representation of women at the level of Branch, Regional, National as well as Congress delegations and make recommendations on how we can rectify issues of under representation.

Congress believes that the elected Lay structure as well as the Full Time Regional and National Officers and staff should reflect the membership of the union in gender balance. This Congress agrees that we should be encouraging more women to become Officers and to take up Senior Officer posts to reflect the true make-up of our membership. We therefore ask Congress that GMB appoint more female full-time officers.

This Congress welcomes the commissioning of a report by the CEC into the involvement of women in the GMB and instructs the CEC to ensure that any report is circulated to regions and branches.

The CEC should consult the National Equality Forum and Regional Equality Forums on the outcomes of the report and bring final recommendation to Congress with any rule amendments that may be required.

(Carried)

SIS. C. STEPHENS (London): President and Congress, it is a privilege to stand before you and move Composite Motion 1. I am thrilled to see that the CEC Report on Staffing and several others for discussion this week are all aimed at advancing GMB's equalities agenda to progress increased participation by women and other equality strands in our great Union. GMB has a proud and radical tradition of unionising women workers who, historically, have been some of the most marginalised in the economically disempowered in the UK workforce. GMB has fought so that even those dismissed as "unionisable" are able to access the basic human right of trade union membership from the match women's strike in 1888 to, perhaps, most recently, the members of my own branch who work in the sex industry, in prostitution, pornography and stripping, amongst others. I am wearing a T-shirt from when GMB first established our branch.

Without full and equal participation of women in GMB structures, the long-term aims of our Union, nothing less than achieving a society with full social and economic justice for all, cannot succeed. Women workers are disproportionately represented in low-paid work and in work with poor terms and conditions, working part-time hours dictated by the employers' needs for flexibility rather than the workers', through agencies or on zero-hours contracts. Outside paid work, women continue to carry the majority burden of the rewarding but unrecognised and unremunerated work of caring for children, the sick and the elderly. In addition, we often do a double shift of paid work and then all the dull and necessary tasks of maintaining a home.

Furthermore, the destructive cuts on public services inflicted by the Tory-led Government are resulting in excessive redundancies of women workers and the enormous harm to all services, whether delivered by the public sector or by voluntary organisations are overwhelmingly affecting services used by women.

One of GMB's slogans is "Equality through inclusion", and this motion seeks to support and develop how GMB can put this into practice. This and other motions being present at Congress this year sometimes suggest specific action to take forward and sometimes enjoins CEC to explore with GMB structures and the wider membership how we can work together to develop ways of building a more powerful and inclusive union.

The motion my branch submitted, one of three composited here, and the previous motion on Increasing Women's Representation at Congress, are the result of discussions within the London Region Women's Group, GMB Sisters. This network is open to all GMB members of any gender and seek to offer both a place for sharing ideas and discussions but also an opportunity to listen to entertaining and informative speakers. Thanks to our fabulous secretary, Lindsay Mann, whose work I cannot praise highly enough, so far we have met with Helen Pankhurst, Yvette Cooper, Kerri Goddard of the Fawcett Society and Sandy Sharma of Southall Black Sisters. Within GMB Sisters we have been accumulating a list of possible practical actions that can successfully enable greater participation, and this has ranged from ideas which are small but potentially effective to suggestions to chairs of meetings about how to make it easier for more people to speak out, to more dramatic methods which would necessitate rule changes, like the idea of branches sending alternate male and female delegates to Congress. I have been told that something along those lines is the practice in the Labour Party. If passed, this motion means that in two years' time we will have a practical programme of action, backed throughout the Union, and if necessary a series of planned rule changes ready to go into place.

Brothers and sisters, now is the time to harness the energy, intelligence and the passion of our Union, both here in the hall and, even more importantly, when you are back in your branches. Congress, I am honoured to move Composite Motion 1. Thank you. (*Applause*)

SIS. D. WILLIAMS (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I second Composite Motion 1. The image of the average trade unionists is of a white, working-class male, but nowadays it is more likely to be a young, degree-educated woman working in the professions. As we already know, the GMB

membership is made of up, approximately, 50% men and 50% women, yet the number of women workplace reps, branch officers or national officers is nowhere near a reflection of that proportion. With unemployment among women at a 20-year high, a new wave of female union leaders and activists has come to the fore, reviving the fight for workers' rights when they are under greater threat than ever. Unions have been through a tough time over the years and it is time for a rebirth and a renewal. Women are vital to that.

The TUC has its first female General Secretary in 144 years in Frances O'Grady. This is fantastic news but one woman is not enough. We should be asking a woman how she wants to get involved and support her to do that at any level of commitment, not expect her to fit into a fixed structure. The future of the Union is definitely female, but the challenge is how the Union can build on that desire for a fairer society and how to turn that support into an organisational strength. Please support. (*Applause*)

UNION ORGANISATION: EQUALITY & INCLUSION
NATIONAL GMB WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
MOTION 67

67. NATIONAL GMB WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

This Congress asks the CEC to instigate an Annual Women's Conference as soon as possible.

ESSEX PUBLIC SERVICES BRANCH
London Region

(*Referred*)

SIS. C. HOLLAND (London): Congress, I move Motion 67: National GMB Women's Conference. At GMB we have a captive audience. At GMB they agree that we should have more women within the organisation. In London one of our ladies has been in the top job. She is Mary Turner. So London is on the move. This year I have been involved in the conception of GMB Sisters, further raising the profile of women in the London Region. We now feel it is time to raise the profile even further. We would like Congress to encourage GMB to say "Yes" to a women's conference. This could be a platform for all women around the UK to get together and tell people in the UK that GMB values women and their contribution within the top jobs as well as the roles we currently undertake. Please vote for this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

BRO. H. SMITH (London): Congress, I second Motion 67 for a National GMB Women's Conference. "Battling Working Women". To the editor of the *New York Times*, in your issue of today, you printed a letter from Margaret Duane Gardiner in which she states: "There are many good reasons to help working women—hard ways requiring personal work and sacrifices. Permit me, a working woman, to say that I do not ask for one to make sacrifices for me. All that I do ask is to be allowed to help myself. As I am fighting the same battle that men fight, I ask for the same weapon: the ballot."

Congress, her story has left a trail of pioneering women for social society to learn from. The women matchmakers' strike at the Bryant & May factory in 1889, Eleanor Marx, who taught our founder Will Thorne, Shirley McCloed, the first black woman elected for the 1971 Presidential candidate, Lucy Parsons, co-founder of International Workers of the World, GMB Sisters, Sylvia Pankhurst, Louise Michele, a soldier in the French Parisian commune war, and Mabel Anson, the first black lesbian. Congress, the story still continues to be written. Congress, in solidarity, I vote and request that you support this motion for our sisters for the future. I support.

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to speak on the special report or any of these resolutions?

BRO. A. NEWMAN (Southern): Congress, I have been sent to the rostrum to address the report from our region, and I have been told to make it absolutely clear that the men in our region completely support this report and that we do need to take this opportunity to improve the number of women in

leadership and organising positions within the Union. We have a long way to go, but I want to say that progress can be made. We have shown that in the Southern Region. We've got 55% women membership and, for the first time, we have four women on the regional committee. I have the figures before me. We've got nine female organisers, two female membership development officers, two female heads of department, two women come from the *Staff to Officer Programme*, and five of our activists have become organisers as well. This situation shows what can be done but there is a lot further to go. We still need to see in our region a woman senior organiser. One thing that is worth saying is that when other unions look at the GMB – I've heard it said that we are male, pale and stale – it can be said that no other union has got the record that we have. Other unions voted for equal pay in the 1960s and 1970s. The GMB voted for equal pay for equal work at our founding conference in 1889. In the 1930s we were putting out leaflets saying, "Equal Pay for Equal Work" when other unions, which are criticising us, were defending the privilege of male workers. We were the first union to send a female delegate, Eleanor Marx, to the TUC in 1889 and they turned her away. They did so because she was a woman and it was a male-only organisation. So we have a fantastic foundation to build on. We are building on it and the future of our Union is one that is going to be equality. I am sure that we will have women in leadership and organising positions as we move forward. Southern Region supports the report. (*Applause*)

SIS. E. DALEY (Birmingham & West Midlands): Congress, this document is far reaching and presents major changes inside what is an evolving organisation. The GMB has a proud history and a culture that is unique. We have a dimension that has been shaped by a solid General Secretary who has driven positive changes through *GMB@Work*, the key driving force for the Union. The set of actions outlined in the document represents a major undertaking for the GMB.

In seeking to address the under-representation of women to key positions in the Union, the GMB will be leading by example, showing other unions what can be achieved by taking a step forward in spite of the current restricting economic climate. It represents fundamental change and the willingness to take on the challenge. It will also need consent and consensus to be built around the Programme for Change. Recent research has shown that both sex and gender affect workers' health and safety in many ways. These differences are too often ignored or misunderstood.

Women often experience practical barriers based around the caring responsibilities they may have. These could be addressed, perhaps, through basing training at local venues to enable with childcare responsibilities and other caring responsibilities to attend without the pressure of having to make additional arrangements. As the document states, "Fundamental change will only be realistically achieved in the long term." We should welcome the document as a positive step forward and seek to implement the recommendations as a sign of real change. Thank you. (*Applause*)

SIS. J. JEPSON (Northern): Congress, I am speaking in support of the CEC's Special Report: *GMB Women's Project*. This report, as far as the Northern Region is concerned, is one of the most important TUC reports tabled at this Congress for many years. The report highlights policy documents on equal rights for women and women within the GMB. Some positive developments have taken place over the years but, as our membership becomes more diverse, it is even more clear that more needs to be done. The report refers to the culture of the GMB. Congress, it is a culture we can be proud of. Our culture, as the report states, derives from our purpose as a campaigning organisation. Our culture and heritage, which has the core values of solidarity and fighting injustice, are part of our campaigning purpose in wanting change, a better workplace environment, better terms and conditions at work and a better society for our members and families. The culture is rock solid. Our values are timeless.

However, Congress, as the report outlines, there are things within our culture that need to change. The recommendations that can be implemented quickly are sensible responses, but to ensure that our membership activists and employees reflect the diverse society that we live in, there are some changes that will take time. The Task Force is an important way forward and will help oversee the process of

change but, as the report says, Congress, perhaps the most important context of this report is *GMB@Work*. Everything we do as activists and employees must have *GMB@Work* as its core. We need a GMB where we have the passion, the drive and the commitment to succeed to campaign and fight injustice. *GMB@Work* is the absolute key to what we do within the context. We welcome this report. Please support.

SIS. C. MASON (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I am speaking on the Central Executive Council's Special Report on the Women's Project. Our region wholly welcomes this report. It's main aim of encouraging and supporting women in their progress to attain higher ranking positions within our Union is something that everyone, men and women, have agreed to. We recognise that with the workplace change with increased women density, especially within the part-time sector, it would seem only common sense that our Union strives to change the current inequality, bring us up-to-date and be more reflective of our membership.

Midland & East Coast Region has already successfully initiated some of the report's recommendations. I refer to 3.3: "Identifying opportunities". In doing just this, we offered our experienced and long-serving senior secretaries the opportunity to move on to roles in organising. With support, these women gladly rose to the challenge and are now full organisation officers. Further, this has opened up opportunities for females in the Finance Department to step up into full-time secretary roles. The region has embraced this move and afforded support and training to ensure a smooth transition.

The following points might already have been covered by Mr. Kenny but I shall continue as this motion was written. However, we, as a Union, should always be mindful that this report's contents should not become a tick box and quoted exercise. It would be remiss of us all to shoehorn or fast track females into a position because of this Special Report. Speaking as a female and one who wishes to progress, I hope I can speak for all women in that we appreciate and applaud the sentiments of the report but no position should be awarded to anyone because of their sex. Ultimately, there has to be need and willingness for the individual to want to progress, whether that be via internal progress or through external candidates. The emphasis should be the same whether it is at branch or regional level.

To protect our Union, it is imperative that, at the end of the day, positions are given to the best person for the job and not just given to women because of their sex. Please support. (*Applause*)

BRO. J. KNIGHT (North West & Irish): President, this is my first time as a Congress delegate. (*Applause*) Congress, I would like, briefly, to address the CEC's Special Report. Of course, it is welcome to see the Union as an employer seeking to fully maximise the potential for its staff to put some big cracks in that glass ceiling. One thing that is noticeable in the report and in the presentation and the discussions that took place on the stage is that there is no mention of any engagement with the staff's trade union representatives. I speak as a member of a GMB branch that organises trade union staffs which went through a 13-year recognition struggle in the '80s and '90s, so I am aware that there can sometimes be a little bit of blind spot in this respect with trade unions as employers. I think it would be a shame for GMB to miss this opportunity to properly and thoroughly engage with its staff on this vital work. (*Applause*)

BRO. J. SUTTON (Wales & South West): Congress, I am speaking in support of the Special Report on Women in the GMB. President, it is beyond argument that union survival depends on widening trade union sources for recruitment, and that involves looking to both increasing the number of women members and extending their involvement. The GMB comprises an almost equal number of men and women members but, unfortunately, the number of women regional officers, workplace representatives and national officers does not reflect that ratio, despite major efforts to encourage their progression into these positions. This Special Report clearly indicates that the GMB has recognised that women are under represented in our Union. It sets out clear proposals which lay the foundations for re-shaping the GMB and putting equality and female leadership at the forefront of our agenda. There has been a focus

on self-development of women within the GMB, promoting, supporting and motivating staff to have the skills and self confidence to apply and advance into officer positions. There is male dominance amongst lay senior activist and branch secretary positions which should be directly addressed and rectified by the *GMB@Work* strategies and branch organising plan. Support for women is imperative to provide key opportunities to self develop and enhance their skills. This process should be adopted by all mentoring activists, men and women. It is imperative that this report is supported to ensure that these principles are adopted in a constructive and consistent manner.

Branches are the foundation of the Union and the starting point for progression into officer roles. We need to reverse and erase the experience of some women being deterred by the culture and practical barriers in branches. The report raises concerns surrounding appointment and recruitment procedures for officer positions and recommends that a transparent process should be implemented within all regions to ensure that all applicants have equal opportunities and that all regions have a clear and consistent understanding of fair and equitable recruitment procedures. This will be accompanied by an Equalities Impact Assessment, a major component of which will be an annual audit led by the General Secretary. Within the recommendation of this report, it states: "The need to implement fundamental lasting change would set a process which will transform equality and representation of women in the Union." We are not sitting back. This report shows that the GMB should support and agree a plan of action on gender equality.

Congress, I also believe that it is important for us to fully support this initiative. It is a fundamental human right that women are equal to men. We should never, ever, compromise on this situation, whatever the culture, whatever the religion. Your support is essential for delivering internal equality with the GMB and to sustain its position as being the most successful campaigning union in Britain. Please support the CEC's Special Report. Thank you. (*Applause*)

SIS. P. ROSS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, the region welcomes this report and endorses the recommendations. We believe it is important that an external body took a fresh perspective on this issue as, despite best efforts through equality conferences, seminars and other works, we have been unable to make a breakthrough internally. This is a watermark in the development of the Union from which we cannot slip back. Even though, during the past six years, many women have been appointed as officers, we recognise that there is a long way to go. This report provides a road map that we are happy to follow. We will be using this report as a focus for our next regional branch event: Supporting women and young people. Many of the recommendations will be discussed with branches and reps in order to turn them into practice.

Some years ago I was sent by the GMB to a World Women's Conference in Denmark, hosted by an all-women's union, who employ men but men are not allowed to be members. We were addressed by the Danish Women's Minister, who said: "A man would not expect having children or being a carer to disrupt his career, nor to return to work after having children and having to accept a lower status in his career." I have been lucky because, obviously, I am a woman, which is brilliant, but many of my jobs have been of equal status with the same pay and expectation for men and for women. Fortunately, in my branch, where men predominate, being mining, I have been lucky to be supported, or probably pushed forward as a willing victim. That support is vital. For many women, all they need is encouragement and a fair opportunity in order to develop and progress, and that culture of support is something we need to take home with us to ensure that, right from the start, our girls and daughters turn into women who have the confidence to succeed.

As a widow who brought up both of my sons and my two daughters to lead independent lives, how appropriate it is to debate this issue the day after *The Time for Change Concert*. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks to everybody for a great debate. I now call on Paul Kenny to give the CEC position on Motion 5, Composite 1 and Motion 67. Paul.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: I believe that was about one of the most interesting discussions that I have been involved in and been happy to listen to for many a year. When people tell you that unions are in trouble and they haven't got a future, or they have no direction, I suggest that, maybe, a few of those people sit in the gallery or, better still, join a union, get bloody active and come along and see what we do for a living. What I heard, Mary, through the debate, through the responses and through the movers and seconders of the resolutions, was an absolute commitment and determination to make this great Union of ours even greater. That is what I heard. The success of what we have been doing over the last 10 years was *there* in the nature of some of those speakers who actually got to the rostrum, because there was a fair chance that a few years ago they would never have made it through the door. So we have been successful in many of the things that we have done. The great thing about changing things is that you can't put it back in the box. You can't take it out and show people a little bit about a wider democracy and then say, "We don't like that bit because Richard gets up and gives me a good tongue lashing about something or other." Basically, once you decide that this is the way an organisation should be run, then this is the way it is run. Then people embrace it. I believe we have heard a great debate about the Women's Project and what we are doing from all of the speakers.

Turning to the motions, Motion 5 is a quite interesting motion. It acknowledges that nearly half of our membership is female. As I said earlier, I think that this time next year the majority of members of the GMB, for the first time in its history, will be women. I think that is great because it shows that we are actually growing. Motion 5, sort of, suggests that it is not reflective of the membership yet, and it is true to say that it is not. We are not there yet, but we are a lot further forward than we used to be. We have a power, willingness and enthusiasm to make sure that we make it.

As a point of interest, in 2005 the Congress delegation for women overall was running at about 21%. By 2010 we had upped the figure to 26%. In 2011, because of some of the changes we had been making, the figure went up to 32%. This year, looking out from the platform, the percentage is even higher. Part of Motion 5 looks at making half of Congress women delegates. I don't know but, maybe, women are not prepared to settle for just half. Maybe they want 75%. I don't know. I don't want to be prescriptive about it. The CEC is asking that Motion 5 be referred. The CEC want that motion and Motion 67 referred, because a number of regions now have active women's networks. For example, London Region has GMB Sisters. Southern Region and North West Region hold successful women's conferences. It is certainly an issue that the task force needs to look at about how we broaden the appeal. What are the key issues that people are interested in in terms of what they expect from the union and why they get active?

On Composite Motion 1, the campaign group made a load of recommendations to encourage more women to get involved. That is the key. On the staff-to-officer posts – I hate using this phrase because it is indicative of how we used to view the people who work for us. We called them "staff" and "officers". The staff were 95% women and the officers were about 98% men. That is the way they were described. I will let you into a secret. The people who work for us know this because when I go round the Union I explain to them that we have records about how many officers we have employed in the Union down through the years. Every year we can tell you how many there are because that information used to have to be reported to Congress. How many we had. So I am able to tell you. If you say, "How many did we have in 1987 or 1990?", I can tell you because we have a record. What I can't tell you is how many staff we had. Do you know why I can't tell you? It's because nobody thought it was important enough to keep a record. When you go back that one group was predominantly women and one group was predominantly men, it almost means that "that group didn't count". It picks up the point of the colleague from North West & Irish Region about ensuring that you are inclusive when you are, effectively, trying to take people with you as employees. Never mind about as trade unionists. Part of the process here is that we haven't come up with a better name because we have almost conditioned ourselves to see ourselves as either staff or officers. We keep going round saying, "What can we call ourselves?" We don't like "Colleagues", because it has a bit of an ASDA feel about

it that we are not quite keen about. "Comrades" is a bit far, yet, Danny, although we are working on it. Basically, we still use these terms even though they almost pocket hole people.

Part of the exercise, as you can see on the screen, was to show you that you have within the ranks of the organisation an incredible commitment and wealth of talent that we can utilise and encourage, and make them role models. Trust me, I know many of those people. I know that London Region knows the work that Sue has done on the equality front, which has been outstanding, has it not? (*Applause*) Absolutely outstanding! I know that Andy, from the Midlands & East Coast Region, said that he would like to move a couple of staff on to that process. Okay, Andy, do it. Great. Andy, it's been a great and sterling success. It is all around the Union. Look at Ruth who came from manufacturing. It's a big jump to come in to be a full-time officer. It is a hell of a jump, but with the right support and encouragement, we have got a staff. Make no mistake about it. We've got a staff. We have so much to be proud about, so much to be confident about and so much to say. We can say, "Hang on a sec. We're going places." We have got the raw material here. Trust me.

What is absolutely key to us is that we have to make sure that, for all these additional women who are now joining the Union, and they are joining in large numbers, we make that transition to get them to play a more active part because it is a conveyor belt. That's what it is. I became a shop steward, not because I thought I was going to be a shop steward but because something happened and I thought something had to be done. I bet I'm exactly the same as the rest of you. You didn't go into work one day saying, "I think I'll be a shop steward", but you got the hump about something and you ended up being a shop steward, or you saw something that wasn't right or was an injustice, and you thought, "Somebody has to do something." We have that passion and spirit. The Union is growing still, despite all the problems. The truth of the matter is that we've got to convert that energy so that we get the conveyor belt going.

In order that women can challenge for jobs at the top of the organisation, we have to make sure that we have women progressing through all the various levels. I can tell you that there is no substitute for that life and work experience. You can't just take somebody and plonk them down in a job and then they fail, because we've done that before, and in this Union as well. In order to satisfy what people was the right thing, we said, "Well, we'd better appoint somebody to whatever role", and they failed. Maybe if they had had five more years learning, they would have succeeded. But that put back the projects about equality for some time. You have to remember that this is not artificial. This is not some sort of, "Well, let's just promote a few people." As a number of colleagues and speakers said, we have to have people in posts based on merit, but as a union with 320,000 women in it, if somebody said to me, "Sorry, none of them have merit", you're a braver man than me. You go and face them, because I don't believe a word of it and, truthfully, neither do you. So we do have the talent and now we have the spirit. We have to make sure that we have consistency of approach. We have to make sure that we have support systems so that people can work different hours, because being a union official is not clocking in at 9 and going home at half-past 4. All of you know that from your own work as lay representatives. You know it doesn't work like that. That phone doesn't stop ringing, does it, at half-past 4 or 5 o'clock? You get phone calls at 11 o'clock at night and 2 o'clock in the morning. So you can see that it is a complex job, and it has become more complex over the years, but we have the support network to do it.

We have powerful voices, President. They all point to our strengths and they all understand the challenges and the conviction that we are going to win. The Task Force, which you are heading up, President, and ultimately Congress, will drive this process through. The Senior Management Team is totally committed to assist the Task Group and to assist Congress to get to those goals and, I am sure, they will do that. The Task Force will examine everything that has been talked about today and lots, lots more, coming up from the grassroots.

Mary, we ask that Motions 5 and 67 be referred, and that Composite Motion 1 be accepted by Congress with that slight qualification that I made. As I say, there is much, much more to come. We have an

incredible asset out *there*. If we can just generate our interest in getting that asset out, we have an untapped army, frankly, that this Union and, maybe, this country badly needs. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Is London Region prepared to refer Motions 5 and 67? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does Congress agree to Motions 5 and 67 being referred?

Motions 5 and 67 were REFERRED.

THE PRESIDENT: I will now take the vote on Composite Motion 1. The CEC support with statement. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against?

Composite Motion 1 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I now put the Special Report to you. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against?

The CEC's Special Report GMB WOMEN'S PROJECT was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Before closing the women's debate, can I draw your attention to a leaflet in your delegate wallet. Mary MacArthur played a key role in our Union. Please support the Holiday Trust which gives help for women in need of a break.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 2

THE PRESIDENT: I now call Helen Johnson to move Standing Orders Committee Report No. 2.

SIS. H. JOHNSON (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): Congress, I move SOC Report No. 2. Withdrawn motions. The SOC has been advised that the following motions have now been withdrawn. They are Motion 3: Guests at Congress, in the name of Southern Region; Motion 231, Brighton Pavilion, also in the name of Southern Region; Motion 250, Campaign to Remove Unaccountable Elected Mayors in the name of Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region. Congress will also note that Rule Amendment 332 from Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region was withdrawn during debate this morning.

On the subject of bucket collections, the SOC has given permission for the following bucket collections: firstly, a collection for the Ambulance Heritage Society organised by Midland & East Coast Region. The SOC recommends that this takes place at the close of the Monday morning session. Secondly, a collection for the National Ugly Mugs Scheme, organised by London Region. The SOC recommends that this takes place at the close of the Tuesday morning session. Thirdly, a collection for Zoe's Place, organised by North West & Irish Region. The SOC recommends that this takes place at the close of the Wednesday morning session. Would regional secretaries please note that when a collection has taken place the region should provide the SOC with a written note stating how much has been collected so that the President can report that information back to Congress.

The SOC has, again, received more requests than would normally be permitted for bucket collections and has had to make difficult decisions, giving priority to those collections which affect living people. Would delegates please note that the SOC will be reviewing the subject of bucket collections with a view to proposing a new system for collections for Congress 2014. The SOC will report back to Congress with proposals later in the week. President and Congress, I move SOC Report No. 2. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen. Are there any questions on the report? (*No response*) Does Congress agree to accept the report?

Standing Orders Committee Report No. 2 was ADOPTED.

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, Motions 1 and 3 have been withdrawn.

**UNION ORGANISATION: CONGRESS
INVITES TO CONGRESS AND QUESTIONS
MOTION 2**

2. INVITES TO CONGRESS AND QUESTIONS

This motion calls for more clarity and democracy, when it comes to inviting guests and asking questions at Congress. In past years a number of controversial figures have been invited to Congress. There are many positive and negative views to inviting these people which this motion isn't concerned with these. However, this motion does feel that the decisions on who to invite should be member led. Also, in my previous years of attending there has been no clarity around the questions that are asked to guest speakers. There needs to be a more open, transparent and democratic process. This motion is calling for an open procedure put in place so that everyone has the chance to put questions forward and is aware how to.

M27 LB MERTON BRANCH
Southern Region

(Fell)

BRO. K. GREENAWAY (Southern): Congress, I am moving Motion 2, speaking without the support of Southern Region, Invites to Congress and Questions. I know there was some debate last year about who we invite. This motion is not talking about who we invite and saying that we should and should not invite certain people. It is talking about us lot deciding. It is for you lot to decide. It is not for anyone else to decide. You should decide who you want to speak at your Congress, whether that is Conservative politicians, so you can put them in their places, or whether it is someone you want from a charity, an author or anyone else, who you want to come to the rostrum and talk to you. It is about you lot deciding. That is all this motion wants. It also wants some clarity about how we ask questions when people do come. I have been to Congress three times now – this is my third time – and I have never known how to ask questions. I know that the notes from the CEC say that we should not be afraid of asking questions of politicians who speak to us. No, we shouldn't, but only if you want to do it. It is down to you lot. It shouldn't be down to anyone else to decide who you have at your Congress. That is entirely up to you. That is all this motion is asking for. The notes by the CEC also explains how questions are asked and that each region gets so many questions. They have already started to clarify it for me, but I want them to go a bit further and make sure that there is a clear procedure that we all can follow so we all know how to ask questions, who can ask questions and when we can ask questions, so we can put in what we want to ask of the speakers who we have invited to address Congress. If anyone believes the same as me, please get up and second the motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Do we have a seconder to Southern Region's Motion 2? *(No response)* No? Then it falls.

Motion 2 FELL.

A DELEGATE FROM THE FLOOR: Formally.

THE PRESIDENT: Too late. Thank you. You see, whoever said that shouldn't have been asleep at the back.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: You should have organised.

DECLINE IN NUMBER OF DELEGATE NOMINATIONS TO CONGRESS MOTION 4

4. DECLINE IN NUMBER OF DELEGATE NOMINATIONS TO CONGRESS

Congress is concerned about the decline in the number of branches making nominations to Congress. Whilst Rule 8.7 has helped improve the participation of under-represented groups by allowing an additional 10% to be added to the regional delegation, it is clear that not all branches are making nominations.

Further, in some regions, delegate elections do not need to take place as places are uncontested and even unfilled in some cases. This does not bode well for our union's democracy and we need to ensure we do everything we can to ensure that the union's policy is agreed by a diverse, cross-section of its members.

Congress therefore instructs the union to research why branches are not putting forward nominations and whether branches have suggestions as to how participation can be improved. A full report on the findings and recommendations on how to improve participation in future years should be presented to Congress 2014.

GMB@PCS BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

SIS. H. PURCELL (London): Congress, I move Motion 4 on behalf of the London Region. Delegate nominations from our branches to this Congress appear to be in decline. I base this statement on anecdotal evidence and nothing else. As a branch secretary I have the pleasure of dealing with the annual bureaucracy associated with the nomination of delegates to Congress. In the past three years in the London Region I have noted that there has not been a need for an election. All nominated delegates were elected unopposed or were included in the delegations under 8.7. On the one hand, the lack of nominations has meant that those who are nominated have been assured of a place at Congress early on in the process. However, on the other hand, it means that fewer branches are nominated and this is not a healthy sign for our Union's democracy. What is difficult to assess is whether this is a trend across the Union's regions and, if so, why it is the case. That is why we are calling for a piece of research to be conducted into why branches are not putting forward nominations and asking for suggestions from branches on how the participation can be improved.

To explain, the annual delegate nomination process involves the drawing up by each region of a list of branches. Each branch is allocated to a division according to its sector and size. The total division number equates to the total number of delegate places for the region. For instance, 50 divisions have 50 delegate places. Larger branches are usually co-terminus with a division and are, therefore, guaranteed a place at Congress, should they nominate. Smaller branches are more likely not to get a delegate elected as they have to compete with one or another in whichever division they have been allocated. My own branch, for example, with just over 300 members, usually has to compete with two or three other branches from the same sector and professions in its allocated division. It may well be that these smaller branches are not nominating as they do not expect to get a place so they do not even bother to go through the motions. It may be that some branches are not nominating as they are not operating as effectively as they should be and, perhaps, do not understand the process and have not put in place an annual routine to ensure that nominations are made in time. These are all assumptions, of course, and that is why we call upon the Union to conduct research during next year and report back to Congress in 2014 with findings and recommendations.

This motion goes to the very heart of our democracy. We need to ensure that as many of our branches as possible participate in a nomination process so that we can be assured of a diverse delegation and our policy is decided by a broad cross section of our members. Congress, support this motion and support democracy. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO. T. CHOLERTON (London): Congress, I second Motion 4: Delegate Nominations to Congress. We are all here today because not only are we passionate about what we do but because we also know that Congress is vitally important to the policy and decision-making that decide the way forward for GMB for the coming year and beyond. Over the next few days we will hear people speak about a range of issues affecting us at both local and national level. Yet, despite the great efforts made by the GMB for a more open and inclusive Congress, there are still branches that do not nominate delegates. This motion calls on the GMB to find the reasons why this is happening, and once we know the root causes we can then provide the help and support to the branches so that we can involve more people. While we are here we will meet new people, refresh older acquaintances and hear about the incredible done by people at all levels. We will be motivated, moved and inspired by the stories of some of the most oppressed people both here and abroad. We need to get this message out to the branches so that more people can be involved. We call on GMB to research this matter and report back to Congress next year with the findings and recommendations. Please support this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to speak in the debate? *(No response)* In that case, I will call Brenda Fraser. Brenda will answer Motion 2 as well.

SIS. B. FRASER (CEC, Manufacturing): President and Congress, I am asking Congress to oppose Motion 2 and support Motion 4 with a qualification.

Firstly, on Motion 2, covering invites to Congress and questions, the CEC opposition is that the decision as to who is invited to Congress is discussed at the CEC prior to the Congress. Any CEC member can object to the suggested guest speakers and voice their opposition at that CEC meeting. We should not be afraid to confront politicians of all parties. Questions are agreed by region so that the same question is not asked twice. Each region is treated equally. It would be foolish to take away the rights of delegates to ask politicians questions which affect their lives and families.

Finally, on Motion 4, which concerns the decline in the number of delegate nominations to Congress, the CEC supports the motion with a qualification that the motion is incorrect. An additional 10% is not added to the regional delegation. 90% of a region's delegate entitlement is elected. 10% is appointed to enable the delegation to properly reflect the balance of the region's membership and to address any shortcomings in any of these equality or industrial strands. The motion asks for a survey of branches to be carried out to determine why branches are not putting forward nominations and to report back to Congress 2014. The CEC recommends that this could be done as part of the branch review process which is looking into branch participation into all elections. Therefore, Congress, please oppose Motion 2 and support Motion 4 with this qualification. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: As Congress is aware, Motion 2 fell. In relation to Motion 4, does London Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* You do. Thank you. I now put Motion 4 to the vote. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against?

Motion 4 was CARRIED.

**UNION ORGANISATION: GENERAL
AMALGAMATION OF GMB UNION AND UNISON
MOTION 9**

9. AMALGAMATION OF GMB UNION AND UNISON

This Congress calls on the CEC to confirm one way or the other if GMB and UNISON are involved in discussions, at any level, with a view to amalgamating the two unions or creating a new union.

(Carried)

LUTON BRANCH
London Region

BRO. C. ANDERSON (London): Congress, I move Motion 9, Amalgamation of GMB Union and UNISON. For several years we have seen consolidation by the trade union Movement into fewer but larger unions. The creation of UNISON and Unite are the obvious ones that spring to mind. There are numerous reasons why unions merge and I am not here to express an opinion as to whether it is a good or bad thing. That should be for the members to decide. For several years there have been rumours of an amalgamation between the GMB and UNISON, and when at last year's TUC Congress, when asked by the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian*, amongst others about a possible tie-up, we were given an emphatic "No comment" from both unions. So you have to start wondering whether these rumours have got a bit of truth in them.

Since the Coalition started its Draconian cuts to public services, it has made sense for UNISON and GMB to work together for mutually beneficial campaigns, but let's not get distracted by talks of a merger if there are no talks going on. If talks are going on, then this discussion should be out in the public domain, not done behind closed doors. The members are the ones who should decide. I am proud to be in the GMB and would be proud to be in a new merged union, should it emerge.

I apologise for what I am about to say, Congress. I did think of a new name for our new super union, if it comes about, and I am a bit worried about it being on the T-shirt. I think of "Boilermakers UNISON Municipal". Thank you, Congress, I move.

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks very much, Cliff. I love you, too.

SIS. D. MULLANE (London): President and Congress, some months ago we were informed that GMB was working alongside UNISON. That was when rumours started saying that UNISON and GMB were merging. As we all know, we are aware that times are hard and will get worse under this Government, and the fight will get even harder but we will never give up. There are many campaigns that we should be fighting alongside with union colleagues to protect and promote our members' rights. However, I am a dedicated and proud member of the GMB, like all of you here today. I am sure I speak for all of us in saying that we would prefer it if we remained as just GMB because of all the commitments and everything that we have fought for and achieved over the many years of the GMB Union. *(Applause)* Therefore, we would like to seek clarification from the CEC as to whether we will be merging as one union with UNISON. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Diane. Well done.

INDEX OF PLAIN SPEAKING MOTION 11

11. INDEX OF PLAIN SPEAKING

This Congress asks the CEC to produce an index of plain speaking.

More friendly format which members can understand.

The many abbreviations in our correspondence and documents addressed to members.

Z39 NORTH KENT ENGINEERING BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

BRO. D. LEAK (Southern): Congress, I move Motion 11. President and Congress, "Tina, you should also join the CEC", "It's a worth cause", "I don't know who Spock is, but I will find out", and "Tom and the GMB are good organisations, too." Did anyone understand what I just said? *(Calls of "No")*. There are two people over *there*, who I can see. You must be one of the scribes who makes the words up, then. I will say it again without abbreviations. "Vote Labour. There's no alternative." "You should also join the campaign for equal citizenship. It is a worthy cause." "I don't know who the single point

of contact is, but I will find out.” The *Troops Out Movement* and the General Municipal Boilermakers Union are also organised, too. The motion calls on the Central Executive Council to produce an index of plain English speaking. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done.

BRO. M. LAWS (Southern): I second Motion 11. President and Congress, our activists in the GMB give their time and energy to represent the GMB. They are not specialists in English literature, but they do understand the needs of our members. What does impede some of our day-to-day activities is the terminology often used in GMB communications and in the Rule Book. Why do we sow such ambiguity and confusion? It often leads to lengthy internal procedures to define our rules. Congress, this motion calls for the Rule Book to be written in plain English with an index of plain-speaking terms. David came to me with a motion for Congress. We put one down and I think it is a very useful exercise to get this sorted. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Mick, did we not go into simple English in our new Rule Book last year? You were on the Executive and agreed it.

BRO. LAWS: It needs a new lease of life.

THE PRESIDENT: A new lease of life; yes. You will be getting a new lease of life in a minute in simple language. (*Laughter*)

BRANCH WEBSITES MOTION 13

13. BRANCH WEBSITES

Congress agrees to develop a means to make it easier for all branches to have an easily maintainable online presence with their own websites.

In this modern age, the GMB is at risk of falling behind other Trade Unions if it does not keep pace with Information Communication Technology. People now have smart phones and TVs so even those with no knowledge of computers can access the internet at home or on the move. With employers across all sectors embracing social media and websites, the GMB needs to do more to communicate on a regular basis with members through a variety of channels so that members can choose how we keep them up to date and when.

For a comparatively minimal set up cost, branches will be able to keep members up to date with campaigns, news and information on what Organisers are doing to protect their members.

I appreciate that not everyone has a good knowledge of IT which is why the GMB needs to support branches by developing a template site for all branches which is as easy to update as typing a letter or sending an email. With a little training this will enable the most IT phobic Branch Officers to be able to update the website easily on a weekly or daily basis.

Safeguards could easily be built in where approval from Regional Organisers or a Policy Advisor at a regional level could ensure content adheres to GMB policy.

The GMB needs to move forward and embrace modern technology to raise our profile and improve recruitment and retention of members.

HENDON BRANCH
London Region

(*Carried*)

BRO. P. COLE (London): President, I move Motion 13, Branch Websites, and I am a first-time delegate. (*Applause*) We are constantly working to improve the way our branch communicates with its members. As part of this, we have been trying to establish a branch website. This has not been easy.

There is a facility to have pages as part of the National website, which we have trialled. This was useful. However, it has limited functionality. It is not easy to use as an amateur and it does not enable the branch to easily establish its own identity. We have also had a website designed which had further content added by the designer. Although this looks professional, it has an ongoing cost to have it administered by the designer and this is not a sustainable cost to the branch.

The purpose of this motion is to call on Congress to agree the development of a template site in order to make it easier for branches to have an easily maintainable on-line presence, should they wish to do so. In this modern age, GMB is at risk of falling behind other trade unions if it does not keep pace with information and communication technology. Many people now have smart phones and smart TVs, so even those who have no knowledge of computers can access the internet at home or on the move. With employers across all sectors embracing social media and websites, GMB needs to do more to communicate on a regular basis with its members through a variety of channels, so that members can choose how and when to keep themselves up-to-date. With an established website with comparatively minimal set-up costs, branches should be able to keep members up-to-date with local campaigns and news and information on what local organisers are doing to protect their members. Branches will be able to promote successes they have had locally, increase support for campaigns and keep members up-to-date with national issues. A website such as this also has the potential to be a recruitment tool for non-members in organised workplaces. Non-members will be able to get feel for what GMB is doing, mostly for the benefit of its members and the benefits they will receive by being part of this Union. I am aware that a number of branches already have a well-established site. This motion is not trying to undermine the great work which has already been done by those branches, nor to call for those website to be changed.

The intent of this motion is to assist those who wish to emulate those sites but have not had the time or knowledge to do so. I appreciate that not everyone is confident in using IT. That is why I am calling on Congress to agree to develop a template site that can be adopted by all branches. With a little training, this will not only make it easier to establish a site for those who are IT-phobic, but it will also promote uniform sites for GMB branches. This should, however, have the flexibility for branches to develop their own personal identity. With a properly commissioned site, it should be possible to create a template which makes it easy to put on content as typing a letter or an email. This can be done without compromising the ability of those who are already more able to do so to add additional content or for those who, over time, will grow in confidence to do this. There may be some concerns about inexperienced reps getting themselves into trouble with the content they publish or expressing an opinion which goes against GMB policy. Where there are these concerns, content can be shared with regional organisers or the regional policy adviser prior to publishing in order to avoid this concern. However, this has not been adversarial role but an advisory role. A branch website will not take away the need for branch newsletters or other forms of communication. These are still important to ensure that all members are kept up-to-date. Using a website will make communication faster and help many members keep pace with the fast-moving world of the trade unions.

I call on this Congress to support this motion and assist branches to raise their profile, to improve their communication with members and create new recruitment opportunities. Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO. G. SHARKEY (London): Congress, I second Motion 13. Many branches have made huge strides forward in using modern technology to promote the work of the Union and represent its members. Equally, the Union, both nationally and regionally, has embraced this new media. We have seen successful launchings of national and regional websites and embracing the use of Twitter and other forms of social media. Whilst this progress is to be celebrated, we need to recognise that for some branches advances in the use of IT and social media are in danger of passing them by. However, this development does need to happen. We believe that for a relatively small cost the GMB could develop an easy-to-use template for web pages that the branch officer could access and edit with relatively simple training, thereby giving branches easy access to an on-line presence that we believe will enhance

the GMB's profile at a local level, thereby allowing us to communicate to a wider audience and ensure that our members receive up-to-date information. Thank you. *(Applause)*

APEX SECTION MOTION 15

15. APEX SECTION

This Congress instructs Congress to revive the Apex Section or similar, to encourage recruitment and activism amongst the managerial and supervisory sections of the workforce.

CHESTERFIELD NO. 1 BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Referred)

BRO. T. PLUMB (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Conference, I move Motion 15 – Apex Section. This is probably not the done thing, but I would like to thank Neil Derek from Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region for helping me with my speech, because if it hadn't been for him it would probably have been on the back of a beer mat and it wouldn't have been very good.

This motion is, really, about leaving no stone unturned in our drive to be a general union that reaches out and is relevant to all sections of the British workforce. We are better at some areas than others and providing a natural third union home for workers who work in a supervisory and managerial role is something we could be much better at doing.

Like it or not, the technical, supervisory and managerial sector of the workforce in the UK has as much need for us as any other. We sometimes seem reluctant to embrace them into our union family. Where once we had MATSA and then Apex, we are a missing piece of the jigsaw. We will refer this motion, once moved and seconded, to allow the CEC to examine it further, but we want the CEC to recognise the opportunity for the organising and recruitment that exists amongst these staff, the vast majority of whom, whether they be in industry, commerce or public services, feel caught between a rock and a hard place. They face the same anxieties and vices over pay, job securing and over-bearing bosses as any other employee. We just need to show them that by focusing our attention and resources on them that the GMB is on their side as well.

In relation to my own workplace, when somebody moves into a management-grade job, they seem to lose the connection between us and the Union because we can't negotiate for them on pay rises. I think we need to push harder to keep these people in the Union because they need us fighting for them. Unfortunately, where I work, sometimes I think they feel like they are left on their own once they get into a managerial-grade job. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Terry. Seconder?

SIS. P. ROSS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President and Congress, when I joined this fine Union way back in 1995 I was under the misapprehension that I was joining Apex, because it was still referred to as such at the pit where I worked. There are people in this hall today, whom I met for the first time when I attended as a visitor the 1995 Apex section conference. That was my first real experience of how the Union functions and it was very stimulating. It is probably the reason why I am here today. For those who don't know, the Apex conference was branch led, not regional, so any Apex branch could submit motions and send delegates. That must have struck terror into the CEC. That structure evaporated over time, partly due to a change to sections and maybe because people did not know. Perhaps it was considered desirable to allow it to expire quietly.

Every amalgamation has enriched the heritage of this Union. I understand that one of the improvements that Apex brought to the GMB was allowing members to attend Congress as visitors.

“Hello, visitors. Thank you, Apex.” In simplifying the sections as we have done over the last few years, we need to ensure that we don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater. Let us revitalise our white-collar members by giving up some of the positive aspects which Apex embodied. Please support this motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Pamela. Motion 16: Durham Miners’ Gala.

DURHAM MINERS’ GALA MOTION 16

16. DURHAM MINERS’ GALA

This Congress agrees to endorse and support, through advertising and promoting, the recently launched appeal to secure the future of the Durham Miners’ Gala.

This Big Meeting of trades unionists gathered together in celebration of our great working-class history with 60/70,000 Socialists on parade behind forty plus brass bands and multitudes of banners cannot be allowed to wither on the vine.

Congress, therefore, agrees to support the campaign to secure future funding in order to maintain this event.

DURHAM COUNTY LA BRANCH
Northern Region

(Carried)

BRO. D. CLEGG (Northern): Congress, the second Saturday in July of each year has always been associated with the celebration of the working class as far back as 1871. The Durham Miners’ Gala, known locally as the “Durham Big Meeting”, was originally set up to celebrate workers and their families in the local coal-mining industry. Although the coal pits have long gone, the essence of the Miners’ Gala is still exactly the same, bringing together the labour Movement and the trade unions to celebrate the values of working-class people.

Congress, as the generations of miners who were involved in the industry get older and the financial pressures keep growing, it is falling upon fewer people to help keep the Gala afloat. There is an urgent need for us to call upon the labour Movement and keep this remarkable event alive. GMB Northern Region is proud to be part of the Durham Miners’ Gala Support Group, and it is active in helping to prepare and promote this great event. Congress, we need the labour Movement and our trade union nationally, through Congress, to come together and support and promote this great working-class bastion of our movement.

Congress, our enemies see the likes of the Durham Miners’ Gala as a relic of the past and would like nothing better than to see the end of it. It is incredible that it took Ed Miliband last year to be the first Labour leader in 23 years, since Neil Kinnock, to attend the Durham Miners’ Gala. Let’s be clear, Congress, New Labour wants nothing to do with the Gala. In fact, Tony Blair would rather go and visit Rupert Murdoch or go and watch a Formula One race than turn up at the Gala, never mind speak at it, and he was a County Durham MP. The Tories and those who want to see the destruction of the Durham Miners’ Gala are the same people who want to weaken and destroy trade unions as a whole.

Congress, we ask for your help and support and, above all, we ask for all those who believe in working-class principles, the labour Movement and trade unions from the past, the present and the future to save the Durham Miners’ Gala. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: As David has just moved this particular motion, could I, on behalf of Congress, send a warm message of solidarity to the Durham Miners’ Association? It’s a great deal, believe you me. Carry on, colleague.

BRO. L. TIMBEY (Northern): President and Congress, I second Motion 16: Durham Miners' Gala. It is an honour to be speaking on this motion. As the son of a Durham miner who worked in the Durham coalmines for all of his working life, my childhood memories are of attending the Gala with my family. The comradeship that this event brought to the mining community, this great social day, should be supported and kept in the trade union calendar. Last year there was an estimated 70,000 in attendance from across the trade union and labour Movement. It was a family day, a day to celebrate everything that is good about our movement. When Ed Miliband got up to speak, there was genuine concern by some of the organisers of the event as to what the reaction of the crowd would be to him. Well, Congress, there was never any need to worry. The tens of thousand of local people and those who had travelled from far and wide gave Ed a great Big Meeting welcome. He was moved and bowled over at the genuine reaction of the people towards him. It was a humbling experience. The enthusiasm of the working-class people for the trade union Movement was there for all to see. Our own General Secretary, Paul Kenny, got a great reception. It must encourage all concerned that the passion, commitment and endeavour of the men, women of children who come together to celebrate helping each other is so strong. This is the spirit of the Gala. That is the reason why the Durham Gala must stay. That is why it must thrive. Congress, let's work together to keep this great landmark day alive. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, you will find the Association on Stand 23 in the Exhibition Area. Please visit their stand. If you have never been to the Gala, I recommend you attend. The annual procession and Gala will take place in Durham on Saturday, 13th July. Thank you, colleague.

FAIR TRADE REFRESHMENTS MOTION 17

17. FAIR TRADE REFRESHMENTS

This Congress asks that all food and drinks item procured by the GMB should, wherever possible, be locally produced or Fair Trade. In particular, all procured tea and coffee must be Fair Trade, and all procured sugar must be Fair Trade or produced in the UK. It is not acceptable for the GMB to campaign for better standards for workers in the UK, while endorsing products that undermine the rights of workers abroad.

SHEFFIELD MCP & LIGHT BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Referred)

SIS. A. MORRELL (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Conference, I am a first-time delegate. *(Applause)* So this is me making my virgin speech. I am moving Motion 17, Fair Trade Refreshments, on behalf of the Sheffield MPC & Light Branch.

Congress, we ask that all food and drink items procured by the GMB should, wherever possible, be locally produced or Fair Trade, whether it be here in Congress, at region or at branch. Tea, coffee and sugar are three of the largest commodities in the western world after oil. They are produced in third-world countries on large plantations in conditions that are little more than modern-day slavery. The workers spend up to 12-14 hours a day in the fields hand picking the crops. Women have babies strapped to them and some children as young as eight work in these plantations. Often they sent back in to pick the crops after plantations have been sprayed with pesticide. No thought is given to their health and safety and waiting times. How many in this room would do that? I didn't think that any of you would. The average wage for a family of eight working on a plantation is around \$4 a day if they hit targets set by landowners. Landowners rent accommodation to the workers do so at a rate that they never really know as it is deducted from their wages. Plantation owners also supply the workers' food, often at inflated prices. Many workers take out loans from plantation owners who charge over-the-odds repayments, which again they deducted from their workers' wages. These wages are already at an all-time low and are blamed on the price of tea, coffee and sugar falling. Many of the workers have resorted to selling themselves in return for food or loan repayments.

How can we, as a trade union, sit here and take refreshments from countries where the working conditions are so appalling? We fight for the rights of our UK workers to have better working conditions, and we campaign for better health and safety. Our very own founder, Will Thorne, fought to reduce our working hours and improve our working conditions back in the 1800s. Yet here we are today, in 2013, with these conditions still prevalent. So why are we still taking refreshments from plantations where employment laws are flouted and they appear to mean nothing to the landowners and local officials? The more I have read, the more I am sickened by what I read. In Guatemala in 2011 a group of peasant farmers – words used by the authorities, not mine – were murdered when they tried to stand and fight for their rights. All they wanted were the wages that were owed to them for the work that they had done. Instead, they were slain.

In 2011 a number of trade unionists were murdered in Central America for trying to build on failing employment laws. It is not acceptable to campaign for better standards while endorsing products that undermine workers abroad. By procuring Fair Trade products we are supporting education for both farmers and workers, a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, improve working conditions and a sustainable future for our planet. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Do I have a seconder? (*Formally seconded*) Does anyone wish to speak to the motion?

BRO. A. MOSS (North West & Irish): Motion 9: Amalgamation of GMB Union and UNISON. What a beautiful word it is, I don't think. For years and years they are courting us. They are coming to us and wanting us to join them, not us going to them. Why is it that the word has spread round that we are looking to join up with UNISON. We have just had a three-months campaign in Liverpool where we have fought with them over certain things like membership. They have tried to sign our members up in any way they could with free this, free that and giving them anything they want, but we didn't do it. That was thanks to the good work of senior stewards and stewards, we fought them off.

I joined this Union in 1965 when there was no such thing as UNISON. So what we need to be saying to them is, "Go away. We are not having you." (*Applause*)

I will finish by saying this. I will say it in plain English for everyone, including UNISON if they are listening: go and swivel on it! (*Applause and cheers*)

THE PRESIDENT: I call Brian Strutton to speak on Motions 9, 15 and 17.

BRO. B. STRUTTON (National Secretary, Public Services): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC, replying to Motions 9, 15 and 17. I would like to deal with Motions 15 and 17 first, and then return to Motion 9 which asks a direct question about amalgamating with UNISON.

Motion 15 seeks to revive the Apex section or set up a similar structure to help organise managerial and supervisory workers. We moved away from a separate white-collar section a number of years ago, and the CEC does not see any strong evidence that such an approach would work in today's world. Of course, we have an MPO brand of membership for senior managers in the public sector, and we are open to new ideas to develop further. So we are asking you to refer the motion to allow for more investigation.

Motion 17 calls for all food and drink used by GMB to be locally produced or Fair Trade. Colleagues, we already insist on this for Congress, as agreed in the Agenda Report in 2008. We would ask you to allow us to refer the motion so that we can check with regions and branches whether there is a practical difficulty in a blanket ruling.

Turning now to Motion 9, this seeks clarity from the CEC on the existence of amalgamation or new-union discussions with UNISON. I will treat that as one question about merger. Congress, GMB members and UNISON members have common enemies and it is in both our interests to fight side-by-side. Separately, we are effective organisations but working together the potential is enormous. Both our unions share common aims and common values. We are both 100% committed to ending discrimination, stamping out inequality and fighting for full employment policies. We both campaign for a just and fair society, and working together we can achieve so much on equal pay, employment rights, social care, public services and many other areas. Our two unions have supported each other politically, and we strive to work better together because the joint strength of our two unions may prove to be the deciding factor in protecting our public services in the years ahead. This is all good common sense. Does that mean, as Motion 9 asks, that we are in merger talks with UNISON? Congress, GMB is financially sound. Our strategies for winning through the austerity programme imposed by the Coalition Government are the right ones. In short, GMB has no necessity to merge. *(Applause and cheers)*

I can confirm, on behalf of the CEC, that although we believe, for all the reasons I have given, in the strength of building our closer working with UNISON, and our door always remains open to anyone who wants to talk to us, there are no merger talks currently taking place. Please refer Motions 15 and 17 and support Motion 9 with the statement I have made on behalf of the CEC. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brian. I just don't know how these rumours get around. Colleagues, can we now move to the vote. Will Yorkshire Region accept reference on both Motions 15 and 17? *(Agreed)* Congress, do you agree reference for Motions 15 and 17? *(Agreed)* In relation to Motion 9, will London Region accept the Statement? *(Agreed)* With that in mind, can I take the vote on Motions 9, 11, 13 and 17. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against?

Motion 9 was CARRIED.

Motion 11 was CARRIED.

Motion 13 was CARRIED.

Motion 15 was REFERRED.

Motion 16 was CARRIED.

Motion 17 was REFERRED.

UNION ORGANISATION: REPRESENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

MOTION 39

39. RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Congress agrees that the long standing practice of the GMB of remaining neutral, when it comes to religious belief, is the correct stance. We agree in order to be able to represent the diverse nature of our members, with their differing attitudes towards religious beliefs. The GMB should not be drawn into conflicts between religions and religious factions. Congress therefore agrees that religious belief should play no part in the decision making process and the culture of our union.

H25 ASCOT AND WINDSOR PARK BRANCH
Southern Region

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we will here the CEC qualification on Motion 39. Will the mover, Southern Region, and the seconder come forward.

BRO. R. REEVES (Southern): Congress, I propose Motion 39, Religious Belief. President, the present practice of avoiding decisions based on religious belief has stood us well over the years. Every day in the news we read of reports of conflicts based on someone's religious views of religious teaching, be it

in politics or personal relationships, at home or abroad. Ours is not to reason why. The result is the same. People get hurt and killed. We must not be drawn into conflicts between members based on religious belief. This will only alienate the members who do not agree with the decisions taken and cause conflict within the GMB. It is far better for us, as a union, not to take sides by avoiding such arguments, but base our decision on the facts of the case, as we did during the Northern Ireland conflict. There is a stained glass window in Belfast City Hall commemorating the trade unions who did just this, so helped gain the Peace Process.

This motion is asking for such practice to become our policy. Please support this motion and make it happen.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Roy. Seconder?

BRO. D. SUCKLING (Southern): Congress, I second Motion 39, Religious Belief. Religious beliefs are varied and diverse. The GMB's stance has long been to avoid making decisions based on religion. This must remain the case as decisions based on religious beliefs can be divisive and isolating. Please support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: I now call Motion 68. I will be taking the vote on Motion 39 after we have had the next section.

UNION ORGANISATION: EQUALITY & INCLUSION OUTLAWING BULLYING MOTION 68

68. OUTLAWING BULLYING

Congress agrees to campaign to outlaw bullying from the workplace in all forms, permanently.

Current legislation does little to protect workers from bullying and intimidation in the workplace. While there are some limited safeguards for those with protected characteristics which include, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexuality, disability and age, a bully can harass individuals or a group of people without being brought to account, so long as they treat them all the same. This means an employer can intimidate all of their staff and get away with it.

The current legislation also does very little to protect those with the identified characteristics because unless you can prove the bullying is linked to one of them, there is no recourse in law.

Congress further agrees to commit to campaigning to change the law so that bullying in work will not be tolerated whether or not it is linked to the age, sex, race, ability, sexuality, gender reassignment, religion, belief, look, feel or any other characteristic of an individual.

HENDON BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. P. COLES (London): Congress, I move Motion 68, Outlawing Bullying. We have all experienced bullying in one form or another. Many of us thought that when we left the school playground we had left the bullies behind. Unfortunately, for many of us this is not the case. As trade unionists we are aware that bullying can and does continue in the workplace and a big part of our role is to support GMB members who are the victims of bullies. Bullying can take many forms, and can range from sly comments to continual harassment and victimisation. In whatever form it takes, it is unpleasant, unwanted and uncalled for by those who are the victims. It makes the working lives of those individuals or groups a misery and many end up dreading going to work. The instigators of such mental torture can come from any level within an organisation. Through good management and effective dignity-at-work procedures, this kind of behaviour can be nipped in the bud and ended before it escalates.

However, poor procedures and sloppy management often leave the victims feeling helpless and bullies believing they have the right to act in the way they do. As a result, victims do not have faith in their employers to deal with the bullies, so they are left feeling isolated and helpless.

As GMB representatives we do our best to assist our members by working through the procedures and supporting them to stand up to the bullies. This can be more difficult when there is an embedded culture of bullying within an organisation. We encourage our members to take out a grievance against the bully, only to find that managers favour the accused and do not uphold the allegations, even when there are witness to corroborate them. We then encourage our members not to give up hope and to appeal to a more senior level to deal with the issue, only to find that the senior managers uphold the outcome made by the decision maker. This whole process takes time and only adds to the stress and anxiety of our members, and we are left frustrated at the injustice of the system. This is even more tortuous and frustrating when the bullies are the managers themselves.

When we have exhausted the internal procedures, where do we go next? Bullying is abhorrent no matter what the reason. This is true if it is true because of someone's age, race, disability, sex, sexuality, marital status, religion, belief or gender orientation. However, employment law offers some very limited protection if the bullying can be linked to one of these characteristics. Unfortunately, through experience, we know that even this form of bullying is difficult to prove and difficult to get justice for.

My frustration came to a head while dealing with institutional bullying in a school kitchen. This was not discrimination because of certain characteristics. Everyone was being bullied equally by their managers. When I got nowhere with the employer of the victims, I turned to the head of the school to put pressure on the contractor. He said it was not his place to get involved in the company's procedures. I was even more infuriated at his passing of the buck, because as I accompanied our members to meetings in an attempt to stop the bullying, I passed many classes within the school. On the door to each of these classrooms was a poster declaring "This is a bully-free zone". However, this situation does not seem to extend to the staff who work there.

The ineffectiveness of the law in regard to those who suffer discrimination and bullying as a result of having one or more protected characteristics infuriates me. What infuriates me even more is that there is no justice in law for those who are bullied because they are the wrong shape, they don't fit in or because they are bullied in the same way as everyone else. As a result, employers do not take complaints of bullying serious as it has no cost to them and the bullies have free reign in the workplace.

I call on Congress to stand up to the bully. I call on you to campaign to improve the law and outlaw the bullies in the workplace. I call on you to end the reign of the bully. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: All right, Jim?

BRO. J. RICHMOND (London): President, Congress, bullying in any form at school, at home, or in the workplace, should be a crime. It is an act carried out by cowards for reasons of jealousy, inadequacy, or simply hatred; it is that kind of physical or psychological bullying by one person to another in front of others, or more realistically in some cases a baying mob, and more recently the social media and electronic communication. Congress, it is quite simply comparable to terrorism and should be treated by law as with any other act of terrorism. This motion deals with bullying in the workplace and is one thing many employers do not recognise and those who do recognise it have procedures in place that they patently ignore. It is a proven fact that bullying in the workplace causes 30% to 40% absenteeism. It is a proven fact that absenteeism has a detrimental financial effect on the victim and the employer. The stress caused by bullying has been linked to heart disease, alcoholism, family problems, accidents, major fail features, and this can cause further detrimental financial effects to us the taxpayer by way of NHS treatment. In some cases bullying at work has caused suicide as we have read, or tragic incidents of suicide as a result of bullying yet who has ever put their hands up for causing it, not the perpetrator nor the baying mob seeking to protect themselves from similar treatment, and especially not the

employer who seeks to maintain production and performance at any cost. Congress, these employees' lives blighted and made miserable, or indeed ended, by this terror should be avenged. Bullies, and the employers who fail to take action against them and at worst actually condone them, should face the full force of the law. Let's make it happen. Congress, I second. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jim.

HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING "A DAILY NIGHTMARE" FOR OVER HALF OF BRITAIN'S SCHOOL PUPILS

MOTION 70

70. HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING 'A DAILY NIGHTMARE' FOR OVER HALF OF BRITAIN'S SCHOOL PUPILS

This Congress notes that pioneering research reveals serious concerns about homophobic language and that nearly a quarter of gay young people attempt suicide.

New research carried out by the University of Cambridge for Stonewall's School Report 2012 has found that 55% of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils in Britain's secondary schools experience homophobic bullying. The research, based on a national survey of 1,614 young people, also found that nearly a quarter (23%) of gay young people have attempted to take their own life and more than half (56%) deliberately harm themselves.

The School Report 2012 reveals that 99% of gay young people hear homophobic language – like 'that's so gay' and 'you're so gay'. However, a quarter of gay young people, rising to over a third in faith schools, report that teachers never challenge homophobic language. In schools where teaching staff never challenge homophobic remarks, the rate of homophobic bullying is far higher than in schools where such language is always challenged (71% compared to 43%).

Stonewall Chief Executive Ben Summerskill said: 'It's unacceptable that over half of gay young people face a daily nightmare of homophobic bullying and deeply worrying that many schools and teachers still fail to challenge it effectively. Thankfully Stonewall's years of work with thousands of schools and local authorities has reduced the overall level of homophobic bullying significantly. But we won't rest until every single gay young person in this country can walk through their school gates every morning without fear of being bullied just because of the way they were born.'

Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, said: 'Homophobic bullying, of any kind and of any child, is completely unacceptable. No child should have to suffer fear, victimisation or disruption as a result of bullying, either on or off school premises. Tackling poor behaviour and bullying are top priorities for the coalition government. Working with Stonewall and other groups, we are supporting schools to take a zero tolerance approach to all forms of bullying. We are also clear that homophobic language should become as unacceptable as racial slurs.'

Shadow Education Secretary, Stephen Twigg, speaking at Stonewall's Education for All Conference in London today, paid tribute to Stonewall for making a 'vital contribution' to discussions about homophobic bullying. 'Every school and college must be a safe environment for everyone learning and working there,' he said. 'Stonewall's School Report sets out challenges for schools, the Department for Education and Ofsted. It also makes recommendations for local authorities and academy chains – it's vital that these are adopted.'

Today's report updates Stonewall's School Report 2007, which found that nearly two thirds of young people were being homophobically bullied. Homophobic language remains as prevalent today as it was in 2007, although twice as many young people today report their schools say homophobic bullying is wrong (50%, up from 25% in 2007).

We therefore ask Congress to support this motion to have LGBT awareness added to the School Curriculum.

NOTTINGHAM CITY BRANCH
Midland and East Coast Region

(Carried)

SIS. D. WILLIAMS (Midland & East Coast): The University of Cambridge has carried out research for Stonewall School Report 2012. The report revealed that more than half of lesbian, gay, and bisexual

pupils in Britain's secondary schools experience homophobic bullying. This includes hearing homophobic language which is not being challenged by teachers and in schools where teaching staff never challenge homophobic comments bullying is far higher. The report also revealed that nearly a quarter of gay young people have attempted to take their own lives and more than half deliberately harm themselves. Stonewall's Chief Executive has said that it is unacceptable that over half of gay young people face a daily nightmare of homophobic bullying and deeply worrying that many schools and teachers fail to challenge it effectively. Stonewall has spent years working with schools and authorities trying to reduce the overall level of bullying. They have stated that they will not reset until every single gay young person in this country can walk through their school gates every morning without fear of being bullied just because of the way they were born. Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, has said that tackling poor behaviour and bullying are top priorities for the Coalition Government. They are working with Stonewall and supporting schools to take a zero tolerance approach to all forms of bullying. The Shadow Education Secretary, Stephen Twigg, has paid tribute to Stonewall and said that every school and college must be a safe environment for everyone learning and working there. We are asking Congress to support this motion to have LGBT awareness training added to the school curriculum to help educate and reduce this unacceptable behaviour. I move. Please support. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Debra.

BRO. J. BANKS (Midland & East Coast): First-time delegate, first-time speaker seconding motion 70. *(Applause)* Congress, homophobic bullying in society must cease. It is not right that our children, your children, must endure this type of bullying through their school years and schools must include LGBT awareness training for their staff and a zero tolerance on homophobic bullying and behaviour. Colleagues, I ask you to support this motion for the benefit of our children. *(Applause)*

SEXUAL VIOLENCE MOTION 72

72. SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Congress, the on-going revelations regarding Jimmy Savile's paedophilia are likely to provide a watershed moment in terms of the way British Society views child sex abuse and violence against women more generally. For instance, just like with the Rochdale "grooming" victims, most of Savile's victims did not fit the assumption of what a real victim should be like – and they weren't believed. Many victims of sexual violence who do tell what's happened to them are not believed and hopefully the women – and men – coming forward will challenge the sexist stereotypes. But in another way, Savile – and "grooming" gangs – are atypical. We know that most of all child sex abuse and violence against women is perpetrated by someone they know, either within their family or wider social circle.

Congress instructs the CEC to:

- 1) Review to which women's groups it is affiliated.
- 2) If none of these groups are actively working to challenge the underlying assumptions around sexual violence against women and children then affiliate to at least one group which prioritises this work.

GMB@PCS BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. R. POLE (London): Originally due to second motion 72 on Sexual Violence but now at rather short notice moving. Comrades, this would be an important resolution at any time but with the endless constant stream of revelations about sexual harassment, abuse, violence, and worse, currently in the public domain it takes on additional importance and serves as a powerful reminder, if one was needed, that women are not necessarily safe at work, at home, in care, or out socialising. We in the GMB and the wider Movement have a duty to take every possible step to put an end to this dreadful situation. I

could quote endless statistics, figures, etc., to highlight this but a few will give more than enough ammunition to prove the point.

Some 54% of UK rapes are committed by a woman's current or former partner. Serious sexual assault is more likely to be committed by someone known to the victim. 81 people are currently under investigation for events at the BBC. In the Oxford cases recently, girls and their families tried for years to get the police and the authorities to take notice of what was happening but were not believed, in fact the victims were seen as the problem and the support they desperately needed was refused. The examples could go on and on and on. This blind eye culture must be stopped.

Women currently make up almost half of the workforce and just over half of trade union members, and we heard the impressive GMB figures earlier today, and we need to ensure that we are at the forefront in the struggles against sexism and sexual violence as we have done in the past on such issues as abortion rights, equal pay, sex discrimination, etc., although regrettably in some cases our Movement has been slow to act and move on these. There are protests going on. The "slut walks" for example, following the outrageous comments made by a Canadian police officer who said that to remain safe "women should avoid dressing like sluts". We can play our part by supporting groups which prioritise assumptions around sexual violence against women. The charter for women to which GMB are affiliated may be able to assist here and yet the issue is urgent. I fear that as the ConDem draconian austerity measures increase with more cuts, more unemployment, reduced wages and living standards, this already appalling scenario will worsen. Please support this resolution overwhelmingly, not only for ourselves but for all women and children not only here but worldwide. I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Seconder?

SIS. T. CHANA (London): Congress, victims of sexual violence, it is very difficult for them and very hard to comprehend what has actually happened to them; it is also compounded by who to tell and who to report it to and, furthermore, they have to go to work. Only two days ago I had to deal with an employee in an organisation where she found it difficult to be in a room with a male employer without the door being open. That was 10 years ago and she did not report it because of the impact on her family. "No one will believe me," those words resonate in the examples given in this motion. We need to empower the victims of sexual violence, we need to educate, we need to adopt the approach in Motion 71 we heard this morning, recognising, tackling, and supporting, not only at the point where a person becomes a victim of sexual violence but before they become a victim of sexual violence. We need to educate that it is wrong, it is a crime, what they can do and the support they can get. There are many organisations that the GMB can learn from and affiliate to, Rights of Women, DIVA Women's Project, Rape Crisis, and Women's Aid. Congress, this is a very important motion and I second this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Taranjit. Motion 75, Midland.

SAME SEX PARENTING MOTION 75

75. SAME SEX PARENTING

This Congress notes that, these days for a same sex couple to go through the process of starting or extending a family there are too many cost implications. Same sex families are the only families that can say 100% that their child was planned and not created through any mistake or misdemeanours.

We therefore ask Congress to support this motion that same sex couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples when planning a family.

NOTTINGHAM CITY BRANCH
Midland and East Coast Region

(Carried)

SIS. K. HUMPHREYS (Midland & East Coast): Congress, it has been recommended raising the current age limit for access to IVF treatment on the NHS from 39 to 42 for women who have no other chance of conceiving and have also suggested new groups of patients who should qualify for this free treatment, including same sex couples, people who carry infectious diseases like HIV, and people battling cancer who want a chance to preserve their fertility. Many same sex couples have had to go through private healthcare to start their families, often costing up to £8,000. Scientific research has been generally consistent in showing that gay and lesbian parents are as fit and as capable as heterosexual parents, and their children are as psychologically healthy and well adjusted as children raised by heterosexual parents. Same sex couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples when planning a family but let's not stop it there, it should not just stop at conception, let's go for it for a full parenting life. Please support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Secunder?

SIS. K. HOLM (Midland & East Coast): Vice President, Congress, same sex couples ask for the same rights as heterosexual couples. The costs involved in starting a family are very high. Every child deserves a safe and loving family. This should not be affected by cost. Paternity leave is given to heterosexual couples yet most same sex couples are having the right denied, which means in order to build the bond one parent must take unpaid leave. I realise in times past the father could only see the baby through a glass window and there was no paternity leave but times have moved on, we have equality rights. Let's push these rights for same sex parents. Please support the motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Karen. Motion 76, Wales and South West.

HARASSMENT – EQUALITY ACT SECTION 40 MOTION 76

76. HARASSMENT - EQUALITY ACT SECTION 40

This Congress is concerned about the Coalition Government's repeal of the rules outlawing third party harassment which in the 2010 Equality Act under Section 40 enabled an employee to claim against an employer where they have been harassed by a third party such as a customer of the employer.

This is a retrograde step in repealing Section 40 which was a protection to workers particularly in the catering/hospitality and care sectors who are particularly vulnerable to this change in the law and we call on the CEC to mount a campaign to get this particular section of the Act re-instated. An Act that was hard fought for and is now being dismantled by this present government.

PONTYPRIDD GENERAL BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

SIS. G. BRINKWORTH (Wales & South West): Vice President, Congress, we call upon the CEC to mount a campaign to get this particular section of the Act reinstated. Section 40 of the Equality Act 2010 introduced the concept of third party harassment whereby an employer will, in certain circumstances, be liable for the harassment of an employee where it is carried out by a third party, for example, a customer, supplier, or client. The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill will remove the provisions on third party harassment which the Government describe as unworkable from the Equality Act 2010 as they believe the provisions do not serve a practical purpose. Under section 40, an employer would be liable if an individual, who they themselves are using as service providers or servicing, would have no personal price to pay if harassment was taking place. Third party harassment is a very real and common occurrence for staff working in sectors such as education, health, social care, hospitality, retail, bus and rail transport, as many trade unionists know. For example, surveys by teaching unions suggest

a third of teachers suffer prejudice-based harassment from students or parents on a regular basis. A recent study of migrant care home workers found that they were frequently subjected to racial abuse by residents and 7% of NHS staff have said they have experienced discrimination from patients and their family members.

As many trade unions know, discrimination is often a consequence of a particular workplace culture, policy, or practice, and it is rare that an individual victim has the courage to stand up to that dominant culture or to be a lone voice criticising an employer's policies or practice; even fewer have the resilience and the financial, legal, and emotional support to go to tribunal. Those that do, even when successful, find it a difficult and at times debilitating experience so when a discrimination claim does succeed and there are others at risk of discrimination in a workplace, it makes absolute sense that the tribunal, which has spent many days hearing evidence and deliberating on what has occurred and why, should be able to make a recommendation that addresses the source and root cause of the problem so that others do not have to go through the same experience, yet this Government believes that it is not likely to serve any practical purpose or to be an appropriate or effective legal remedy. Rubbish. This section of the Equality Act is essential to ensure employees are protected as this Coalition Government continues to privatise our public services with subcontractors, supply teachers, and agency nurses. It is absolutely essential we fight to get this reinstated for the protection of vulnerable workers. Please support.

I move. (*Applause*)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gwylan. Secunder?

SIS. W. BEATON (Wales & South West): Pleased to be seconding motion 76. First-time speaker. (*Applause*) President, Congress, the 2010 Equality Act went further than before by extending the grounds upon which third party harassment could be established. It was previously restricted to gender but, helpfully, the Act made provision for other protected characteristics, such as age, race, religion, and disability. Now, of course, after only a couple of years of application the Government have decided to repeal the enabling section 40. Their argument stripped down to its essentials is that a lack of cases brought under the section is indicative of very little harassment taking place in industry. The revised claim could well be made that section 40 has had a deterrent effect and that employers have taken necessary measures to address the issue of harassment. Without that deterrent, things could easily return to where they were before the Act was introduced leaving employees with the option of claiming remedy once the employment contract has ended or under the protection of harassment law where the course of conduct would need to be proven against the same harasser and where active harassment is of a criminal nature.

Section 40's purpose was to make an employer liable for failing to act in certain circumstances. Its repeal now serves to remove the liability and excuses the reckless and careless employers who do not care about harassment of their staff. Obviously, the Act's deterrent value will be lost and the creation of good practice amongst employers will diminish or even disappear. The Government predictably suggests that section 40 creates a burden on business and discourages recruitment. Congress, what is more important, red tape or workers' rights? For us there can only be one answer. Congress, the repeal of section 40 is just another cynical example of the Coalition rolling back the workplace equality issues, another change not based upon evidence but typical Beecroft back of a fag packet policy-making. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you, Wendy.

DISCRIMINATION – EQUALITY ACT SECTION 138 MOTION 77

77. DISCRIMINATION – EQUALITY ACT SECTION 138

This Congress condemns the removal of the right of workers who believe they have suffered discrimination to use statute-backed equality questionnaires. Under the 2010 Equality Act Section 138 employees have the power to ask questions of an employer about any unlawful discrimination that they have suffered and the employers were expected to answer within eight weeks.

Once again this Government is ignoring its own consultation and intends to scrap Section 138 and this is yet another attack on the hard won Equality Act and we call on the Labour Party to condemn the attacks on this Act.

PONTYPRIDD GENERAL BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

SIS. P. PHILLIPS (Wales & South West): Chair, Congress, section 138 was a valuable means of ensuring that a discrimination claimant was not placed at a disadvantage by providing the use of a questionnaire requiring the employer to set out the reasons behind the decision involving the individual, to give access to information normally available only to the employer, not the worker, information without which it would prove difficult, if not impossible, to prove workplace discrimination. In short, excluding section 138 has the effect of disabling the burden of proof placed upon the employers in discrimination cases and transferring it to the employee.

Guess what, colleagues, in the responses to the consultation paper show that only 15% of those responding were in favour of scrapping the questionnaire facility. Once again, the Government are influenced only by those rich public schoolboy types who support it and its anti-worker policies. Surprise, surprise, no change there then. The tired old phrase, burden on business, is trotted out again to justify a change to worker beneficial legislation. Ironically, however, removing section 138 may well place more demands upon business in defending discrimination claims. The section is helpful to claimants in obtaining evidence to prove their case; removing it will almost certainly lead to a regression in protection for employees, victims of discriminatory work practices.

If the Government are really serious about dealing with workplace discrimination, then they would repeal the provision. Even some of the more responsible employers want the questionnaire and answer process as it enables the flushing out of claims without any or enough merit. A very important mechanism for extracting information from employers has been lost. An employee seeking to claim discrimination would still be able to pursue such information through other routes, such as pre-hearing requests or applications to the tribunal for disclosure but the point here, of course, is that the statutory procedure has been removed without any supporting evidence and there has been a failure to promote the number of pre-hearing settlements, or that the burdens and risks falling upon the employer are too high.

The repeal of section 138, along with section 40, is just part of the employment law reform agenda set by this Coalition since it came to power. We have seen an ever-increasing number of proposed changes and public consultations at a time when the main priority should be to get the economy back on its feet, but, no, colleagues, why tackle the failures of austerity with a change of economic policy when declaring war upon our members industrially and legally. Is this an easier and more politically attractive option? Equality and justice are not values that mean anything to Cameron and Clegg. No surprise there either. However, the Labour Party must have a different position. It cannot stand by silently as equality law is diluted under the guise of dealing with unnecessary regulations. Congress, this Government have ignored the voice of the public on these matters to carry through the ideological aims. The Labour Party must not ignore our voice. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Pauline. Will the movers of 79 and 80 please be at the front?

BRO. R. WILLIAMS (Wales & South West): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Chair, Congress, these changes are detrimental to our workers and vulnerable employees. There are many

beneficial sides to section 138, such as tribunal claims, potential tribunal claims, encouragement towards settlement by the early exchange of information and time being saved at tribunal hearings, but that was never the purpose of the questionnaire procedure. It is wrong to judge the questionnaire solely in terms of these collateral advantages but they should not be disregarded.

The current questionnaire procedure has clear benefits for all parties and the tribunal services. It enables the effective operation of the anti-discrimination legislation and it is well-known that direct evidence of discrimination is rare. It also assists claimants and respondents to assess the merits of potential claims and to assist parties to reach a settlement thus saving cost and tribunal expenses. The questionnaire procedure is not a problem for employers who have nothing to hide, they are made aware at the earlier stages of the strengths and weaknesses of a possible discrimination claim. This gives the advantage to take swift action to settle a claim, if appropriate to do so, without the cost of a full tribunal hearing. This is a clear detriment to both employers and employees. However, employees are the most affected and again this is an attack on the rights of workers by this Coalition Government. Congress, support. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rhys. Motion 79.

DISABILITY ATTACK MOTION 79

79. DISABILITY ATTACK

This Congress believes that people with disabilities in this country are facing unrestrained attacks from those with authority and control. We resolve to campaign and work in alliance with other local and national groups - DEPAC and UKUncut among others - against the attacks on people with disabilities, particularly attacks on employment, benefits and other support services. Of particular recent concern have been the attacks on Remploy employees and the cuts to Disability Living Allowance.

SHEFFIELD MCP & LIGHT BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(*Carried*)

SIS. M. HOBSON (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): First-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, we as a union need to recognise that for us the union and for our individual members times are getting harder, poor is being set against poor, black against white, working against non-working, able against disabled. We need to remember that unity is strength and not be party to this Government's attempts to weaken us. Disabled people are facing unrestrained attacks from this ConDem Government. So, what are they doing?

They are replacing Incapacity Benefit with Employment Support Allowance and how are people assessed for this new benefit? They are assessed by the French IT company, ATOS. And what tests do they need to pass to be able to be deemed capable of holding down a job? It is a test such as being able to touch your nose, being able to spell a four-letter word, or be able to walk 20 metres. These are things that any five-year old child can do. What is the Government planning to do, send our children out to work also?

Disability Living Allowance is currently being replaced by Personal Independence Payment. It is estimated that over 600,000 disabled people will lose much needed benefits. This is money that is used to support extra costs of living with a disability.

The introduction of the bedroom tax disadvantages all Housing Benefit claimants with a spare bedroom and who rent a social landlord property, such as a council house. Many of our members are on low incomes and claim Housing Benefit and these are affected by this new Tory tax. Claimants with disabilities are being disproportionately affected by this tax as they often need an extra bedroom for disability reasons, for carer reasons, for medical equipment, etc. With financial support being removed

and a greater portion of rent to pay, little choice to downsize because of lack of new builds and Margaret Thatcher's right-to-buy scheme, will these attacks never end?

With new rules relating to Legal Aid entitlement, unsuccessful benefit claimants are now restricted in the appeals process. Most cannot afford to challenge it.

The Government's intention is to cut the welfare bill and get people back into work but where is the work? For many disabled people Remploy was the answer, a supportive workplace where ability and not disability was put first and yet these places have suffered unrestrained attacks at the hands of our ConDem Government. Last year around 1,500 employees of Remploy lost their jobs and only a small number have actually found employment again.

We, as a union, need not only to support our disabled members but actively campaign against these disability attacks from the ConDem Government. I call on this Congress to give unreserved support to Motion 79, to join with local and national groups actively to campaign against these disability attacks. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Well done, Mel. Secunder?

SIS. A. BURLEY (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): President, Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Thank you. Good afternoon, delegates and visitors. Disability and carer organisations are protesting strongly about this change. Carers UK states that at the moment more than a million people receive Carers' Allowance and for about 270,000 of them this entitlement is dependent on the eligibility of the Disability Living Allowance of somebody of working age for whom they care.

The bedroom tax is also going to be a double whammy for these disabled individuals who live in social housing and occupy a second bedroom, either for their equipment or for their carers. There are examples of carers being penalised for the extra bedroom even though their spouses or partners are registered disabled and live in specially adapted properties. The ConDems expect partners and carers to be sharing the same bedroom but in most cases this is medically unrealistic. So, to add insult to injury to these disabled individuals the ConDems have developed a programme of closure against the Remploy factories giving no hope, future, or prospects to these individuals. Congress, we want you to support this motion against these disability attacks. I second this motion to Congress. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO MATERNITY LEAVE MOTION 80

80. LEGISLATIVE CHANGES TO MATERNITY LEAVE

Congress is concerned at this Government's continued cutbacks and attacks on workers' rights which are primarily impacting upon women. In particular the proposals originally contained in the Modern Workplaces consultation to reduce maternity leave to 18 weeks will be detrimental to both the mother's and child's health and well-being. In addition, there are proposals to make changes to maternity pay and indications that employment rights for women on maternity leave will also be reduced.

Whilst Congress supports the notion and aim of shared parenting, this will not be achieved by reducing rights to maternity leave. In addition, based on international evidence, it is unlikely that proposals would improve the take-up of leave by fathers/partners.

Congress therefore calls upon the union to actively campaign to protect women's pregnancy and maternity rights and in addition to support campaigns by the TUC, Maternity Action, Working Families and others. Such campaigning should encompass:

- Protection for 26 weeks maternity leave as a minimum;
- Defending enhanced occupational maternity schemes;
- Tackling pregnancy discrimination in the workplace;
- Alternative proposals for paternity/parental leave which promote equality;
- Enhancing, not reducing, family income during maternity;
- Paternity/partner and parental leave.

GMB@PCS BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

SIS. H. PURCELL (London): Congress, we cannot be under any doubt that this Government's austerity measures and continuing cuts are already having a disproportionate impact on women and this is set to continue over the next period. All too often women still have to compete on an unlevel playing field in the workplace and in the home and changes to maternity rights and leave, as proposed by this Government, can seriously set back the continued struggle for women's equality.

In February this year the Government presented the Children & Families Bill to Parliament. Within this bill there is proposed legislation to make changes to maternity leave. According to the Government, these proposals are designed to encourage more flexible parental leave, promote equality in the workplace, and shared parenting in the home. Clearly, supporting families to share parenting is important and something we would fully support; if we want an equal society then we need both parents to care for their children.

To explain, currently all women have the right to take 52 weeks maternity leave; 39 weeks of this period is paid, six weeks at 90% of income, plus 33 weeks at just over £135; 26 weeks of this leave can be transferred to the father or partner and any remaining statutory pay is then paid to this person. There is little evidence at present regarding the take-up of this option amongst fathers and partners but anecdotally it appears to be low and the scheme has not been advertised widely.

The current arrangements were only introduced in April 2011 so it has not really had a chance to bed in and the impact has yet to be evaluated, yet this Government wants to make further changes. The major change is that transferral of maternity leave or shared parental leave can be made after the reserved period of maternity leave, which is limited to two weeks compulsory maternity leave after the birth of the child. At present, this cannot happen until 20 weeks after the birth and there is a maximum amount of 26 weeks that can be transferred.

As all of us will accept, shared parenting is good for children and the first year of a child's life is an important time for both parents to bond with their child. However, one of the key concerns is that women will take shorter periods of maternity leave without the corresponding assumed increase in take-up from fathers or partners. This could have a detrimental impact on the woman's health as well as the child's. Another concern is that in an ever shrinking job market and in an environment where there is less job security, women will come under increasing pressure from their employers to take less maternity leave and return to work earlier.

Maternity Action and other pregnancy and maternity advice services have identified that women are already under increasing pressure from their employers to return to work earlier and this will only get worse in time. A woman finding herself in this situation may not feel best placed to assert herself and may fall in line with the employer's expectations for fear of repercussions later on.

Congress, this motion is not against the principle of fathers and partners sharing parenting but all the evidence suggests that the proposed legislation in this bill will not result in an improved situation. We do not believe that it will affect change. Rather, it will negatively impact on maternity and child health

resulting in shorter periods of maternity leave and a minimal increase in leave taken by fathers or partners and ultimately lead to an increase in pregnancy and sex discrimination.

Congress, we must actively campaign alongside the likes of the TUC and Maternity Action for legislation which protects women's pregnancy and maternity rights, truly promotes shared parenting, and is premised on empirical evidence. Congress, let's work to ensure that maternity rights and leave are protected, let's work together for women's equality. Please support the motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen.

BRO. M. LANCASTER (London): This Government's continuous attack on our employment rights and the rolling out of their plan of cutbacks has been felt across all of the equalities spectrum. The proposal to reduce maternity leave to 18 weeks was first proposed in a model workplace consultation. This proposal would place women at a massive disadvantage in the workplace if implemented; not only would this place maternity schemes that provide contractual maternity pay beyond 18 weeks at risk, but would also put the woman's right to return to the same job when returning from a period of 26 weeks leave at risk as well. This would only create a race to the bottom of the employment ladder for working women who choose to start a family, forcing women to face a choice between a job or family. The development of more family-friendly rights is the only way we are going to ensure greater gender equality in our workplaces. The Government needs to listen and understand this. They need to understand not only does this benefit our families and children but also benefits business and the economy through stronger employment engagement, retention, and the utilisation of women's skills, knowledge, and experiences.

Congress, many steps can be made to ensure paternity and parental leave rights equality. One of the biggest steps towards achieving this would be to set up the provision of leave just for fathers that is paid at earning related pay, the removal of long notice periods and length of service criteria so that paternity leave becomes a day one employment right, and the creation of a paternity allowance equivalent to the maternity allowance for fathers who do not qualify for statutory paternity pay.

Congress, the key to creating a working environment that truly ensures women and men have an equal opportunity to climb the employment ladder together will only be achieved through the development of family-friendly policies and stronger maternity and paternity rights that promote equality, not by weakening them and dissolving them, or selling our rights or our shares. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to speak in the debate?

BRO. D. JOBSON (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, speaking in support of motion 79. Amongst the items that you will see in the motion itself on various campaign groups, I would also like to draw your attention to the WOW campaign, War on Welfare, a three-stage campaign. Stage one is currently running, which is an HM Government e-petition calling for an equality impact assessment on the disproportionate impact of cuts on the disabled. I would like to ask you all, if possible, to sign the WOW petition to get the Government actually to have to put in place said impact assessment. Aside from that, I fully support this motion and ask you all to do so as well. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Well done.

BRO. J. SUTTON (Wales & South West): Congress, speaking in support of motion 79. Philomena Bryant was a friend of mine. Phil was on disability Benefit but was assessed by ATOS as being fit for work and her benefit was stopped. When they broke into Phil's flat and found her body there was no food in her flat, she had no electric, and only a few coppers in her purse. The Government's attacks on the disabled had pushed Phil to a dark place where there was no hope, only despair, and Phil had taken her own life. Please support motion 79. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jeff. Can I call Sharon Harding, on behalf of the CEC, on motions 39 and 72?

SIS. S. HARDING (CEC, Public Services): Congress, the CEC asks you to support motions 39 and 72 with these qualifications. With regards to motion 39, the motion asks us to ensure that religion does not play a part in adversely impacting on the decision-making and the culture of our union. The Equality Act 2010 recognises religious belief as an equality strand, the same as age, disability, gender, race, and sexuality. GMB currently asks delegates at Congress and the National Equality Conference to complete an equality monitoring form. One of the questions on that is religious belief. This is done for the purpose of ascertaining the make-up of our delegation. The qualification is that the aggregated information is not used to adversely impact on any particular group or is used in any decision-making that penalises any religion. The religious diversity of the union enhances GMB.

On motion 72, since we met last year there has been a number of cases of sexual violence against women and children, including those involving grooming and crimes committed by Jimmy Savile. The late TV presented sexually assaulted women and children as young as 10 over six decades. A Metropolitan and NSPCC report shows that Savile was able to brush off police investigation into his behaviour. The majority of his victims never reported their experiences to the authorities before saying that they feared they would not be believed or they did not trust the judicial system. A report to the Criminal Prosecution Service covered assaults and complaints made against Savile in 2007 and 2008. It found that Jimmy Savile might have been prosecuted over these three allegations of abuse had the police dealt with the complaints differently.

The motion is asking for us to review our affiliation in relation to women's groups. However, it is not clear if the branch has any specific group in mind. All GMB affiliations are cleared by CEC Finance & General Purposes Committee who research each affiliation in detail before committing to the affiliate. We support the motion in principle and we will contact the branch to let us know if they have any particular group in mind.

Congress, we ask you to accept motions 39 and 72 with the qualifications I have just outlined. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Sharon. Does Southern Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Thank you very much. Does London Region accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Thank you. With that in mind, can I take 39, 68, 70, 72, 75, 76, 77, 79, and 80 to the vote, please? All those in favour please show? Anyone against? They are carried.

Motion 39 was CARRIED.

Motion 68 was CARRIED.

Motion 70 was CARRIED.

Motion 72 was CARRIED.

Motion 75 was CARRIED.

Motion 76 was CARRIED.

Motion 77 was CARRIED.

Motion 79 was CARRIED.

Motion 80 was CARRIED.

PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP AWARDS FOR EQUALITY

THE PRESIDENT: Can we now move to our next section, that is section 5, President's Leadership Awards for Equality. We launched these awards at Congress 2009 so this is the fourth year of recognising the exceptional work of our regions and branches. There are four categories with awards

given to those who have inspired and championed various aspects of the Equality Agenda. You will find more details about the winners in a separate document in your wallets.

Can I ask those winners of the sections to come down? They are: The Most Inspirational Individual on Equality in the GMB or at Work, Margaret Gregg from North West & Irish Region for her lifelong commitment to equality; Most Inspirational Regional Equality Forum, London Region; Most Inspirational Equality Project for Organising, London Region for their Regional Equality Toolkit; and Most Inspirational Project for Making a Difference at Work, Mick Lancaster for work on tackling racism, dealing with dyslexia, and training resources on domestic violence. Could I please ask you to come down? (*Applause*)

Presentation of awards amid applause.

THE PRESIDENT: As well as the award winners, I am also pleased to present certificates to those Highly Commended GMB members: Highly Commended Individual on Equality, Phil Brannon GMB Scotland, for his work in Remploy; Highly Commended Regional Equality Forum, Birmingham & West Midlands; Highly Commended Equality Project for Organising, Southern Region, for their NEXT Campaign exposing poverty wages for young workers; and Highly Commended Project for Making a Difference at Work, Brian Burton, for his work on training apprentices and enabling them to gain basic skills.

Presentation of certificates amid applause.

THE PRESIDENT: Well done all of you. Can I now move to the next part of the agenda, number 6, Employment Policy: Health, Safety & Environment? I will be calling the movers and seconders of 81, 83, 84, 85, and 87. Will you please come to the front Wales and South West Region, then Midland, North West and Irish, Northern Region, and Northern Region.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT
HEALTH AND SAFETY
MOTION 81

81. HEALTH AND SAFETY

This Congress condemns the amendment on health and safety legislation slipped in to the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill which could turn the clock back more than 100 years and represents a fundamental shift in attitudes to workers' safety. This Government introduced this amendment at the last minute deciding it was unfair that employers should be forced to pay compensation to employees injured or made ill by their work.

Once again this Government is attacking workers in favour of employers and we call on the CEC to mount a campaign to stop this iniquitous attack on the health and safety of our members taking us back decades and look to the Labour Party to lend their support to this.

PONTYPRIDD GENERAL BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

BRO. G. FRANCIS (Wales & South West): Congress, if ever you wanted an example of how this ConDem Government could not care less about the health and safety of GMB members at their place of work then you will find it easy enough in their preferred version of Clause 62 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill. The basic effect of that clause is to amend the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act by removing a worker's rights to compensation for injuries caused by an employer's breach of health and safety regulations. In future, employers will no longer be able to pay compensation where there is no excuse, such as where they have failed adequately to guard a machine resulting in loss of limb. The clause will also put an end to injured workers being able to rely on or refer to a breach of

safety regulations putting the onus instead upon them to prove foreseeability, that is, to establish that the employer knew or ought to have known that something was unsafe. Furthermore, the clause will lead to the end of enforcement in almost 99% of health and safety breaches given that there are only a thousand executive criminal prosecutions every year.

Congress, this will have serious and unjust ramifications for health and safety in the workplace right across the country. It is no exaggeration to say that this regressive change will take us back more than 100 years to the time when workers received no health and safety protection whatsoever. Despite initially voting against clause 62, the House of Lords eventually voted to accept it following the Government having used its Commons majority to overturn that original stance. Not only will this damaging clause prevent people, who, through no fault of their own, have suffered pain and injury because of an accident at work and claiming fair and adequate compensation, it will also result in lower workplace health and safety standards as strong regulations contribute significantly to enhancing workplace safety.

The Coalition saw clause 62 only as a tariff upon employers for accidents which they could not reasonably have done anything about and an unnecessary burden upon business in times of fiscal difficulty. The reality is that the passing of this clause will greatly benefit negligent employers who care little or not at all about health and safety in the workplace. The removing of civil liability from duty breaches imposed by health and safety regulations is totally unjustified and unfair and does nothing to prevent future workplace injuries, and even deaths. Strict liability was introduced over a century ago for good reason, namely, to recognise the imbalance of power between employers and workers. The withdrawal of an ability to enforce a civil claim for a workplace accident leaves the employees reliant upon common law doctrine of negligence to enforce reasonable care, and claim. It is totally unfair to require someone to have to show that the employer has failed to take that reasonable care. If you take away absolute liability for breaches of statutory duties and replace it with doctrines of negligence, then you simply encourage irresponsible employers, and we know there are a lot of them out there. It would also avoid their obligation to the detriment of their employees.

Congress, clause 62 was only introduced at the Commons stage having first passed through the committee stage. I ask you, please, to support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder?

BRO. I. BOUNDS (Wales & South West): I am seconding this crucial resolution relating to health and safety. President, Congress, the Health and Safety at Work Act was designed to ensure that workers were properly protected by legislation. The clause that Gordon has just talked you through seeks to undermine much of the effective campaigning policy work undertaken by our union over many, many years. Prior to its introduction many negligence claims were successfully defended because the claimants were unable to gather all or enough evidence needed to prove actual negligence itself. That Act, which clause 62 was intended to overturn, caused a fundamental shift in the approach to damages claims for workplace injuries. From then it was no longer necessary to have to prove that employers knew or should have realised the machinery, equipment, or systems at work were defective or downright dangerous. It was sufficient to show that regulations intended to achieve workplace safety had been breached resulting in an injury at work. Workplace safety environments also improved as the impact of strict liability forced employers to take appropriate steps to minimise workplace risks and hazards.

Congress, the Government sees the threat of being found liable for health and safety claims as being a deterrent to business growth. Long-term growth and strengthening the business environment will not and must not be attained at the expense of our members' health and safety, and neither will the change do anything positive for building consumer confidence.

As Gordon has already said, diluting workers' rights amounts to turning the clock back to Victorian times, not quite sending young children back up the chimneys but bad enough at a time when employment opportunities are at a premium and wider rights are under attack too. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Skills cares only for watering down the civil redress on ideological grounds and for the aim of excusing employers their responsibilities for health and safety. The United Kingdom is already more lightly regulated than many of its European competitors and now we have an even greater deregulation in a critical area of employee rights. Congress, vote for this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian.

CAMPAIGN FOR REVIEW OF DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT REGULATIONS 1992 MOTION 83

83. CAMPAIGN FOR REVIEW OF DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT REGULATIONS 1992

This Congress notes that these regulations need to be updated to take into account the technological advances in the equipment during the last twenty years.

ASHFIELD NO. 1 BRANCH
Midland and East Coast Region

(Carried)

SIS. C. MASON (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, this motion asks Congress for a campaign in order for these regulations to be reviewed. The reason is simple, the advances in technology have created some large gaps leaving our members' health at risk, not only at work but in their home life too. I am looking at just one specific example, the advances in the humble cash register, which is defined as a machine that calculates the total, provides a receipt, and holds cash in a drawer. Almost reinvented from 20 years ago today's cash register, ECR (electronic cash register) or EPOS (electronic point of sale) now usually comes with a large touch screen display and does so much more than take cash and provide a receipt. These improved devices, which actually sell themselves as computerised systems with hardware and various software upgrades, can virtually do everything from stock control, refunds, telephone top-ups, internet orders, the list goes on and on and on.

Our members, who can spend entire shifts on a daily basis operating this equipment and to all intents and purposes tick every box in the 1992 regulations as they stand today to be defined as an operator but still they will receive no health and safety training, no eye test, and no workstation assessment, and this is all quite legal. The 1992 regulations quite clearly specify in section 1(4)(e) that, nothing in these regulations shall apply to or are related to calculators, cash registers, or any other equipment having a small data or measurement display required for direct use of the equipment.

This clause was reasonable in 1992. It now leaves thousands of our members not slipping through cracks but falling headlong into bottomless pits totally unprotected. The reason is legally and technically the members are operating a cash register to which these regulations do not apply. We do not, unfortunately, live in a time when we can look to employers to improve the working conditions out of the goodness of their heart. Ultimately, only a change of legislation will offer any chance of protection to our members.

On the home front, the last 20 years has seen an explosion of the personal computer and video console games. How many of us actually apply the rules we use at work at home? How many of us limit our children, our partners, or even ourselves to just 45 minutes and then take a 15-minute break? People need to know this information. I have only covered a small sample but there are others. By raising awareness with a campaign we will be taking the first steps in the right direction. Congress, please support. I move motion 83. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Seconder?

BRO. J. EVANS (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, the motion asks for us to campaign for a review of the Display Screen Equipment Regulations. I work as a field worker in the water industry where many are required to use an ever-increasing variety of equipment with display screens of many types and sizes and they are used in all weathers and at all times of the day and night. All have the potential to cause strain to eyesight and to upper limbs. The original regulations were primarily concerned with office-based equipment and urgently need reviewing to include the growing diversity of applications and their risks. I ask you to support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Jason. Motion 84?

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MOTION 84

84. MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

The Manchester 115 Branch calls upon Conference to use every opportunity in 2013 and beyond to promote and raise general mental health awareness in the workplace.

We also ask Conference to endorse and 'champion' the development of an on-going campaign encouraging 'Mental Health Awareness in the Workplace', for the benefit of all members.

This will be achieved through a coordinated and sustainable campaign, encouraging the development of a better understanding of Mental Health whilst providing a robust support mechanism for members, centered around the promotion of an 'early intervention strategy', so supporting our members at times when they feel most vulnerable; the lead focus of our campaign would be.

The GMB 'We are here today – for your tomorrows'.

MANCHESTER 115 BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): President, Congress, one in four British adults experiences at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any one year. Positive mental health is a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to their community. Mental wellbeing is the foundation for an individual to function effectively in society. Our members are facing times of great change, times of uncertainty, times of testing people to the limits of their endurance. People have to work longer hours under increasingly stressful circumstances. Pressures in the workplace result in ever-increasing demands on members and families while the effects of the recession and government policies are forcing the most vulnerable members of our union and our communities into isolation and despair.

It is for this reason I ask Congress to use every opportunity in 2013, and beyond, to promote, champion, and increase awareness of mental health issues in the workplace. I also call upon Congress to work in partnership with other agencies to provide an effective response and support for all GMB members and their families affected by the crippling nature of poor mental health. I have seen firsthand how positive interventions by the GMB in learning on social activities have had a hugely beneficial impact on the lives of members suffering from the debilitating effects of poor mental health. As well as gaining a better understanding of mental health issues, we should work to provide a robust support mechanism centred around an early intervention strategy, enabling members to get support when they need it most.

Mental health impacts careers, friendships, families, and communities. It reduces quality of life and holds back all those affected from taking a full part in their communities, both in the workplace and their domestic lives. I urge Congress to support this motion ensuring what we do today strengthens our

members tomorrow and helps to fill the members' days with life, not their life with days. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Seconder? Formally. Thank you.

Motion 84 was formally seconded.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I now ask for the movers of motion 85, Regeneration, Northern Region?

REGENERATION MOTION 85

85. REGENERATION

This Congress calls on the Coalition Government to do much more by way of stimulating regeneration than it is currently doing. It is a travesty that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are operating in a lot of areas in isolation within relatively parochial boundaries. Much more needs to be done by Central Government to enable better use of derelict land such as along the banks of the rivers running through the towns and cities of former industrial heartlands. Congress believes that areas that were once employers of thousands of workers in manufacturing, could be readily used for investment in green technological industries such as wind farm and other renewable technology. Congress calls on central and local government to work in tandem with the business community so that employment and regeneration opportunities are invested in at a time when UK PLC desperately needs it.

ROWNTREES INDUSTRIAL BRANCH
Northern Region

(Carried)

SIS. L. AVERILL (Northern): Congress, at a time when the UK desperately needs investment in projects that will help kick-start a weak economy the response of the Coalition Government shows that they just don't get it. The millionaires in the Cabinet, like Cameron, Osborne, and the rest, do not understand what life is like out there. The Coalition's answer to regeneration was to introduce Local Enterprise Partnerships, better known as LEPs. The problem is, Congress, that these LEPs have taken too long to get up and running. Instead of getting on with the job of governing the country, the Tories, backed by their LibDem partners, have decided that they did not like the local structures that were in place and have gone for LEPs. Many of these LEPs are not doing the job that they were set up for. They are too inward looking, only looking after a relatively small area. They tend to regard local government as a blocker to get things done and they tend to ignore trade unions. Indeed, the very expertise that could help LEPs to do something has been cut out of the loop.

Congress, there is a mass of former brown field land that is ready, willing, and able to be built on. Just take a wander along any river bank that used to have a thriving manufacturing company or industry, much of that land is now derelict. The old-style business owners selling the land for development, mainly house-building, have gone. The housing market is in such a fragile state that the house-building shows little sign of a UK-wide recovery. Congress, there is great opportunity to develop derelict land into the new green industries, such as wind turbines and renewable energy technology. The incentives for investment have to be there but the chance to get direct employment in this new sector, plus further jobs in the supply chain, is a chance that should not be passed up. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Seconder?

BRO. W. STEWART (Northern): Congress, as the mover said, the way that the Coalition Government set up Local Enterprise Partnerships has been an accident waiting to happen. What happened was the former RDAs were abolished and many people lost their job or took their redundancy. Some of the expertise built up locally over decades has been lost but some of the staff of the RDAs have now been

employed by the new LEPs. However, it has taken at least a couple of years for these to get up and running with vital time and local energy lost.

Congress, we have a very real live example of this in the Northern Region thanks to a good friend of the GMB, Mary Glindon MP, of the North Tyneside, and her team led by another longstanding MP activist, Eddie Drake, a project called *The Big River Regeneration Conference* took place in December 2012 in Wallsend. It was set up to look at the ways forward, mainly to look at the option for the old Swan Hunter site but also for much more. Companies far and wide came to the conference and of course the GMB were heavily involved. The new wind farm and the marine sector were looked at. A common theme that came through was the fact that the LEP boundaries were a barrier to growth with a failure to join up the dots locally. In North Tyneside's case the Tories in the form of the elected mayor had their heads in the sand with a staggering lack of commitment to business and regeneration.

Congress, self-organised groups are thinking of replacing what the authorities are putting in place but the UK is missing out on so many regeneration opportunities and is not helped by a government that is unwilling to act. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Wyn. Can I now ask the mover of motion 87, Business Solvency v Environment; Northern Region to move and second, please?

**BUSINESS SOLVENCY v ENVIRONMENT
MOTION 87**

87. BUSINESS SOLVENCY V ENVIRONMENT

Congress supports the UK Ferry Industry and the vital services it provides in moving people and goods to and from Europe.

Congress further has a fundamental support for protection of the environment.

Congress recognizes that there is currently friction between the two policies as the cost of making environmental improvement, is massively increasing the cost burden to shipping companies operating in the waters around the UK. Low sulphur fuel and the continuous policy of removing other chemicals from fuels is increasing costs to a unsustainable level which will bankrupt many companies.

The business pressures in an industry suffering severe difficulty in recession Europe are taking many companies to the edge of insolvency and the introduction of low sulphur in 2015 will cause the end for many. In P&O Ferries where GMB has membership, the anticipated increase in fuel cost is in the order of 50/60%.

Congress urges GMB officials in conjunction with our other sister unions in the UK and Europe, to lobby for a delay in the introduction of low sulphur. GMB must join the campaign to support the shipping companies until better economic times and after a longer development time to reduce the increase in costs created by environmentally cleaner fuel.

X23 DOVER FERRIES BRANCH
Southern Region

(*Lost*)

BRO. P. GOODACRE (Southern): Motion 87 concerns the impending sulphur emission reduction targets scheduled to be imposed on the UK shipping industry in 2015. It requests that this Congress instructs the union to join and lobby on behalf of campaigns to extend this deadline beyond 2015. As a movement we care deeply about the environment, however the assumptions on which these targets are based are well-intentioned but ill-conceived. Meeting the 2015 targets poses significant costs and risks to the shipping industry and to the wider economy. This fact is recognised elsewhere. On the Irish Sea

reduction targets have been delayed until 2020. This motion would like to see similar extensions granted to other UK routes.

The immediate solution to meet these targets is to switch to low sulphur fuel. This comes at a high cost. Estimates vary between a 40% to 60% increase on current fuel bills. Even at the lower rates this increase will be ruinous to the shipping industry. Other solutions that rely on technology, for example, fitting existing engines with sulphur scrubbers is prohibitively expensive and relatively untested. At this time, these costs are prohibitive and in all likelihood will result in the closure of a number of longer routes. This effect will be felt immediately in the loss of jobs estimated to be well over 3,000 or 4,000. This impact will be felt on many depressed areas. Quite often, if you visit a port town you will notice that that is pretty much all it has going for it. Anybody who has ever visited Dover will know we have a castle and a port and not much else. Five or 6,000 people are not going to make their living out of Dover Castle, sadly.

The cost of these increases will be met in large part by customers of shipping companies with tourist and freight prices increasing by 20% to 25%. Inevitably, the cost of shipping goods will increase. This will in turn be passed on to already hard-pressed consumers introducing further downward pressure on living standards. The cost of many essential items will increase for consumers. Meeting the 2015 sulphur emission targets creates costs and will fall disproportionately on those who can least afford to pay for them. They equate to a form of aggressive tax.

Compliance with the aforementioned targets and costs associated to the economy will also have profound implications for the economy. Britain is an island economy more open to trade than most. Transport links by sea are essential to our prosperity. A failure to postpone these targets will affect long-term economic growth adversely. Should these targets be imposed by 2015, they will have the opposite effect of those desired. The closure of longer routes will mean more movement by short sea routes. This will mean goods will be shipped more by road or greater distances by road, therefore increasing emissions. Shipment by sea is acknowledged as the most efficient way of moving goods. Congress, please support this motion. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Paul.

BRO. A. NEWMAN (Southern): Comrades, this is really quite a simple issue, that we are all in favour of reducing the amount of sulphur in emissions and we are all in favour of the environment but the 2015 deadline was introduced before the recession. Currently, the shipping industry is under severe problems economically and there is a real danger here that the cure could kill the patient. What is needed here is a delay in the implementation in order that it does not drive shipping companies out of business, putting our members out of jobs, and damaging the economy. As Paul has explained very well, if things are not shipped by sea over the longer routes then they will travel by road and go the shorter routes. That means an increase of the sulphur emissions, not reduction. That will happen if shipping companies go out of business. Because of the parlous financial and economic situation of the shipping companies, we need to join with our sister unions in the shipping industry, GMB is a shore-side union, there are shipping unions that are already taking a clear position on this, and we need to lobby the European Union for a delay in introduction. It is really quite a simple issue, we need to join this campaign to save jobs and to save the economy. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Andy. Can I call Ann McLaren from the CEC to come down, please? Does anyone wish to take part in the debate? Come on, then.

BRO. A. GROAT (Southern): I am speaking in support of motion 81. Clause 62 was sneaked through by the Government at the very last second. It is a fundamental attack on our membership and on the workforce, and for the right to seek compensation from the more unscrupulous employers. It is a game change. They have not only moved the goalposts, they have taken away the entire pitch. I would ask Congress to support 81. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Angus. Next?

BRO. H. SMITH (London): President, General Secretary, Congress, on the issue regarding health and safety, as a GMB Health and Safety trained officer in the workplace, the Health and Safety Act 1974 is the bedrock that we as stewards stand on to support our workplace colleagues. These motions and these attacks on our health and safety mechanisms are pioneered by capitalistic and non-concerning people wanting to destroy our workplace safety options. We as a trade union support and affiliate to the Labour Party as they are our voice, and our eyes and ears, in that party to make sure that these bills and these agendas are lobbied and attacked from the inside so that we can feel safe and progressive to support our workers within the workplace. Support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Henley.

BRO. J. KNIGHT (North West & Irish): I have come up the front to speak against motion 87. Let's be clear, this is not about whether environmental improvements can be postponed but about preventing further deterioration. Lasting economic stability will not be built on the back of increased environmental degradation but on major investments in green jobs. The earth is standing on the edge of an abyss as climate change reaches the tipping point, the sea levels rise threatening communities and whole countries, and species die back. A level playing field in this industry does not depend on postponing low sulphur fuel. It is not as though rival ferry companies would have access to dirtier fuel than P&O. It is now becoming apparent that it is the actions of the oil cartel, not governments, that racks up the price of fuel. Saving the earth is not an optional extra. Our children and the rest of life-kind will need somewhere to live. Please oppose motion 87. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Next.

SIS. C. CAMPBELL (GMB Scotland): Supporting motion 84. Encouraging and promoting mental health in the workplace is a benefit for all. Employees who suffer from mental depression are more likely to hide from their managers and colleagues for the fear of being labelled, particularly men who find it hard to discuss or talk about how they are feeling. You are more likely to hear somebody say at work, "Oh, he's a psycho," "She's off her head," "Nutcase", or "She's absolutely bonkers," which I may hear a few times in my work. It might be a laugh and a joke, and entertainment patter among colleagues, but it is not funny and it is a torturous experience for the sufferer.

I do not want this to be about me. I am not talking about me because I feel this is all about me but I want to give you a little story about my experience of depression and mental health issues. I came here in this country as a young woman with very small children. My language and communication was very poor, maybe some of you think, "Oh, it's still not that good," but hey, I can communicate now, I can go out and be able to talk to people, but at that point my communication skills were not that good and I was suffering. I had nobody to turn to and when I joined GMB was the best thing I have ever done because although GMB did not refer me to a counsellor they referred me to the group that took me under their wings and helped me get through it, and that was the Black Workers Committee. Through the Black Workers I met you lovely people who have continued even today to support me.

The effect that it has on your family, your friends, is incredible. Your children, your family, suffer. It is not just about the person who is suffering from mental health. Congress, what I would like to ask you all is to be able to make the awareness at your workplace of the mental health issues. That way we can all be able to support those people that we are working with. Do not avoid them. That is not what they need, they need your support. It can be your sister, it can be your friend, it can be your family member, it is your colleague, they are suffering; they need you. They do need you, not you challenging them, like, "You are not capable of doing your job because you are not right for it." At that time they do need you.

I stand here today, I was scared to death of standing here, but it is so personal to me that I stand here because I feel like we all have a responsibility, of taking some responsibility of supporting and helping those who need us. Please support the motion. Thank you. (*Standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Caroline. Well done. No more? Somebody was speaking against on 87. Does Southern Region wish to make any comments in relation to the opposition on your resolution?

BRO. P. GOODACRE (Southern): Congress, I would just like to exercise the right of reply to the colleague who urged you to vote against 87. This motion is not just about P&O who happens to be my employer. If you walk up to The Hoe, look right, you will see a load of ferries going back and forth to the thriving ferry terminal. If these targets are imposed in 2015 that will not be there in 2016, I can guarantee it. As I said, we all care deeply about the environment. I just repeat my point about if that route closes, there are loads of goods that originate in this area that will probably end up shipping Dover/Calais. They will spend more time on the road. It is a well known fact that transport by road is far more inefficient than by sea. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Paul. Ann.

SIS. A. McLAREN (CEC, Manufacturing): President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC and asking Congress to support motions 81, 83, and 84, with qualifications, and asking Congress to refer motion 87.

Firstly, on motion 81, the motion is about legislation which is fresh on the statute books. Its implications on both employers and on whistle-blowing employees will not be known until test cases are taken and precedents are set. Therefore, Congress, the qualification is that we wait until all of the impacts of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act are known and understood before we mount our campaign.

On motion 83, Congress, this is simply a question of timing. The CEC fully supports the sentiment of the motion but until the EU review of the directive on display screen equipment has been reported, UK regulations are unlikely to be updated. The qualification is, therefore, campaigning activity shall not commence until the outcomes of the EU review are known.

Turning to motion 84, again, Congress, the CEC is fully supportive of initiatives and campaigns to take on mental health issues in the workplace. We will continue to campaign for greater awareness and deliver guidance, materials, and training on mental health at work. However, the qualification is that GMB and its officers cannot provide direct support to its members on such issues. This is a specialist role which requires medical expertise and we are not adequately qualified or competent to do so. We will campaign for qualified mental health professionals to work with the GMB to provide support where it is necessary.

Finally, on motion 87, the CEC is requesting that the motion is referred for more detailed consideration. This is a highly technical motion which needs to be researched with greater levels of expertise than the union currently possesses. We cannot take a stand on the issue of low sulphur fuels without understanding in depth what are the potential environmental consequences of the changes and the economic and employment outcomes. In addition, the motion calls for GMB to work with other sister unions in lobbying through their policy motions whose positions may be different to our own. As such, we need more time to consider the issues in greater detail. Therefore, the CEC is supporting motions 81, 83, and 84, with the qualifications I have just given and is asking you to refer motion 87. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Ann. Can I ask Southern Region, do you agree to refer? No, no, do you agree to refer? I have given you the right to reply. No? Then we will have to oppose,

which is sad, but there we are. Can I now put 87 to the vote? All those in favour please show? The CEC is asking for opposition. Those against please show? That is lost. Thank you.

Motion 87 was LOST.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I now ask Wales & South West Region do you accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Does Midland Region accept the qualification on 83? (*Agreed*) On 84, does North West & Irish Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Can I now put 81, 83, 84, and 85 to the vote? All those in favour please show? Anyone against? They are carried. Thank you, colleagues.

Motion 81 was CARRIED.

Motion 83 was CARRIED.

Motion 84 was CARRIED.

Motion 85 was CARRIED.

DANIEL DENNIS HEALTH & SAFETY AWARD 2013: WINNER & RUNNER-UP

THE PRESIDENT: I now come to number 7 of our agenda items, the Daniel Dennis Health & Safety Award 2013: Winner & Runner-Up. Congress, this award is in the memory of a young Welsh teenager, Daniel Dennis, who, in 2003, tragically died aged 17 in his first week of working for a roofing firm. He had received no training and had no safety equipment. With the help of the GMB, Daniel's parents took legal action and won a landmark case on corporate manslaughter. We will continue to honour the memory of Daniel Dennis and this is the sixth year of presenting this award. I will announce the winners of the Silver Badge in reverse order.

I would like to ask Tracy Francis, from Midland & East Coast Region, to come to the platform. Tracy works for Nottingham City Homes. She has successfully instigated workplace site inspections, risk assessments, and developed safe working practices. She has ensured that the employer engages in proper consultation on health and safety matters and has focused on asbestos related issues. Through her efforts, Tracy has increased membership by 20 using health and safety issues as a recruitment tool. Unfortunately, Tracy cannot be here in person but Helen Wright will be collecting the award on her behalf and will say a few words which Tracy has prepared. Helen is invited to say a few words on Tracy's behalf.

SIS. H. WRIGHT (Midland & East Coast): I am collecting this award on behalf of Tracy Francis. President and Congress, Tracy would like to thank the GMB Nottingham City Branch members and the Midland & East Coast Region for nominating her for the Daniel Dennis Award. It is a great honour and Tracy will continue to work hard and improve the standards of health and safety within the branch, and Nottingham City Homes. Once again, thank you from Tracy and thank you from Nottingham City Branch. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Helen. Give Tracy our love.

(Presentation of award amid applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the winner of the Daniel Dennis Safety Representative of the Year is Billy McEwan from GMB Scotland. His employer, West Dunbartonshire Council, tried to set up a non-trade union safety committee and Billy successfully led the arguments against this. Last year, Billy completed his TUC Occupational Health and Safety Diploma despite having to go to tribunal to get release. He has also had an article published on PPE in an international Health & Safety journal. Last year he organised the first Workers Memorial Day ceremony in Alexandria, which was attended by local councillors and the local MSP. He has instigated a better working at heights system reducing the number of notifiable accidents to one and has

campaigned against the use of agency workers. This has resulted in 44 jobs being created in-house with ongoing recruitment of apprentices. Billy, I would like to invite you to the platform to present your award.

Presentation amid applause.

BRO. B. McEWAN (GMB Scotland): Where to start. Three words come to mind quite quickly for me, stunned, shocked, and delighted. I was stunned when I was told that somebody had taken the time to put my name forward for this award, I was shocked when they actually phoned me and said, "You're going to Plymouth," and I am absolutely delighted to collect this award. Thank you very much. Just before I go I would like to thank GMB Scotland and Harry Donaldson, Martin Dolan, Mick Conroy, and Brian Johnson, for supporting me over the years as a Safety Rep, and a big thank you to the TUC tutors at Stow College, George Walden, Gus Grubb, and Stuart Henderson, who is unfortunately no longer with us. Thank you once again for the award. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you, Billy. Can I now move to item 8, Social Policy: Justice. I will be calling motions 270, 273, 274, and Composite 17, and then I will be calling Tim Roache to reply. Wales and South West Region will you move 270, North West and Irish Region, 273.

SOCIAL POLICY: JUSTICE
CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION SCHEME
MOTION 270

270. CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION SCHEME

This Congress calls upon the Labour Party to condemn the revised Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme which came into force in November 2012. The revision of this Scheme will take away the right to compensation from those suffering minor injuries which the original Scheme could be awarded compensation of between £1,000 to £2,000 and this would impact on nearly 90% of the victims of violent crimes.

We call upon the Labour Party which they form the next government to amend this legislation which was the last safety net for many victims of crime who could not receive compensation through other means and went some way to help them overcome the trauma of an assault or attack whilst carrying out their employment.

MID GLAMORGAN C&T BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

SIS. J. SMITH (Wales & South West): Welcome to our new region. President, Congress, on November 27th last year a revised Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme came into effect. From that date many innocent victims of violent crime no longer have any entitlement to compensation for their injuries or, if they have, the amount has been slashed. The scheme used to award monies to between 30,000 to 40,000 claimants each year but the new regime will cut or axe completely the financial support given to 90% of those who have suffered crimes against their person. GMB, together with other unions, particularly in the security and retail sectors of industry, campaigned forcibly against these cuts on behalf of many staff injured in armed robberies and assaults at work.

Congress, these changes were ill conceived, callous, and totally unnecessary meaning that victims themselves will not only suffer physically but financially as well. Those who suffer serious facial scarring, punctured or collapsed lungs, permanent brain injuries resulting in headaches or impaired balance, and those who sustain breaks to their joints will now have their compensation reduced by up to 60%. Furthermore, any payments for loss of earnings will be limited to the statutory sick pay level of £85 a week and be restricted to those who will never be able to work again or in severely reduced capacity. In short, only those with the most serious injuries will be able to recover any compensation

and, guess what, the changes are estimated to create a saving of £50m each year, yet another example of the Government making money off the backs of working people.

The removal of awards under £2,000, particularly show the complete lack of understanding of how compensation can make a difference to people on low incomes who are more likely to be the victims of crime than those who are wealthier. This change effectively removes the financial lifeline of our members who may find themselves in very serious monetary difficulty after crime-related injury.

Well, colleagues, victims of violent crime deserve more than just words from someone whose party specialises in looking out for only their own. In many cases injuries are life-changing; victims often suffer from nightmares and panic attacks. The least they should be entitled to is some degree of financial assistance when off work. Congress, as someone once said in the House of Lords debate, for the innocent victims of crime we feel sympathy but we feel that sympathy alone is not enough. Those words were spoken as far back as 1962 but they and that principle remain just as valid over 50 years later. We know that several MPs voted against the changes and that dissent was evident in both Houses of Parliament. This motion calls upon the incoming Labour administration to reverse them and restore the scheme to its previous position and provision. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jenny. Secunder?

BRO. I. BOUNDS (Wales & South West): President, Congress, the previous Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme represented a coherent and fair way of awarding compensation to those suffering crime-related injuries. The proper protection and giving of support to those of our members who have suffered at the hands of criminals is a fundamental and integral part of this country's civilised justice system. That support especially is needed to help them cope with and recover from what can sometimes be terrifying ordeals. No one asks to be a victim of crime so reducing or removing the amount of compensation awarded simply sends a message that the state does not view their distressing experiences as being sufficiently serious or important.

Jenny, in moving this resolution, drew attention to some of the draconian changes which would dramatically affect those people who are crime victims. To add insult to injury, the revised scheme will require people to pay £50 upfront to obtain their initial medical evidence. It is entirely likely that requiring victims to pay this amount when they are off work still recovering from their experiences may genuinely deter them from bringing any claim. Furthermore, the provisions of the scheme fail to recognise the state of the current employment market. The new version states that access to loss of earnings payments depend upon the individual having been in regular paid work for a period of three years prior to the incident that caused the injury. In the present economic climate, being out of work at any time in that qualifying period would be reasonably likely but that would deny any entitlement to the loss of earnings payment even if that person was now working regularly.

Congress, too many of our members live in fear of robbery or assault whilst at work. Whilst greater protection and creation of a safer working environment must remain as policy priorities, it is inevitable that crimes against our members will still take place. Those Tory and LibDem MPs who voted for the changes should never again have the barefaced cheek to declare that they put victims first. It is beyond doubt that the scheme in future will treat many claimants as second class citizens unable to recover what they deserve by way of financial compensation for being attacked at work. Colleagues, the Labour Party in opposition must commit to scheme reform that allows for victim compensation to be ordered at a fair and reasonable level. Our members deserve nothing less. I second. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Motion 273, Cammell Laird, North West and Irish Region.

CAMMELL LAIRD 37
MOTION 273

273. CAMMELL LAIRD 37

Yet another year gone by and another one of the 37 has died.

This Branch calls on the GMB to fulfill its promises and take our case to the European Court of Human Rights immediately.

278B BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Referred)

BRO. J. BARTON (North West & Irish): Chair, Congress, and may I say very special guests, in April a delegation from our region with the support of Kathleen Walker Shaw, our European officer, met with several committee and European MPs in Brussels. Arising from that they suggested we submit a petition to the Petitions Committee by the end of June this year to be heard by the European Parliament in September. It is therefore with this proviso that we agree to a reference back. Congress, I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Before I ask the seconder, colleagues, there are two guests on the platform at the moment and I thought it only right that I introduce them to you. The first lady here is Margaret Aspinall, and, as you are aware and know, Margaret is the Chair of Hillsborough Family Support Group and she has come to address Congress a little later on. With Margaret is her friend, Sue Roberts, and fellow campaigner. Anyway, can we say from this Congress, welcome to you both. *(Standing ovation)* Thank you, Congress.

BRO. G. SMITH (North West & Irish): President, Congress, this petition to the European Parliament will at the very least tell the rest of Europe about what happened in the Cammell Laird dispute in 1984, something that the British media have been reluctant to report on. So, with the proviso mentioned by Jimmy Barton, I second this motion. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, colleague. Motion 274, Knife Crime.

**KNIFE CRIME
MOTION 274**

274. KNIFE CRIME

This Congress notes that, despite the rhetoric of politicians, knife crime is continuing unabated and that those in positions of authority are failing society by failing to put in place the necessary mix of carrot and stick to try and reverse a pernicious and pervasive crime culture. Congress calls for new laws to be enacted to ensure that deterrents, education, and supplying deadly weapons are brought under one legislative programme to try and reduce the death and serious injury to people in our society.

HARTLEPOOL 3 BRANCH
Northern Region

(Carried)

SIS. C. LINES (Northern): Congress, we have all heard the terrible stories about people of all ages, but particularly the young, being injured, maimed, or killed as a result of knife crime. According to last year's figures that were available to Parliament in the year to June 2012 there were just under 30,000 recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments. This works out to be 7% of selected offences. While this figure has not risen in previous years, it is still nearly 30,000 more knife crimes than this country can afford. According to the crime surveys for England and Wales, in 2011 and 2012 a knife was used in 6% of all incidents and violence experienced by adults. This is an equally shocking figure. We cannot go on like this. First it was gun crime and now it is knife crime. In the current economic climate with public services being decimated in those deprived communities and losing income and benefits week in, week out, we need collectively to do something. Yes, we need to stick to the deal,

effectively, on use of knives and other sharp weapons but we also have the carrot. We just cannot demoralise people, especially the young, or those in our society who have no hope. We must work with communities, their out-groups, mentors, and community leaders to help turn around the lives of those who are, for instance, locked into a gun culture. Too many people, too many families, have had their lives ruined and injured by death at the hands of a knife in this country. We need to understand the problem and tackle it. We need to work to give people hope and to get rid of these weapons and to lobby for more work to be done with younger people rather than to do what the Tories would do, which is keep people in poverty and without any hope or inspiration for the future. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Carole.

BRO. D. LEYLAND (Northern): Congress, according to some research, a terrifying knife crime now takes place on the streets of Britain every eight minutes. One in five muggers now threatens victims with knives. This is not just a problem in the big city areas. The perception to many in our communities is that this is nationwide. At present, carrying a knife with a blade longer than three inches can lead to a four-year prison term or a huge fine. This contrasts with illegal possession of firearms which carries a jail term of five to ten years. According to the Department of Health, many incidents of knife crime are just not reported so it is difficult to establish the true nature of the current problem.

Congress, as the mover has said, we need to tackle knife crime at its source. We need to ensure that this going prepared culture of carrying a knife is stopped in its tracks. It is about time that the young gang culture, with the use of knives, swords and the like, are properly punished but also that education and support in the schools and local communities is ramped up so that people, especially the young, can see the dangers, that they have something to do, that they have hope, and that the injury, the killing, and the suffering are ended. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Darren. Can I ask Northern Region to move Composite 17 and London Region to second, please?

ORGREAVE AND POLICING THE MINERS' STRIKE COMPOSITE 17

C17. Covering Motions:

271. ORGREAVE: TRUTH AND JUSTICE CAMPAIGN *(London Region)*

272. POLICING OF THE MINERS' STRIKE 1984-1985 *(Northern Region)*

ORGREAVE AND POLICING THE MINER'S STRIKE

This Congress notes the work of the Hillsborough Commission and the Leveson Inquiry. During each of these events, it has become clear that the Police have fallen short of the standards the public expects from their guardians. The recent Hillsborough Inquiry shows the pattern of police corruption in South Yorkshire police, and in fact Orgreave is part of the pattern of cover ups and lies by the police from many different forces, which are now being exposed. In particular, allegations are now being made, with some regularity, about the events that took place during the Miners' Strike of 1984-1985.

Congress congratulates the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign – seeking truth and justice for all miners victimised by the police at the Orgreave Coking Plant, South Yorkshire, on June 18th 1984.

Congress

- instructs the CEC to support the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign which calls for a public inquiry, to take place as soon as possible, into the events during that dispute, the policing and subsequent statements recorded by the police at the time and calls for the Labour Party to commit to one in the event that it is returned to power in 2015.
- asks the CEC to note developments and report back to Congress on developments on this subject matter.

Northern Region to Move London Region to Second

(Carried)

SIS. J. JEPSON (Northern): Congress, recent campaigns and investigations into events over the last 25 years, and into the tragic events at Hillsborough, and then the Leveson Inquiry into the phone hacking and the media, have shown how police officers have colluded to falsify statements and, worse, compound the agony of victims. Much of this seems to have taken place with the knowledge of senior police officers, indeed, some of them allegedly carried out these deeds themselves. The culture within the police was one of condoning such activities; absolutely disgraceful. *(Applause)*

We have all seen ongoing campaigns for justice that successive governments have failed to deal with. I refer to blacklisting and the ongoing work in support of the Shrewsbury Three. Congress, there is one major industrial conflict and, in particular, the activities of the police in it, and so far has not come under proper scrutiny, that is, the way the miners' strike was policed. We all know of stories where pickets were fitted up, evidence tampered with, and threats of longer sentences for workers in mining communities. Many miners were well represented by barristers, such as Vera Bird QC, and in fact if it was not for people like Vera finding holes in police statements and the prosecution evidence, many more would have gone to jail. But, Congress, it is a scandal that politicians seem unwilling at least to look at the activities of the authorities during one of the most difficult periods of working class people. There should be an investigation as to what went on within police ranks, who knew what and what if anything was tampered with.

We know this rotten government will not do anything but we need Labour to. We need them to do something that the last Labour government would not even dream of looking at, that is, a proper inquiry as this motion lays out. Many miners and their families suffered many injustices during and after the strike. I know. I lived through it. I was part of it. I saw what those bastards did at Easington Colliery. *(Applause)* More and more news is coming to light about the police during the long strike. It must be that their activities are looked at this time. Please support. I move. *(Applause)*

SIS. J. HUNT (London): Congress, this is my first GMB Congress and I am a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I knew I would get a clap for that. I was a teenager when the miners' strike took place in 1984 and I remember the devastation that was heaped on entire communities. I grew up with mass unemployment and the despair that I understand only too well, the despair that brings. Just a wee example, when I was at school at the tender age of 15, one of my classes was how to sign on the dole. I tell you something now, I will be damned and it will be over my dead body if that is the future I have to offer my two children.

In the course of the strike we witnessed the deliberate and rapid politicisation of the police force to the point that in towns like mine the police were known as Margaret Thatcher's boot boys. Some people may be thinking what are we banging on about, it was 30 years ago, but I will never forget the vilification of the miners, particularly in the aftermath of Orgreave, and it is almost unbelievable to see the extent they went to, the tampering of evidence, of footage from Orgreave where they basically made out to the public that it was a vicious and unprovoked attack by the miners on the police when in fact it was the other way around.

The thing is the image that sticks in my head about the miners' strike, and I do not know if you have seen some of the T-shirts that the Orgreave Campaign have put out, it is of a policeman sitting on the top of a horse swiping his truncheon at the back of the head of a miner who is running away. I think it is fitting and I hope she does not mind but I am going to end on the words that Sheila Coleman from the Hillsborough Campaign, and it is a letter of support she put on the Orgreave Justice Campaign site, as she puts it, "The corrupt policing of working class communities throughout the Thatcher years must be

rigorously investigated and truthfully recorded in history in order for justice to be done.” I second the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? The words are, “Follow that!”

SIS. A. DRYLIE (GMB Scotland): I am supporting composite 17. Congress, my roots are a mining community where numerous members of my family worked in the pits. The person I want to talk about today is my oldest brother David. David worked in a pit called Seafield Colliery, which is situated just on the outskirts of Kirkcaldy in Fife. Seafield had been on strike for two weeks on a separate dispute before the rest of the miners joined them. Being an active member of his local strike committee David took part in various activities, whether that be out collecting tins for the strike fund, making meals at the strike centre for the families, or going on picket duty. One of the days when he was going on picket duty he went to a place called Ravens Craig, which was a steel mill outside Motherwell. It is not there now. David and other men arrived in Motherwell and started to make their way to Ravens Craig. They were walking up a street when they saw a line of policemen walking towards them. Not wanting confrontation, the 12 men turned to walk back the way they had come. First, they went to the pub, but as the miners filed into the pub David at the bar said, “Well, boys, who’s on the round?” At which point he was grabbed by the shoulders and a voice said, “You are.” It was a policeman. As David was pulled from the threshold of the pub it was noticed there were no numbers on the policeman’s shoulder. David was duly bundled into a van and taken to the station where he was held until 2 a.m. in the morning and let out, no transport home. He was one of the lucky ones. He was not charged. If he had been, he would never have got his job back. Congress, this is the reason why I support a call for a public inquiry into the policing of the strike, and Orgreave. I am not saying that every one arrested was faultless but the majority of them were. Please support. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Annette.

BRO. D. GRAY (North West & Irish): I am up here to support composite 17. I would like to say that at Orgreave and Hillsborough some of the same policemen were involved in all this. They went round all these disputes, the tragedies that happened at other places, and the same police were there all the way. They are the ones who should be held to account for a lot of this. I would also just like to say that what we discussed this morning at our meeting, North West and Irish, the FA was complicit in this as well, what happened at Hillsborough. I would just like to bring that in as well. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Tim.

BRO. T. ROACHE (Regional Secretary, Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Good afternoon, Congress and President. I am speaking on behalf of the CEC seeking reference back of Motion 273 and supporting Composite 17 with a qualification.

First of all, I am delighted, or the CEC is delighted that the region has agreed to refer Motion 273 as following Congress last year meetings took place between Eddie Marnell, a CEC member, the IER, and the GMB Legal Department, and the IER advised that the Court of Human Rights was not the best route but lodging a Freedom of Information request would be; so that was therefore done. The motion implies that the GMB has not acted on this, which, frankly, colleagues, is not correct. The case has been taken to two prime ministers, two justice ministers, and legal experts. We have also financed the production of a play and a film script, our e-petition attracted over 2,000 signatures, and in April this year a delegation from North West and Irish, led by Paul McCarthy, held a series of meetings in Brussels where we were advised to petition the European Parliament. The ILO European Office has offered to submit our case briefing to their legal experts for the tripartite committee in Geneva, so our campaign goes on.

On composite 17, this motion instructs the CEC to support the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign, which calls for a public inquiry to take place as soon as possible into the policing and subsequent statements recorded by the police at the time. The motion also makes reference to the Hillsborough Inquiry and police corruption into the tragic events of that day.

This is really quite poignant to me as I was actually at that football match on the day in April 1989. I was supporting Nottingham Forest. I was standing at the other end and at six minutes past three the game was disrupted. I can only speak to you honestly, colleagues, that at the time Nottingham Forest fans were all standing next to me saying, "Look, Liverpool disrupting the game," and then within ten minutes we literally saw young people being carried on advertising hoardings laid out in front of our fans, and people having their chests thumped, and tried to have life breathed back into them. It was horrific. It is a sight I will never ever get over. There were no mobile phones in those days. There were the transistor radios for those of you old enough to remember, and I remember turning to the guy next to me and saying, "That young fella is dead." He said, "No, he can't be. It's a football match." But, of course, he was. By the time we got back to my car, on the transistor radio it said that there were six dead. By the time we got home to Nottingham, it was 13 dead. I remember walking into my house and my phone was ringing, and it was my Mum. She was absolutely distraught. She could not believe the relief that I had picked the phone up and I had answered it, but sadly 96 other people who also went to a football match did not answer the call from their Mum or their Dad.

The debate now goes on about justice and about the police, and about cover-ups. The latest debate is about whether Bettison, who is the one who has overseen all of this from South Yorkshire Police, should lose his knighthood. He should not lose his knighthood, he should be slung in jail. He should face the full force of the law that he denied all those people all those years ago. (*Applause*)

So, to sum up, colleagues, the CEC supports this motion. However, the qualification is that there has not been any official inquiry and the findings have not been proven in terms of Orgreave, so we wait for that to happen. Please agree to seek reference back for 273 and please support composite motion 17 with the qualification I have set out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tim. Does South West and Irish Region accept a reference back? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does Northern Region accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Therefore, I put 270, 274, and Composite 17, to the vote. All those in favour please show? Anyone against? They are carried.

Motion 270 was CARRIED.

Motion 274 was CARRIED.

Composite 17 was CARRIED.

Motion 273 was REFERRED.

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, this comes to the last part of the day and a very important part. I have introduced Margaret to you. I met Margaret myself when I was up in Liverpool, and her friend, Sue. First of all, can I ask Paul McCarthy, the Regional Secretary of North West and Irish Region, to say a few words before we hear from Margaret?

BRO. P. McCARTHY (Regional Secretary, North West & Irish): President, Congress, I honestly wish I did not have to stand here. I have 96 reasons not to stand here today. A number of speakers have come forward and spoken more eloquently than I could ever do about Orgreave, and Tim has just exploded the myth once more because he was there. On 15th April 1989, Margaret and Sue's lives changed for ever. Ninety-six women, men, and children, died as a consequence of a crush at a football match. Hundreds were injured and thousands were traumatised as well. The counterattack by the police, and in particular, Bettison, with the FA, who were complicit before the game and understood that in 1981 it had happened to Tottenham supporters with no fatalities, still allowed that game to go on. Then we had that shit of a

rag, *The Sun*, and I hope no one buys it here this week because it is a shit. (*Applause*) They were aided and abetted by the judiciary and by the late great Margaret Thatcher. I am grateful that she is not here but she had a lot of things that she should have answered because it went right to the top and right on her desk about exonerating the police; by three minutes past six the cover story began to make sure that the blame lay on 96 dead people, and the families that were left behind.

The courage and the endeavour of those families goes beyond football. It is everything we hold dear. It is about the truth, the justice, and honest policing for all, equal. I fully support the justice campaign, the truth came out in September 2012, and now the justice and those who were behind everything do need to be put in jail and I hope, God willing, that Orgreave is the same. I hope you will support the campaign going forward and never forget it is a basic human right to go to a football game and come home safe. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Can I now ask Margaret to address Congress. Margaret, thank you very much indeed. (*Applause*)

MARGARET ASPINALL, CHAIR OF THE HILLSBOROUGH FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP, ADDRESSED CONGRESS

MARGARET ASPINALL: Can I just say to everybody this is my first Congress meeting as well. (*Applause*) Thank you to Paul and everybody who has invited us here today. I think it is important that we get invited to things like this because there are awful lot of similarities with Orgreave, with the miners, with Hillsborough. As it was mentioned before, yes, it was the same police force at Hillsborough that was at the miners. We all knew at the time what they were. You know, it is a very, very difficult thing and I am sure you all understand when I say, when you are fighting the establishment it is very, very difficult to win them.

I have to say to all of you, though, we have fought for 24 years and I just hope what we have achieved will help Orgreave and it will help the miners, because justice delayed for anybody is justice denied. So, as I said, we have been fighting for 24 years. It has not been easy for any one of us but the most important thing, as Paul said before, is that it came from the very top, Mrs. Thatcher knew about it. I just hope now, wherever she is, she is getting her justice that she rightfully deserves. (*Applause*) It is all right, we are all standing here and saying, "Yes, she's gone," but there is a lot more yet we have to get. What you have mentioned about Bettison, Bettison we have to get and he has got to lose his knighthood. He should have lost his job straightaway when they found out on 12th September the role he played in Hillsborough. He should have been gone. Never mind his knighthood, he should have been sacked. Yes, they are protecting his pension now. That is the craftiness of the state of this country. It has happened.

There is also when you think back and you go over it and mention Hillsborough, you go back and think about it, Duckenfield admitted at the Taylor Report that he gave the order to open the gates, but he accused our fans of kicking the gates in. Now, to me, right away that was perverting the course of justice. He should have been brought to task right away. No, he wanted to blame our fans, blame our fans for drunkenness, being ticketless, and urinating on the dead. He tried to make our fans that came home that day feel so guilty and they had nothing to feel guilty about because without the fans a lot more than 96 would have been dead. Those fans saved indirectly an awful lot of lives and I thank our fans for what they did that day.

But you go back to an injustice, what families have gone through over the years, all governments have let the families down, not just the Conservatives, Labour played a big part in letting the families down. (*Applause*) I just say to all of you, they ought to have been ashamed of themselves because they are supposed to be for the people more than anybody, and they are the ones that let the people down more than anything.

With the Conservative Government at this present day, I have to admit that Theresa May is doing a very, very good job. I have had meetings in confidentiality with Theresa May and everything I have put to Theresa May, she has not let one of us down at the moment. That is not supporting the Conservative Government because at the end of the day Cameron had to apologise for his government on the day for what they did. I am not supporting them in that way but I have to admit I was very pleased with that apology he made to the whole of the nation on behalf of what happened at Hillsborough. That apology should have been made also for the miners and Orgreave, but unfortunately it was not.

Hopefully, from that they are learning lessons. We never ever walked away. With every door that was slammed in our faces we were determined, we did what Duckenfield said we had done, kick the doors down, keep fighting, keep pushing. Don't ever, ever give up because in the end you wear them down. It is not them wear us down, we wear them down.

The worst thing I think we did have was not that the Taylor Report did not go far enough, obviously we have had judicial reviews, but the worst thing we had given to us was Jack Straw. I will never forgive Jack Straw for what he gave the families, and that was that scrutiny. It was an absolute disgrace. That evidence was there for all those years and Stuart Smith knew those statements were altered, and yet they gave us nothing. How disgraceful is that, they have let families suffer, they have let the fans and survivors suffer for all those years knowing that was there.

Another disgrace was when families on 12th September were in the cathedral waiting for news, and none of us knew what we were going to get on 12th September from the HIP, none of us knew because they did not leak anything to us, and to find out because the blood alcohol levels did not suit the system for them to go away and check criminal records on the 96, what an absolute disgrace. They wanted to do anything, anything, to blame the 96 themselves, and the survivors. We were shocked when we heard that but we were more shocked also to hear that the medical side altered their statements also. So, the cover-up went far beyond not just South Yorkshire Police, it went beyond that, it was further than that.

My thing was at the time, and I remember, I do not know whether I said it to Sue or Trevor, "My God, if they can cover up on a magnitude the way they have over Hillsborough, what have they done to the lonely voices that none of us know about? What have they done to the lonely voices who have no one to support them?" We do not know and that is what we have to keep fighting against, to make sure that a thing like Hillsborough and a cover-up, the corrupt system, we have to wipe it out. The only way is people being united and sticking together. The families have had fantastic support but without that support we would have never got what we got on 12th September, and that is the truth, the truth of Hillsborough came that day.

The turning point of Hillsborough for all that we had done over the years, keep pushing, and pushing, and pushing, it was still getting us nowhere because they had Jimmy McGovern doing the drama documentary, we have had all kinds, judicial reviews as I have said before, and I do not like to keep repeating myself but the turning point was, and I know Andy Burnham is coming here tomorrow to speak to you all, the turning point was the 20th anniversary when Andy Burnham stood in front of 32,000 people at Anfield and all of those people shouted to him, "Justice for the 96", "Justice for the 96". To be fair to Andy, he is a great guy, he came up to me afterwards and he said, "I will take that message back from those people. I promise you I will take that message back." I said, "Please, Mr. Burnham, don't do what Mr. Straw done. He promised us all kinds and completely let us down. Don't do what your government has done to us in the past. You have got to start changing things."

To be fair, he took the message back because within a matter of, I would say, weeks our executive committee were having meetings with the Ministry of Justice, but we could not tell anybody because everything had to be kept confidential. So we kept our word and we had quite a few, but we were making our demands. Things were not getting down any more behind closed doors what was happening with the families, everything we went forward with, the powers that be gave us what we had to have

because they were making their decisions behind closed doors. We were not going to let that happen this time, and we did not. We demanded what we wanted and we got the HIP set up, and we got people on the HIP who we thought should have been on it and who we could trust.

That took an awful lot because I met Mr. Alan Johnson, then the predecessor of Theresa May, and he said he would do certain things and, of course, the government was voted out and the Conservatives came in. That was a great worry as well for the families at the time, here we go, Conservatives back in power, we are going to get nothing again; but we did, we did.

At the end of it all, what we fought for and fought so hard for, we achieved the truth and I felt at that time on 12th September that our city was exonerated, our people were exonerated, and our fans and survivors were exonerated, but most importantly our 96 were also. But we still have a long journey to go. We still have to fight for justice. We have the truth and, as somebody said, justice must follow. I know now, even now, that they are preparing to defend themselves so it is going to be a hard slog yet again for the families.

You are not going to believe this but I was really young when Hillsborough happened. I am now an old woman, in fact I am a grandmother, and my poor son did not even see his little nieces and nephews because he was just 18, and that was by the way his very first away game, and it cost him his life, and everything our fans and survivors were accused of, lateness, drunkenness, being ticketless, my son was in the ground by a quarter past one, he had his ticket, the stub of his ticket in his pocket. He did not have a drink in him, and so what if he did, it was their day out. That is what fans do, it is their day out. They tried to make it look as if we were all scum. That is what they got away with.

When Paul mentioned it, I do not like mentioning that name, Paul, a certain newspaper, I don't even like to say it, they helped to get us the injustice that we got because that spread all over the world, and they have still not made any apology. They offered an apology to the families if they could print the truth — if they could print that we accepted their apology. We refused that. They offered us a lot of money. They said they would build a sports centre or something for young children in our city. This is what we had to put up with. We said, "And what do you want in return," "That we can print the headline", that the Hillsborough Family Support Group accepted their apology. We did not. We kicked them out. I won't use the words any of you use but we kicked them out. At the time, we know for a fact they did everything for Mrs. Thatcher. It was Bernard Ingham, her press officer, who we know must have helped to give that story to blame our fans.

I have gone a little bit off the subject there and you are all looking bored. Sorry. There is so much about Hillsborough, honest to God, that I just do not know where to begin, in fact 24 years' worth. You can imagine it is a hell of a big, big story. One thing we were determined about, and I said it before and I do not want to repeat myself, 12th September was bitter sweet. It was sweet for the fans. It was still bitter for the families because the families did not have any justice, and we still don't have that justice and we know we still have to fight for that justice. I know we have. Everybody says it should come naturally. It does not because they are still doing things to defend themselves.

Like Sue and I from here, on Tuesday, we have to get up to London and we have a meeting with our lawyers and the courts on the Wednesday morning. We are dreading what they are going to be putting in, what are they going to be putting in, and we have to be prepared for it. It is going to take us another couple of years as well before this is over. It is going to take a lot more years and I am just hoping that I don't end up where Thatcher is. She can stay there. None of us want to be with her. I just hope that the families we have left now do not die because a lot of them have died tormented without even seeing the truth out. I just hope they can all survive to see what they need and what they desperately should have had 24 years ago, that is, the right verdict on those death certificates because that was no accident, absolutely no accident.

I am sorry if I go on too much about it, I'll end up getting emotional, but you all think there is a part of Hillsborough that you know about but there is an awful lot that you do not know about still. There is so much about our loved ones, the way they were treated, even when they died, was a disgrace; the way the families were treated when we went up there to cuddle our loved ones we were not allowed to do that. It was also what happened and how they treated them, and that could have been anybody that day, that could have been any team, any football supporter could have come out of that hat and played there that day, and that is the way you all would have been treated, and that is why I try to keep telling people, it could have been you, it could have been you and your family listening to the way you were treated when you had even died.

There is a lot that nobody really knows that we have kept to ourselves, but there is a lot more that you will learn about and you will say, "That could have been my child, that could have been my Dad, my uncle, my brother, my sister, my Mum." Everybody deserves respect no matter who they are, where they come from; everybody deserves respect. Our families did not get any respect whatsoever and especially the dead, they were treated appallingly.

What we have achieved I am proud of because I think what came out on 12th September is not only good for our city, it is good for the nation, and for all of you; this can never happen again. Police cannot cover up. Police should not be investigating themselves like we had with the West Midlands Police investigating themselves, Yorkshire Police; West Midlands Police were the biggest corrupt force at the time, in the 1980s anyway. That has all got to stop. It has to be independent.

All I can say to all of you, I don't know whether you would like to add anything, Sue, I would like to say thank you for listening to me and, by God, you will get there, the miners and Orgreave will get there, and I hope and I pray to God that we get the right verdicts now on our 96 because that is what they rightfully deserve. Thank you for listening to me. (*Standing ovation*)

Presentation of gifts amid applause.

THE PRESIDENT: Margaret, I just want to say we are extremely proud and humbled that you have addressed us today. You stand up for justice and those who denied you and all the families justice should be jailed for life because they have given no life to others. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Congress, it has been a very long day but I do believe that that was worth waiting for. Margaret felt she did not do very well. Well, there are not many dry eyes in this house, in this Congress, Margaret. You did fabulous, all of you. I am now bringing Congress to a close.

There is a petition in support of the Shrewsbury Pickets on the Info Desk for you to sign and register your support.

Congress, there is a fringe event being held after Congress session ends, details are being shown on the screen.

Congress is adjourned till 9.30 in the morning. Thank you. Good night. Have a good time, everyone, and thanks for staying on.

Conference adjourned.