

GMB

CONGRESS 2016

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

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Held in:

Bournemouth International Centre,
Bournemouth

on:

Sunday, 5th June 2016
Monday, 6th June 2016
Tuesday, 7th June 2016
(Sectional Conferences)
Wednesday, 8th June 2016
and
Thursday, 9th June 2016

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PROCEEDINGS
DAY TWO
(Monday, 6th June 2016)

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SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 6TH JUNE 2016

MORNING SESSION

(Congress assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

THE PRESIDENT: Will Congress come to order, please? I hope you are all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed this morning! Did you enjoy yourselves last night?

(Confirmed) I am sorry you were late leaving but it was worth it in the end, wasn't it? That is my excuse and I am sticking to it! Right, good morning all and I saw many on the dance floor, even I attempted it but I was tired. I enjoyed it and thank you all for showing up.

I have a couple of announcements to make. First of all, I have been joined on the platform by Lisa Johnson, our newly appointed Director of External Affairs – I do not know what affairs – and Training. Lisa, welcome. *(Applause)*

I have been asked by Friends of Dementia to make sure that you all sign up.

I have an appeal from the RMA: “Mary, can you please announce that raffle tickets for the RMA can be obtained from the RMA stall and also if any region would like to donate a raffle prize this would be appreciated. Thank you. Jan Smith.” Okay, that is that one.

I do have also an apology from Jeremy Corbyn. He asked me to tell the Camell Laird workers that he had not forgotten about them. It was only later on he remembered he had not mentioned them but he will keep the fight up on your behalf as well as for the others, the miners and so on. *(Applause)* He did not stay last night because he had been travelling for three days and he just wanted to get home, but we really did appreciate him coming and giving up that time. Thank you for all being so well behaved. It is not often you are well behaved but you were well behaved yesterday.

Let's move into the business of the morning and that is, I will now be calling Motion 172, Yorkshire, 173, London, 174, Yorkshire, 176, London, 177, Wales & South Western Region. Will those movers and seconders please come to the front? Then I will be asking Dave Clements, on behalf of the CEC, to speak on the qualifications. Okay.

POLITICAL: THE LABOUR PARTY

HANDS OFF CORBYN

MOTION 172

172. HANDS OFF CORBYN

This Conference welcomes the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader. We note that he was elected by an overwhelming majority of Party members and supporters. We therefore consider that it is the duty of all Party members inside and outside the Houses of Parliament to support him.

We condemn the campaign of vilification in the Tory media directed against Jeremy Corbyn, which is aimed at undermining and removing him. We furthermore deplore the actions of members of the Parliamentary Labour Party who, through their systematic attempts to

undermine Jeremy Corbyn, are deliberately sabotaging the work of the opposition, destabilising the Labour Party and playing into the hands of the Tories.

- We call upon our representatives in Parliament to provide us with a clear and unambiguous commitment not to participate in any such activities and to support the elected leader of the Party
- In the event of a refusal to provide such an undertaking, we will have no alternative but to move a vote of no confidence and set in motion a process of selecting somebody who is prepared to respect the democratic views of the membership.

RIPON & THIRSK GENERAL BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

THE PRESIDENT: You are bright-eyed and bushy-tailed this morning! Before you start, our colleague here is the convenor of Nestle and that is his present to all of you on your tables this morning. *(Applause)* Next it will be the Scottish Brewery! Okay, colleague.

BRO. B. GOLDING (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): *(Cheers)* I would just like to respond to what a delegate said yesterday about Nestle being evil. We have 8,000 people employed directly by Nestle in the UK and Ireland, many of them are GMB members right across the sites, we are Fair Trade, and we are a Living Wage employer. I would like people to be careful what they say about some of the companies our members work in, please. *(Applause)*

Yesterday we heard Jeremy extolling what we want from a Labour Party leader, socialism and justice. Unfortunately, we do not get this from all in our Parliamentary Labour Party. We have collaborators with the Tories attacking the leadership at every opportunity. This must stop. If they continue, we must deselect them. I move. *(Applause)*

BRO. G. JARVIS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): *(Cheers)* President, Congress, at last year's conference when Jeremy Corbyn was seeking support for his leadership campaign our Regional Secretary at the time, now our General Secretary, was the first to offer support. During the speeches and debates with the other candidates, Jeremy won over the vast majority of delegates whose allegiance was turned from the candidate the GMB was publicly backing at the time. After his resounding victory, the GMB finally climbed down off the fence to offer him their support much to the delight of many in our region, and beyond. But, empty words are meaningless. Actions speak much louder and action is what is required from us if we are to defend Jeremy in the next period.

This Congress does indeed welcome the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Leader, that he was elected with an overwhelming majority, and that is the duty of all party members, inside and outside the House of Parliament, to support him. Attacks in the press are to be expected although not deserved but attacks from Labour MPs are totally unacceptable. *(Applause)* We must not be afraid to condemn those who do so. This motion sets out the detail of what that support should be. The message is clear, support our leader or get out. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Graham. 173, London.

**THE LABOUR PARTY
MOTION 173**

173. THE LABOUR PARTY

This Congress congratulates Jeremy Corbyn on his success in rebuilding confidence in the Labour Party.

Congress also resolves to give him the full support of the GMB in future, as have other major unions. GMB recognises that he represents the aspirations of the working class within the Party and is a sincere and long-standing supporter of trade unions.

LOWESTOFT BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. G. DOUCE (London): President, Congress, colleagues, we heard from Jeremy Corbyn yesterday and I am sure you will agree that he has a refreshing approach in politics, he answers the question he is asked. That much was evident when we heard from him last year at the leadership hustings in Dublin. His leadership, however, has seen significant attacks from some quarters of the press and reports of attack from some within the Party and the wider labour Movement. I say reports because I have seen articles claiming that prominent Labour politicians have attacked Jeremy in a TV interview. I watched the interview on the iPlayer and I was pleased to see that the politician actually stuck to his brief, spoke about his election, his remit, and his proposals. He acted with professionalism, in my view, just what I suggest we would all expect from a GMB member who was recently elected as the Mayor of London. Thank you, Sadiq.

Generally, there seems to be renewed confidence that the leadership of the Labour Party is becoming more in tune with ordinary working people like you and me rather than risking becoming out of touch but not quite as out of touch as the current so-called government. Therefore, colleagues, I call on you to support this motion subject to the CEC qualification. Our policies and priorities are front and centre in the minds of the current party leadership and as we were reminded yesterday by our CEC colleague from Southern Region, our President Mary will keep prompting them about their obligations to stand up for our policies and to help us stand up for our members.

Colleagues, there are times at which individuals or organisations may disagree with their leadership but there is a time and place for debate. If what some people wish to do is openly attack a democratically elected leader, I would say to them, work constructively and collaboratively with the leader and any affiliated organisations such as ourselves. We all know what happened to those who disagreed so fundamentally with the Party, they went off and formed the SDP. Their experiment failed and they just ended up propping up the Tories for five years and then returned to irrelevance.

By working together, colleagues, we can realise our shared goals and as the banner on the side there says, *In Unity there is Strength*. Colleagues, let's stand together and

fight our common enemy, and that is Dodgy Dave and his double-dealing chums. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Gareth. Secunder.

SIS. A. COUSIN (London): Seconding Motion 173. President, Congress, finally we have a Labour leader who will further the interests of working people, not suck up to big business, celebrities, and Murdoch. He is a man of integrity with firm socialist beliefs, a leader who abhors the politics of spite and vilification. He has remained dignified when the gutter press has heaped scorn on him and spread their vicious lies. I personally stopped being a Labour voter shortly after I voted in Tony Blair for his first term. The Labour Party has not felt like a party that represented me any more. In my opinion, it became a party of sound bites, spin doctors, war mongerers and news speak. That is now going to change. Hopefully, under Jeremy Corbyn the party will become once again one that understands what it is to be working class and paying the austerity bill. I was proud to use my affiliation vote to vote for Jeremy. We are paying for a recession now which we did not cause. Yes, Jeremy may hold beliefs which go against current GMB policy but you cannot fault Jeremy, these are beliefs he has sincerely held for a number of years on Trident and fracking, for example, but we are a trade union family and what family does not have disagreements from time to time.

Let's not focus in public on things we may not agree on but instead let's shout from the rooftops what we do agree on, the £10 an hour Living Wage, opposing austerity, taking rail franchises back into public ownership, re-nationalising utilities, protecting our NHS, repealing the TU Bill. He told us yesterday of his plans for 2020 and his commitment to public inquiries for Orgreave, the Shrewsbury 24, and of course the blacklisted workers. I could stand here all day extolling his virtues but instead I will simply say this, let's get behind Jeremy, work with him, and finally get a prime minister and a government we the working class deserve. Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Alison. 174, Yorkshire.

LABOUR PARTY UNITY MOTION 174

174. LABOUR PARTY UNITY

This Conference, the GMB Yorkshire region urges Congress to put pressure on The Labour Party to heed the Leaders call for unity.

Jeremy Corbyn has issued an appeal for party unity; we (branch) believe that the Party should consider the cost of losing the next general election.

This would be devastating for working people. Labour MP's earn a good living in Parliament, but further Tory Austerity would create much more poverty for our members.

The Labour Party is our Party and the members have spoken when they overwhelmingly endorsed Jeremy Corbyn as our leader.

We urge our leaders in the GMB to support Corbyn's leadership and withdraw financial support from disloyal MP's.

KIRKLEES BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

BRO. B. O'CONNOR (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): First time delegate, first time speaker, and the important bit, Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region. *(Cheers)* Also a Young Member! *(Cheers)* Congress, I am here to move Motion 174, Labour Party Unity. This topic is very close to my heart. Apart from being a proud trade unionist I am also a proud member of the Labour Party, a party that throughout its history has worked on behalf of working people, built by trade unions. It has introduced legislation that has included all of workers' rights, giving the country the NHS, the welfare state, provided the minimum wage so that people could actually afford to work, to live, a party that is not founded on greed or inequality. I say our party.

You may not all be members but it was built by our Movement. It is our party. It is the party of the working people. This party is needed more than ever and we must win in 2020. Tory austerity has failed. It has hurt and impacted the poorest in society, often the hardest working individuals, barely making a living. We need a Labour government in 2020 to change this. The only way we are going to get the desperately needed Labour government is if we all work together as a collective. Some members of the Labour Parliamentary Party are unhappy with Corbyn's leadership and that is okay, having reservations is human nature to some people, but openly attacking and sabotaging your leader is not okay. It is not helpful. It is pretty much comparable to shooting yourself in the foot.

As members we have a common purpose, we may disagree on how we want to achieve that common purpose but overall we share the same goals. I want the message to ring out to all members of the Labour Party, all MPs in the Parliamentary Labour Party; we can accomplish more if we work together. When we strive together, we achieve together. As it says on the back of the Labour membership card, by the strength of our common endeavour we can achieve more than we achieve alone. To all in the Labour Party, let's stand behind Corbyn, unite against the Tories, and unite in common purpose. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Barney. Secunder.

BRO. M. HIRST (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Morning. *(Cheers)* President, Congress, the Labour Party was founded by the workers to fight for workers. Every elected MP has a duty to work for the party and working people irrespective of who the leader is. Jeremy Corbyn won the leadership election by a massive majority. He has the right to expect backing and unity from all Labour MPs. Stop the backbiting and infighting. If they cannot do this, then the GMB should review and stop, if necessary, funding for these MPs. We are in danger of handing the Tories another five years in government, which would be unforgiveable. Stop the infighting and back Jeremy Corbyn, the democratically elected leader of the Labour Party and the next prime minister. I second. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, colleague. Will London please move 176?

LABOUR PARTY UNITY MOTION 176

176. LABOUR PARTY UNITY

Congress is deeply concerned at the recent increase of factionalism within some sections of the Labour Party, detracting from the need to mount unified opposition to many of the Tory Government's anti-Trade Union, anti-Working class policies.

Congress therefore calls on the CEC to join with other Trade Unions, the TUC and other like-minded bodies to urge all within the Party, especially our MPs to concentrate on those issues that unite us in opposition to this Tory Government.

BARKING BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. S. STREET (London): Congress, history tells us that divided political parties do not win elections. History tells us that the electorate are unwilling to vote for parties who wash their dirty linen in public or appear to be at war with each other. The Tories demonstrated this after the fall of Thatcher, wrecked by a split over Europe, a split that has now re-emerged during the referendum campaign, they lost power for 13 years.

Before that, 1997, a landslide Labour victory and all the way through the 13 years of Labour governments we were constantly told by the leadership of the party and their spin doctors that unity was imperative. For many of us in both the Labour Party and trade unions this was often difficult when policies were being pursued that we fundamentally disagreed with, or when we felt that there was little difference between Labour and the Tories. Nevertheless, we held our tongues, we kept our disagreements in private and we did all we could to ensure a Labour victory.

However, history began to repeat itself and many in the party started to openly call for a change in the leadership but not in private, they chose to air their views in public, more often than not in the newspapers controlled by Tory-supporting press barons, who were more than willing to stick the knife into the Labour Party with glee. We know the result. Gordon Brown was defeated and Labour lost power in 2010.

Since the election of Jeremy Corbyn this self-defeating attitude has not only increased but has taken on a new intensity. Some people within the party appear unwilling to accept the mandate that Jeremy clearly has from the membership of the party, a membership that has increased many fold since the leadership campaign and since he was elected. Those people need to stop and stop now. They need to accept that the party has always been a broad church made up of trade unions, individual members, socialist societies, and the Co-Op. It has also been a broad church in the range of its political views and some might argue that this creates division and that the party would be better if split.

I would, however, argue that the strength of the Labour Party is that it is a broad church, that it is able to reflect the views of all its constituent parts. The trick has always been trying to get all those strands working together and then the Labour Party

wins elections. Elections are not won in the six months before polling day, they are won in the five years before. If Labour is to present itself as a credible government in 2020 then unity needs to start now. That is not to say we will not have differences, that is not to say we will not have debates, but those debates need to take place in party meetings, in trade union branches, and not in the pages of the *Daily Mail*, *The Times*, or even worse, *The Sun*. The onus is on those who feed the pages of the press, whether it is the MPs, party activists, or even the current leadership team, to desist.

The Tories are split. Their great dividing line over Europe has again exploded. Whatever happens in the referendum on 23rd June that split will still be there and they will not be able to paper over the cracks. The Labour Party have an open goal to aim for but we will only score if our team is seen as united and fighting for a common purpose. We definitely face a general election in 2020 but who knows where the Tory split will lead, almost certainly a leadership challenge that will not be at the time of David Cameron's choosing, and very possibly a vote of no confidence which will lead to an early election.

We must not let that opportunity go to waste. Our members, the members of other trade unions and the British public, cannot and should not have to face another five years of Tory misery. It is our duty and the duty of every party member to bury our differences, present a united front to the public, and ensure a Labour victory whenever the election is called. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Steven. Secunder.

SIS. S. HURLEY (London): President, Congress, the reason the general public voted for Jeremy Corbyn is simple, he came with a new vision, new ideas, and the general public refused to vote for the same old Blairite crap we have had for all these years. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Wales and South West Region to move 177.

SUPPORT FOR THE LABOUR CAMPAIGN TO END HOMELESSNESS MOTION 177

177. SUPPORT FOR THE LABOUR CAMPAIGN TO END HOMELESSNESS

This Conference notes that:-

The politics of austerity combined with the current economic system have served to exacerbate homelessness. The GMB recognises that a society in which homelessness exists is a society unfinished, a society which is not worthy of the name.

The Labour Campaign to End Homelessness seeks to ensure support for the homeless and to fight against the causes of homelessness in the political sphere.

This Congress of the GMB resolves to:-

- Engage fully and support The Labour Campaign to End Homelessness.
- Lobby the Labour Party for their next general election manifesto to contain a specific pledge to end homelessness.

- Encourage GMB Branches to support The Labour Campaign to End Homelessness on a local level.

TRANSCO BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

BRO. D. HAMBLIN (GMB Wales & South West): I have long maintained that politics is about the food in your mouth and the roof over your head. If there is not even that, then our politics must resolve the issue. We recognise that a society in which homelessness exists is a society unfinished, a society which is not worthy of the name. The selling off of council houses, the uncertainty in the workplace, and more, have all contributed to a rise in those without homes.

The Labour Campaign to end Homelessness endeavours to resolve the blight of homelessness on people's lives. The fact of the matter is that there is no way of dealing with the problem of rented houses in modern society except by public ownership, so spoke the illustrious Nye Bevan. There was a campaign which recognised that collective issues require collective resolutions. The GMB already has strong links with the Labour Campaign to end Homelessness, sterling work of Sis. Patricia Pinheiro De Villa, and Bro. Sam Stopp, and Martin Smith, are an exemplar of the GMB's trade union values.

As Chair of the GMB Young Members' Network it would be remiss of me not to highlight the debilitating destruction that homelessness wreaks upon youth. There is a multitude of factors which may result in homelessness for a young person. As such, we in the Trades Union Movement and the political sphere must establish a number of ways to address such factors: support for those who identify as LGBTQ who find themselves in hostile environments, those who are fleeing domestic violence, and those whose circumstances take a turn for the worse.

The GMB Young Members Fair Deal calls for a real living wage and an end to zero-hours contracts. We aim to address the economic disparity with which so many young people are afflicted through the malaise of capitalism and austerity. In such a system the economic means of keeping a roof over your head is beyond many. Yet when they lose their homes it falls on the local authorities to provide support, local authorities who are under the cosh of austerity from this Tory Government.

This is why the support for the Labour Campaign to end Homelessness is so critical. The work it does ranges from being out on the streets, including weekly outreach sessions in London, to lobbying for policies which would make a material difference to the lives of the homeless. The campaign is not a panacea for the immediate end of homelessness but it is more than a step in the right direction towards such an end. I took the liberty of quoting my beloved Aneurin Bevan at the start of this speech; it is not quite the indulgence that it first may seem to be. As Minister for Health Bevan is rightly lauded for his role in establishing the NHS but housing also fell within his remit. It does not seem to have dawned upon us some people in this country that the vast majority of us cannot afford to buy a house, words which were spoken over 50 years ago and how often are we hearing the same words again now.

We must fight the scourge of homelessness in multiple spheres, not least of which by providing public and tangible support for the Labour Campaign to end Homelessness. The Labour Party was born out of the Trades Union Movement and it is right and it is proper that we support those Labour campaigns which embody our values. I was proud to speak at the Wales March for Homes rally in Cardiff, as a trade unionist, as a Labour Party member, and as youth. We sought support for building council housing, establishing rent controls, and scrapping rip-off agency fees. The Labour Campaign to end Homelessness stands in the finest tradition of the GMB and the labour Movement as a whole. Bevan proclaimed that now we are the builders, let us in turn be the builders of today of homes, of solidarity, and of a society which is indeed worthy of the name. We shall build such a society the way the labour Movement knows how, by hand, by brain, and by the strength of our union and the solidarity we bear for our brothers and sisters. Please support this motion. Solidarity. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, David. Well done. Secunder.

SIS. C. SIBLEY (GMB Wales & South West): President, Congress, a couple of weeks ago my eldest niece went into town with her granddad to spend some pocket money that she had managed to save in recent months. After a little while they decided it was time to stop for lunch and as the weather was good they chose some seating outside. Soon after sitting down they noticed a man clearly homeless digging through the bins for food so Jade got up and said to her granddad, "I'll be back in a minute," and went back into where they had got their lunch. A couple of minutes later she returned with a meal for the homeless man. I was so proud of her when I heard this but it also made me think, a 12-year old girl who gets only a few pounds pocket money a month can feed a homeless man but our Tory government with access to billions daily cannot house him? Rubbish. The money is there, we know it is, if they stop abusing the public purse. It is the compassion and the desire to do the right thing that the Tories lack. Ooh, that's out of character! We cannot leave it up to them to help the homeless. I know it. You know it. My 12-year old niece knows it. The question is this, what are we going to do about it? Let's start by carrying this motion and backing Labour's Campaign to end Homelessness and we can go from there. Please support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Charlene. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? Anyone else, will you come to the front, please?

BRO. D. POLE (London): Supporting the resolutions and looking to take the opportunity to bring to the attention of Congress, and it is particularly relevant to Motion 172, and the vilification of Jeremy Corbyn, the disgraceful allegations that he is in some way involved and encouraging anti-Semitism within the Labour Party. This campaign is being waged not only by the usual hypocritical hysterical Tory Party and their vile media allies, many guilty of extreme anti-Semitism themselves, but sadly supposedly some on our side. Jeremy Corbyn has a proud record of opposition to anti-Semitism and has proved this to be time and time again with his speeches, activities often including Rabbis and the Jewish community in his constituency, and actions.

There can of course be no truck with anti-Semitism and it must be dealt with when it raises its foul head. However, it is not anti-Semitic to be against the many illegal

activities of the Israeli government in support of BDS as GBM does and opposition to the West Bank illegal settlements, the bombing of Gaza, etc. Jeremy Corbyn is, of course, well known for being a passionate supporter of Palestine solidarity and I for the last couple of years have been proud to represent GMB on the PSC trade union committee. The standing orders of PSC clearly state, quite rightly, that anti-Semitism will not be tolerated. Accusations against him are clearly a smear campaign that plays into the hands of the Tories, creates the climate for witch hunts that divide our Movement and are a thorough disservice to those of us who overwhelmingly gave Jeremy their support. The Tories are in a state of civil war. Let us not fall into the trap. Let us say loud and clear from this Congress, hands off Corbyn and leave unity to keep the Tories out. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Anyone else? No? Can I call Dave Clements, on behalf of the CEC? Before you start, I will be calling the next group, Motion 50, Midlands, 66, Southern, and 75, London. Thank you, Dave.

BRO. D. CLEMENTS (CEC, Commercial Services): Good morning, Congress. The CEC is supporting Motions 172, 173, 174 and 176, all with qualification.

The world has changed dramatically since we met at Congress one year ago, much way beyond any normal and rational thoughts, dreams or hopes, some in fantasy land. Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, Leicester City Champions of the Premier League. However, it is good to know there was some stability and no change elsewhere, Arsenal did not win the Premier title, again. What odds would you have got for a Corbyn/Leicester double? What odds with one of the home nations winning Euro 2016. I am looking forward to the tournament starting Friday, obviously supporting England, but I will also follow the Wales and Irish teams. I will, in particular, be looking very hard to find the Scottish results! (*Laughter*)

Congress, none of us could have predicted what would happen when the leadership candidates held their first hustings at Congress in Dublin in June 2015. The election of Jeremy Corbyn is historic, its majority, its vigour, and shaking the political establishment to the core. It demonstrates how frustrated and disengaged the electorate are with modern politics and how the thirst for real change is there. This is mirrored on the other side of the pond but let's hope we do not get a Trump presidency.

The scale of the Corbyn victory no matter what your view on the leadership election process has given Jeremy Corbyn a mandate; quite frankly, whether you like him or not, he must have a chance to do the job which a quarter of a million people, including many of us trade unionists, gave him. If we are honest with ourselves, we are highly unlikely to get a Labour leader more sympathetic to our policies and understand who we are as part of a wider movement than Jeremy Corbyn.

I was proud to see him stood on the stage yesterday alongside blacklisted workers pledging to work with our Movement. There is a huge opportunity now with projects like Workplace 2020 to engage our members and show them why politics matters. We need to win elections to put that goodwill into practice. Divided parties do not win elections as a general rule. The Tories are currently ripping each other apart and we hope their divisions will be reflected at the ballot box in the future.

It is our duty to fight for a Labour victory. We owe it to the working people of our nation who are suffering but we are nothing without power. Whether Corbyn can win the support of the electorate time will tell but a divided party will not win elections and resentment will be caused if this democratically elected leader of our party is not given a fair opportunity. So, we support calls for unity to unite behind the leader, to get on fighting the Tories and not with each other.

GMB support for any politician is not unequivocal or without constraint and must be with a view to a wider agenda. We organise politically as we do industrially to bring change for our members. We support working people, their families, their communities. The qualification for these political leadership motions are that we cannot and will not support policies that are detrimental to the jobs and livelihoods of the people we represent. It is enshrined in our constitution, in our rules, in what we are, to fight for the betterment of working people and their families and no ideology can move us from that mission as we meet GMB members work on projects that could possibly be threatened in the future with policy change.

So, we must be clear that the protection of GMB members is our number one priority, unequivocal support for members and their families. There will be times when we disagree with the Labour leadership when it comes to policy and we must be free to say so and fight our corner accordingly. Please support Motions 172, 173, 174, and 176 with the clear qualification I have made. In addition to the speech here, I would just like to point out that Mary Turner and Cath Speight have been working very hard in Parliament recently with the Chief Whip to fight on all these splits to try and get the unity we all are after. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Dave. Congress, will Yorkshire accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) On both? (*Agreed*) Okay. Will London accept the qualification on both? (*Agreed*) Yes. I will now put 172, 173, 174, 176, and 177 to the vote. All those in favour please show. Anyone against? That is bingo!

Motion 172 was CARRIED.

Motion 173 was CARRIED.

Motion 174 was CARRIED.

Motion 176 was CARRIED.

Motion 177 was CARRIED.

UNION ORGANISATION: FINANCE & CONTRIBUTION

THE PRESIDENT: Can we move on now to the movers of 50, Midland and East Coast Region, Respect Women in Sport.

RESPECT WOMEN IN SPORT

MOTION 50

50. RESPECT WOMEN IN SPORT

This Conference, in 2014 a survey found that two-thirds of all women in football had experienced sexism. In the same year, the Premiership's Chief Executive Richard Scudamore

was accused of sending vile and explicit e-mails about his female colleagues. Despite the furore this caused in the national press, no action was taken. But football is not alone.

At the Australian Tennis Open last year Eugene Bouchard, the Canadian number one women's tennis player made history by becoming the first Canadian tennis player to reach a Grand Slam final. But in the interview afterwards, she wasn't asked about her technical prowess or her ability to beat her opponent. Instead she was asked "as a single woman, which famous celebrity would you most like to date?"

In March 2015 a clothing company was forced to withdraw its line of sports clothes because the washing instructions inside their garments were "Give this jersey to your woman. It's her job". They claimed it was "just a joke."

Women face a lack of respect in all areas of sport. On a day to day basis they are faced with sexist attitudes, derogatory remarks made by their fellow sportsmen and journalists.

SEXISM IS A PREJUDICE. THERE SHOULD BE NO ROOM FOR ANY TYPE OF PREJUDICE IN SPORT OR ANY OTHER WALK OF LIFE.

Yet despite the level of prejudice still pervasive in our society today, women want to play sport. There is an appetite to watch sports played by women, as was demonstrated by the viewing figures last year of the Women's World Cup. And don't forget, we reached the semi-finals, something the men's game hasn't achieved since 1966!

Sports sponsorship is a multi-billion dollar business and yet, in the UK in 2014, less than 0.5% of all sponsorship deals were invested in women's sports. This lack of investment and apathy by key sports sponsors means that women continue to struggle to be heard and taken seriously. It makes our victory in the Women's World Cup all the more remarkable don't you think!

The GMB has and does sponsor sports teams including Castleford Tigers Rugby Team, Swindon Town Football Club, Port Vale Football Club and most recently Nottingham Panthers Ice Hockey Team – the common theme through all of these sponsorship deals - they are all male.

We therefore call upon the GMB to:

1. Spearhead a national campaign to kick sexism out of all sport;
2. Demonstrate their commitment to women in sport by providing the equivalent if not more sponsorship to professional and non-professional female sports teams ensuring that there is equal parity at all times between GMB sponsorship of male and female sports teams.

LEICESTER SERVICES BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

SIS. D. LOVATT (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, at the Australian Tennis Open last year Eugenie Bouchard, Canadian No. 1 women's tennis player made history by becoming the first Canadian tennis player to reach the Grand Slam Finals. However, in an interview afterwards guess what she was asked, "As a single

woman which famous celebrity would you most like to date?" Can you imagine anyone asking Wayne Rooney that question?

In March 2015, a clothing company was forced to withdraw its line of sports clothes because the washing instructions inside the garment actually said, "Give this jersey to your woman, it's her job." They actually reckoned it was some kind of joke.

My partner who is in her 60s now when I first met her used to play women's football. She started at the age of 24 and retired at 45. She was seventh in the Ladies Fishing All England Competition, and the number of darts trophies, put it this way, there is over 400 in our house. The only trouble is if you compare that to the male counterparts, the prize money and the state of the trophies is nothing in comparison. I had a glimpse of that myself because I play in three men's pool leagues each week and we came top of our section last year and got this lovely trophy but let's just say it was not plastic.

The same can be said on a major league when I visited, and I am not advocating Man United by the way even though there could be some fans here, I do apologise, went on a tour of their football ground and saw their trophy cabinet. Their trophy came up to here. I am not kidding you I have never seen anything like it, but last year at the Women's Football FA Cup Final, which I went to, lovely trophy but nowhere near as big; by the way, there was a good 18,000 crowd turnout for that in comparison to our unfortunate 1966 World Cup Final, at least we reached the semis last year, ladies.

On a local note, bear in mind that GMB likes to be inclusive, it is very good that we sponsor things like Castleford Tigers, Swindon Town Football Club, Port Vale Football Club, and the Nottingham Panthers, there is just one slight problem, folks, they are all male: food for thought there. Sexism is prejudice. There should be no room for any type in this day and life.

In conclusion, I am asking the GMB to spearhead a national campaign to kick sexism out of all sport, to demonstrate their commitment to women in sport by providing the equivalent, if not more, sponsorship to professional and non-professional female sports teams, showing that there is equal parity at all times between GMB sponsorship of male and female sports teams. At the end of the day, why don't we have joint teams? Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Secunder.

BRO. B. COOK (Midlands & East Coast): President, Congress, I find it extremely sad that in the 21st century sexism still occurs in sport. At a GMB workplace we campaign every day for equal pay for women, whether it be on the tennis court, a golf course, hockey pitch, football pitch, rugby pitch, this is any sports person's workplace and everybody should be treated equally as they should on a shop floor, a factory floor, a ward or an office. Women do exactly the same jobs as men and should be paid exactly the same. I find it disgraceful that a golf club can exclude women in the 21st century or include women for financial gain. Women in sport should be included and not excluded.

It appears that GMB sponsored sports teams are mostly male orientated and may be this should coordinate with our 50:50 membership balance. So, from today let's change it and let's become a 21st century equality union. Please second this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Colleagues, before I move on, I have just a couple of announcements to make. First, I welcome Rachel Holmes to the rostrum and I will be giving you a better outlook in a few moments. This is to remind you that any questions on the ballot sheet and auditors' report will need to be submitted in writing to Congress Office no later than 5.30 today. Congress, a growing number of GMB branches are now doing their accounts electronically. Please go to the internet café in the exhibition area for a personal demonstration of online branch accounting, after Congress.

Congress, we will now combine the rest of the resolutions and can I ask for the mover of 66, Southern, and the seconder.

**UNION ORGANISATION: EDUCATION & TRAINING
POSITIVE ACTION
MOTION 66**

66. POSITIVE ACTION

This conference believes, as a growing union, with over 50% of membership being of the female gender, GMB's structure does not currently reflect this figure. We need courses to develop and empower women into leadership, as currently in GMB, there is an imbalance in structure by gender. GMB promotes equality, which currently is not being reflected.

This congress resolves to implement a training structure to develop women to take on roles to develop them in the union.

L26 WANDSWORTH BRANCH
Southern Region

(*Carried*)

SIS. C. HYMAN (Southern): First time delegate. (*Applause*) President and Congress, last year GMB history was made when the national membership of women hit 50%. This is a direct result of the recruitment campaigns in branches and, in particular, Asda, schools, and the care sector. As the women's membership grows in the GMB this should also be reflected in our reps, our branch officers, our organisers, and our senior positions. We have just had a General Secretary election but there were no women candidates. All Regional Secretaries are men.

In order to change this trend and move forward, GMB need to encourage support and train female members into leadership. Last week I attended the public speaking course facilitated at the Euston office and found it very useful. This course also gave me a newfound confidence and prepared me for today. This course was the first of its kind and will, hopefully, be available in the future for women members.

The Women's Conference in Hove last year was a great success and it was good to network with other female members and share experiences. The Women's

Conference was the first big conference of its kind and we have a bigger and better conference planned for this year.

We need courses of this kind for women members as they face challenges and attend existing courses, such as childcare responsibilities, part-time working, shift work and sometimes lack of confidence. In the future I hope this training will not be needed but because of the current imbalance in women's representation in GMB and in senior positions the Union must address this. I move this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Charmaine. Secunder.

BRO. A. ALLEYNE (Southern): President, Congress, I would like to say that I think we are all potentially as much part of the problem as part of the solution. We need to understand what Charmaine was just talking about. We should not treat equality as somebody else's issue. If you do not think you fall under one of the protected characteristics, you may want to re-read them and see how they may actually affect you.

When people are talking about solidarity, are they actually thinking about people who are sitting right next to them as well as people who are overseas, in far-flung climes, and who they read heartfelt stories about? They need to think about people who are sitting right next to them and who are in their own branches, and whether they are showing true solidarity locally.

If we look at the local context, in my branch I am certainly looking to encourage more women to come forward as reps and I will be up for election in two weeks as Branch Secretary. I hope, and I truly say this, I am sincere, that I will not be elected unopposed. If I am, then that is a bad sign for our local union. I want to look forward in four years' time to there being a strong challenge for that post, if I last that long. I would like it to be a healthy field that is up for that post and not just me and the usual suspects being blokes. I want other people involved.

I will end with this. I am not big on the Bible but I will say something from Corinthians 12:26: "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it. If one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it." I second this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Can London move 75, Equality Mapping.

UNION ORGANISATION: EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

EQUALITY MAPPING

MOTION 75

75. EQUALITY MAPPING

Congress agrees that diversity and equality should always be at the heart of strategic planning. This Congress further agrees that for a trade union to be relevant to its members it needs to be able to connect with the broad range of different backgrounds that are represented in our membership. Furthermore, the membership should in theory, be reflected in the structures of the GMB at all levels.

Congress understands this is a huge undertaking and it should first begin to map its membership into the various equality strands, so we know exactly how our membership is broken down.

This motion calls for a CEC report to be prepared for the 2016 Regional Equality Conference.

Outlining this general data, along with any recommendations on how the union intends to move this issue forward to ensure that the GMB Union is representative and proportionate of the members they seek to serve.

EALING BRANCH
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. L. CULHANE (London): First time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)*
Congress, equality is the heartbeat of our Union. Every day we all fight to ensure that there is a fair and equal environment in the workplace but we must also ensure this is the case within our own union structures; after all, the face of union membership is ever changing.

A report on union membership recently published by the Department for Business, Innovation, & Skills, has confirmed what we already know. It states that not only are there more women in work than men but the women are more likely to be in a trade union. As we know, here in the GMB, 50% of our members are women. The report also states that older workers account for a much larger proportion of union members than young workers so, in effect, we have a demographic time bomb waiting to go off.

Can we say that members we serve are represented within union structures? We cannot be sure as we do not have accurate information on how the membership breaks down. However, we can hazard a guess that women, BME, LGBT, Youth & Disabled strands, are not well represented within our union structures. With our towns and cities becoming more and more multicultural, the working face of Britain becomes ever more diverse. It is therefore essential that we remain connected with the workforce and in return that workforce must feel a positive connection with the trade union. In reality, most members never need representation in a disciplinary or a grievance hearing but we can give them more and they, too, can feel part of the Union family.

I am proud to see the work that our award-winning colleagues in the London Region have done as part of the GMB Race Group, where they have already started the process of engaging with BME members. Last year, they screened *Step Forward Youth*, a powerful adaptation of the struggle experienced by Brixton's black youths in the 1970s. It was a huge success and you would not have found a seat in National Office to watch it.

In conjunction with GMB Shout, the Race Group has also been involved with joint events around LGBT history month earlier in the year along with a *Racism in the Rainbow* event at TUC LGBT Conference later this month. Furthermore, the successful London Region Women's Conference was attended by nearly 100 activists and it mobilised 20 female activists who were previously dormant but now want to get more involved in the Trades Union Movement. The London Region has also set up a

self-organised Disability Forum and the work of the Young Members Network goes without saying.

We have much to celebrate, Congress, but more can be done. In a TUC equality audit we have to give data on the demographic make-up of our Union but I am not sure we are in a position to give a positive response. A one-size-fits-all approach is not necessarily inclusive and we risk alienating some of the groups that this trade union has fought tooth and nail for. A 21st century union must be a union that reflects the face of its membership from top to bottom. A mapping exercise will allow us to look at our membership, the fabric of the GMB, and allow us to start becoming a pioneer in pushing through a positive diversity agenda in the Trades Union Movement. I urge you all to support and I formally move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Secunder.

BRO. G. BRUNNING (London): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, as activists and workplace organisers we endeavour to map and build comprehensive profiles of members as the face of the membership we represent on a daily basis is ever changing. We do this so to better help and support them and enabling us to get the best possible outcome when representing them. If we do this when dealing with individual members within the GMB, should we not do the same across the whole of the GMB as our membership becomes increasingly more multicultural and diverse.

If we want to best represent women, BME, LGBT, Youth, and the Disabled strands within the GMB an equality mapping exercise will allow us to do this. It is the right and logical thing to do otherwise the GMB will not be as it should be, at the forefront of the Trades Union Movement when it comes to promoting a positive equality and diverse agenda for its membership but will drift into obscurity if it does not take decisive action now to actually map all equality strands. Please support the motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Gordon. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate?

BRO. P. EVEREST (Southern): President, Congress, first time speaker, first time delegate. (*Applause*) I would just like to support the Midlands motion for Women in Sport. Due to the support I received from the GMB I have been fortunate enough to coach a young lady who is 20. She has learning disabilities but she is also female and she went to the European Games in Belgium and also the World Games in Los Angeles last year, at both of which she became European and World Champion. (*Applause*)

Due to the GMB support I was able to enable that young lady to fulfil her dreams. She was also able to produce performances beyond her wildest dreams. Ten years ago when I first started coaching her she could not even speak. She refers to me as her “grumpy coach”. However, that being the case, as I say the GMB promoted her within the magazine but she has had no, and I mean no, other public recognition at all other than a couple of lines in the British Judo Association magazine. We have had nothing else since then. So, I would just like to say support this motion for women in sport. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks very much. Congress, I apologise to the delegates whose names are not coming up on the monitor but the computer has crashed. When you go to the internet will you please put it right? I now ask Midland, do you accept the qualification? Speak to Mary. Oh, sorry, Judith. I did not mean to forget you.

SIS. J. BATSON (CEC, Commercial Services): Good morning, President, Congress, speaking on behalf of the CEC responding on a group of motions which I will run through in the order they have been debated.

Firstly, on Motion 50, Respect Women in Sport, the CEC supports this issue and a similar motion was carried at Congress last year asking GMB to sponsor the England Women's Football Team. As a result, we wrote to the Football Association, who responded with details of the costs. This was outside our normal sponsorship range. The GMB will continue to work with regions to identify opportunities for GMB to get involved with women's sports. Some GMB regions already sponsor women's football teams, such as the Doncaster Rovers Belles and the Sheffield Football Club Ladies Team. The qualification is that we should aim for parity of sponsorship although a target of achieving this immediately is not practical.

On Motion 66, Positive Action, the remit of the CEC Women's Taskforce set by Congress 2013 is to look at ways of increasing participation of women across all GMB structures. The qualification is that to date pilot leadership training courses for women members and employees have been developed and have been run in two regions. A new programme could be developed on these foundations nationally and recommended to regions to deliver. Furthermore, there are motions on the agenda to look at our equality representation within our structures.

On Motion 75, Equality Mapping, the qualification is that the ability to input and identify data on a number of equality strands already exists within the GMB membership system. However, the monitoring and capturing of data would need to be discussed between the Equality and IT Departments.

Congress, to recap, the CEC is asking you to support Motions 50, 66, and 75 with these qualifications. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Judith, thank you. Can I say this is Judith's first time speaking at Congress. Well done. Well, it is now as a CEC member! (*Applause*) I go back to the script, can I ask Midland? Yes? (*Agreed*) Southern? Yes. (*Agreed*) London? Yes. (*Agreed*) Okay, with that in mind, Motions 50, 66, and 75 to the vote, all those in favour please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 50 was CARRIED.

Motion 66 was CARRIED.

Motion 75 was CARRIED.

ELEANOR MARX AWARD

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, as you can see I have been joined on the stage by Rachel. It gives me great pleasure to announce the inaugural award in the memory of

Eleanor Marx. Last year Congress agreed a motion which called for an annual Eleanor Marx Day to celebrate the cofounder of the union. I am proud to announce that London and Southern Regions organised the first Eleanor Marx Day in January. I am pleased to have Rachel Holmes with us to present this first award. Rachel Holmes is a great friend of the GMB. She is a passionate and gifted historian and a great campaigner in her own right. She is the author of the Eleanor Marx's biography. She has also written *Fifty Shades of Feminism* and is currently working on a biography of Sylvia Pankhurst. I will ask Rachel to say a few words before presenting the award.

RACHEL HOLMES, AUTHOR, ADDRESSED CONGRESS

RACHEL HOLMES: Thank you, President, and thank you all. I am very proud to be at Congress and it is a privilege to endorse and support the giving of a prize in Eleanor Marx's name. I think it would be very proud for her too, to recognise the advent of the 50/50 membership. In her day, after 1889 when she co-founded the Union, there were many women amongst the gas workers and she set up the first women gas workers chapters. I feel that she is sitting somewhere, I think probably just up there at the back; her presence is here.

She inspired me as her biographer and I think that she inspires and has inspired a whole new generation of women activists, organisers, and campaigners, and there are many aspects to her legacy which this award encompasses, but one in particular I think is really important, that Eleanor Marx was tireless in her words and deeds, the importance of education and skills training, and the absolute necessity for education and skills training for people, for their participation, and thus particularly for women to join in at every level.

She also, I think, still inspires us as a socialist at a time when our fellow human beings, refugees, are drowning in the Mediterranean, at a time where we are struggling against zero-hours contracts. Her internationalism remains as important today as in her own day, as alongside her socialism she was very, very focused on the drive for equality, to be in a place where our neighbours are also having to go to food banks too much would shock her, and her internationalism also would lead her to due concern that some would have us further undermine workers' rights by leaving the EU. Her feminism coming as that fourth pillar is so important, a believer in women at the heart and head of the Movement, at every level, regional, national, as organisers, as advocates, as regional secretaries, and as general secretaries.

Before I hand back for the presentation of this new award, I thought we might hear a few words from Eleanor Marx herself that remind us of what the legacy of her tireless activism is that is being commended and awarded here, and she would, I am sure, be very proud of all the nominees and particularly the winner. This is Eleanor Marx still fighting for the eight-hour working day at the first May Day in London in Hyde Park in 1890. Here we hear again her spirit of socialist internationalism and her commitment to British trade unionism, and a need for a parliamentary Labour party that represents working people.

She said: "I am speaking this afternoon not only as a trade unionist but as a socialist, socialists believe that the eight hours working day is the first and most immediate step to be taken and we aim at a time when there will no longer be one class supporting

two others but the unemployed, both at the top and the bottom, of society will be got rid of. This is not the end but only the beginning of the struggle. It is not enough to come here to demonstrate in favour of an eight hours day, we must not be like some Christians who sin for six days and go to church on the seventh but we must speak for the cause daily and make the men and especially the women we meet come into the ranks to help us.” Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Rachel. I am so pleased to announce that the winner of the first Eleanor Marx Award is Cath Murphy from GMB Scotland. (*Applause*) Congress, not only is Cath my good friend, Cath has been a GMB member working for Asda for 40 years. She has held a number of posts within Asda as a Shop Steward, Health and Safety Rep, and member of the Asda National Forum. She has been a Regional Equality Rep, Regional Council Member, Branch Secretary, and a CEC member.

Cath is a strong and passionate woman who has supported GMB members and the wider Trades Union Movement over many years. She gives up her weekends and nights representing Asda workers. She has not only organised her own Asda store but she has encouraged others to become shop stewards. Cath is a longstanding Labour Party activist and has represented GMB on Labour’s Scottish Executive for eight years.

She has been involved in the Daphne Project on Domestic Violence and brought this to the attention of the Scottish Parliament. She is a key campaigner on cancer awareness, organising breast cancer screenings at Asda Stores across Scotland and raising awareness of testicular cancer and toxic shock syndrome.

Cath is a great ambassador for GMB. She is truly worthy to be the first winner of this award and I present you, Cath, with a brooch and a certificate, and it could not have happened to a better person.

(Presentation amid applause)

SIS. C. MURPHY (GMB Scotland): Good morning, Congress. I see you are all fighting fit this morning after the President’s Dinner! I would like to thank all involved in the judging of this award and for naming me the winner. I feel humbled in accepting this, especially given all the wonderful women who were nominated. I would also like to thank my Regional Secretary and my Regional Committee for nominating me. I need also to thank Cath Sutton, Jean Foster, Carol Clacton, and Margaret Clark, my fellow Asda stewards, who have been there from the beginning and have supported me.

When I went to college, and we will not go back that many years, on my first course I almost turned and got on the train back to Glasgow. I was petrified. I did not think I was clever enough. I soon discovered that everyone was in the same boat. As there were no trains I had to stay. I am glad I did. Attending college gave me the confidence to go on and get involved in everything I have done over the years. If I can do it, so can you. I do not consider what I do for the GMB as work. I love what I do and to all those who think they cannot do something, always remember GMB is the best support group you can have. There is always someone who will advise and

guide you through difficult situations. Once again, thanks for this award. I will wear it with great pride.

Congress, there is one more thing before I go. It is an honour which no other award winner will have, and that is to present this honorary Eleanor Marx Award to my friend and our President, Mary Turner, in recognition for all the hard work that she has done and continues to do for the GMB. (*Standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I can assure you I had no knowledge of this and to Cath Murphy, who I have seen return to good health, and to you all, I thank you so, so much for there are more deserving people, but I will treasure this for the rest of my life. Thank you. (*Applause*) Thank you so much and thank you to the Committee that decided this. I never entered because I wanted other people to come forward, but somebody else did and I will find out later who it was and I'll kill 'em! (*Laughter*) Thank you.

POLITICAL: DEMOCRACY & CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

THE PRESIDENT: I call 183, Combined Authorities, moved by Birmingham Region, the CEC is supporting this motion and if anyone wishes to speak in the debate, please come down now.

COMBINED AUTHORITIES MOTION 183

183. COMBINED AUTHORITIES

This Conference supports the GMB Birmingham & West Midlands region who note the proposals to establish combined authorities as part of the Tory government's agenda for a Northern Power House. We note with alarm that Greater Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands are now heading down this path.

The GMB also notes that the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) represents a fundamental change in the model of local government in England and we believe this represents a true threat to the future of public services, their users and workers. We also believe that this model undermines the democracy and autonomy of each local authority within the grouping. It undertakes this by imposing a directly employed Mayor with significant powers to override local authorities and ignore the wishes of the constituents in the local authorities.

GMB Birmingham is calling for an opposition to these Combined Authorities being imposed on the rest of the UK and to lobby the Labour Party for assurances that when they get elected in 2020 they will overturn these bodies and reinstate the democratic accountability for each authority. The GMB is also calling on Labour controlled authorities to resist the attempt by the Tory Government to destabilise further within the Local Government Associations and reject future plans for more combined authorities.

X13 BIRMINGHAM GENERAL BRANCH
Birmingham & West Midlands Region

(Carried)

BRO. W. JUSS (Birmingham & West Midlands): When I was asked by my region to move this motion, I had not given the idea of combined authorities much thought. I had not given it any thought at all, actually. Then on the face of it I thought to myself

what could be wrong with the idea of regions having more control, more money, and more devolution of spending powers.

Currently, the Greater Manchester combined authority is leading the way. They have around £22m in funding and that includes £1bn to build an extension to their own Metro light rail system. Then you have to consider that the combined authorities idea is actually brought forward implemented by George Osborne and the Tory government. It is they that are encouraging regions to form combined authorities and immediately you have to look at combined authorities with scepticism.

The fact of the matter is, comrades, that George Osborne wants combined authorities with a commitment to public sector reform and we all know what that means. It means privatisation, cuts in public services and jobs, and changes in working conditions. Combined authorities are going to have huge implications on workers, our members, and those who use our public services.

Additionally, contrary to the regions being given greater power, combined authorities are going to be a way in which this Tory Government will exert greater control on our local councils, and that is on top of the Tory Government wishing to end the block grant funding of local councils by 2020, and that will make councils largely dependent for their income on the retention of the business rates. That will mean councils will have to tailor their policies even more closely to local business interests.

It is going to be central government that will decide what policies and what structures the combined authorities will take. Also, comrades, combined authorities are deeply undemocratic. The West Midland Combined Authority, which is already coming into effect, and there is nothing we can do about that, will have power vested in the hands of eight people, the seven council leaders in the cabinet and the Metro Mayor. They will also have business representatives from the local enterprise partnerships.

No doubt we would expect there to be committees where there will be some trade union representatives but these committees are likely to be unimportant committees where strategic decisions will not be made. Furthermore, the combined authorities will include the election of a Metro Mayor and in Birmingham and Coventry they have already had referendums where the idea of a mayor has been rejected.

Birmingham is the largest city outside London and what it will mean is that Birmingham will exert control and dominate its neighbours, the smaller local councils, such as Solihull and Dudley Council.

It is clear that combined authorities are George Osborne's baby, they are based on a business agenda driven by austerity, not local need, and they are a threat to public service jobs and conditions, and are deeply undemocratic. What we are calling for is for future Labour-controlled authorities to resist attempts being made by the Government to have more combined authorities in the rest of the country and when we do have a Labour government in 2020 under Jeremy Corbyn we would be asking the Labour government to abolish these combined authorities and reinstate the democratic accountability for each authority. I move. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder.

BRO. S. FAGAN (Birmingham & West Midlands): President, Congress, in the motion it states that the combined authority has powers to override local authorities and ignore the wishes of the constituents in the local authorities. As Warrinder touched on, we had referendums in 2012 in Birmingham and Coventry and we rejected the idea of a mayor. We also did it in Bradford, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Sheffield, and Wakefield, yet across the country now we are going to be forced to have a directly employed mayor. It is not democratic at all. It is not what people want. Based on that I hope you will support this motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you. Does anyone wish to speak? No? Before I call for the vote, I call the mover of 192, Political Honours, Yorkshire to move and second. I now put 183 to the vote. All those in favour please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 183 was CARRIED.

POLITICAL: HONOURS

ABOLISH HEREDITARY TITLES MOTION 192

192. ABOLISH HEREDITARY TITLES

This Conference believes that the passing on of titles is an anachronism that has no place in a 21st Century democratic society. The undue deference for those who have titles as a result of service rendered by an ancestor is an affront to those who believe in democracy and equality.

Conference, therefore, calls for the abolition of hereditary titles as a step towards a genuinely equal society.

PARKGATE BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire *Region*

(Carried)

BRO. I. KEMP (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): (*Cheers*) Tenth time delegate, 50th time speaker and I still ain't got any better! President, Congress, David Lloyd George once said a fully equipped Duke cost twice as much to keep as two Dreadnoughts and dukes are just a greater terror and they last longer. Well, Dreadnoughts might be history now but we still have dukes in other arcane and archaic hereditary titles. Despite a parliamentary democracy and universal suffrage, despite legislative and political changes promoting equality, we still have a class-ridden society with deference still being paid to a small clique. Wealth, power, and influence are still wielded by those with inherited titles.

Comrades, it is time for us to move into the 21st century, it is time to end the inheritance of titles. These barons, viscounts, and what have you, are descended from oligarchs who gain their title and wealth via the usual nefarious deeds of the rich and powerful, theft, murder, prostitution, a daughter or two to the king, the exploited surfs and peasants, they benefited from the dissolution of the monasteries and gained from the Enclosure Acts, they profited from slavery, colonialism, the Highland clearances,

the Corn Laws and the Irish potato famine, not exactly a history I would be proud of for my family.

Comrades, even if the original holder of the title was as pure as driven snow, there is no guarantee that their descendants are exemplary characters. In my lifetime, there has been the 14th Earl of Home, the former prime minister, who as MCC President supported apartheid South Africa during the D'Oliveira incident and cited Brian Close as the England cricket captain for class reasons. Then there was the 7th Earl of Lucan, enough said. At present, we have the 12th Duke of Marlborough convicted of fraud with prescriptions, dangerous driving, and criminal damage. That is just three who see themselves as our betters, as our lords and masters, a racist snob, a murdering fugitive, and a common criminal.

No matter what your opinion is on the honours system, and I know there are some think it should be abolished, should be amended, whatever, there is surely something wrong with the passing down of titles. It cannot be right that people hold positions of power simply through an accident of birth. For those who believe in fairness, comrades, believe in justice, believe in equality, then the hereditary principle is anathema. Getting rid of hereditary titles alone is not a panacea, I know that, comrades. On its own it does not equalise the balance of power in society or redistribute wealth but it clearly separates those who want to enter a brave new world from those who benefit from the status quo. Support this motion, comrades, let's finally demolish the *ancien* regime and let's build a new Jerusalem. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Secunder.

BRO. J. GREENE (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): (*Cheers*) First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) President, Congress, there are 650 elected MPs but 803 unelected members of the House of Lords. How can we say we live in a democracy when the majority of Parliament is unelected? Of those in the Lords 92 more and 10% are hereditary peers there by accident of birth. It is bad enough them being there but it cannot be right that power can be held as a birthright rather than through the ballot box. If power and wealth are inherited it does not matter what type of person you are, you are unaccountable for what you do. Then it does not matter whether you are good, bad, or indifferent. These ancestral and hereditary powers were pointed out by Thomas Paine, as he said, "We cannot conceive a more ridiculous figure of government than hereditary succession." Over 200 years later it still holds true.

The GMB holds its reps and officials to account with periodic elections from workplace organisers up to the General Secretary. We are accountable to our members and proud to be elected by branch members and for them to pass judgement on what I do to represent them. If it is good enough for me and everyone else here at Congress, it is good enough for those holding positions simply because of some ancestor.

Congress, we are living in the 21st century, it is time to get rid of these things that were unfair and unjust in the past and even more unjust now. Let's abolish hereditary titles and see how these lords and ladies get on with being plain Mr. and Mrs. without power of prestige. Please support motion 192. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Anyone wish to speak?

BRO. P. DUFFY (GMB Scotland): President, comrades, there is one way to solve it, get rid of the monarchy. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Anyone else? I now put 192 to the vote. We are supporting. All those in favour please show. Anyone against? That is carried.

Motion 192 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: I now call the movers and seconders of 168 and 169, London to move and second 168, and Yorkshire to move and second 169. If anyone wishes to speak in the debate, will they please come forward as well.

POLITICAL: GENERAL

EQUAL ACCESS TO PRESS & MEDIA MOTION 168

168. EQUAL ACCESS TO PRESS & MEDIA

Congress agrees to campaign for equal access to the press and media for the main political parties to eradicate political bias against particular mainstream political views.

The Leveson inquiry has failed to address the political bias of the UK's national press so we, again, ask Congress to campaign to separate out press and media ownership from day to day control so that the public may be better informed of differing political perspectives in like manner to that of the BBC.

NORFOLK PUBLIC SERVICES
London Region

(Carried)

BRO. G. BOLISTER (London): This Congress is requested to campaign for legal access to press and media for the main political parties to eradicate political bias against political mainstream views. If you recall the Leveson Inquiry looked into the ethics and the culture of the British media and recommended a new independent complaints body which media companies then decided to set up for themselves. I am sure the irony of this is not lost on any of us today.

The issue is of paramount importance, not just to the GMB but to the labour Movement overall. Let's be honest, we do not get a look in when it comes to any of the positive media exposure on TV or radio, very little in the column inches in the press unless we are being vilified or derided by one armchair critic or another from the chattering classes.

I am heartily sick of reading and hearing the right-wing bias against most everything I hold dear. To have our own words and ideals and our aspirations misrepresented and skewed against us day in, day out, cannot help but influence people. I cannot bring myself to read the *Metro* or the *Evening Standard* when travelling to London. You know it, I know it, and sure as hell the powers above know it, a so-called free press can control the perimeters of debate, why else do the rich and powerful want it.

Russia does not have a monopoly on oligarchs. We have our own in the UK, although their commercial interests will be registered in some sort of offshore tax haven and probably just to make sure put in their wives' names.

Controlling the debate in the press and the media is all too obvious but to us we do not seem to see the wood for the trees. What alternative is there? Once a front page headline goes up, all subsequent conversations and debates are about that issue. We even now have multimillion companies advertising on BBC every night in the form of *What the Papers Say* showing their front page headlines and articles for the next day. These are private sector companies that just happen to be into publishing newspapers. The point is this determines what the next day conversations are going to be amongst millions of citizens. I do not recall ever seeing the *Morning Star* reviewed on *What the Papers Say*. I could be wrong but I do not think so.

A future Labour government need to go further than Leveson. It must address this toxic imbalance that affects us all in our lives by separating the ownership of the press and the media from its editorial control, with a robust right of reply that can actually act as a counterbalance in any debate. This is not a proposal of censorship but rather just the opposite, greater freedom to say what you want but not without a countervailing argument to go with it, notwithstanding the UK norm surrounding it.

We have to have a voice that is heard in order to head off the likes of the current press and media coverage on immigration that is on all too many occasions, daily in fact now, amounts to pure racism and I hardly need mention *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, and *The Daily Telegraph*, too many newspapers to mention are currently biased out there. Please support this motion. Congress, I move.
(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder. (*Formally seconded from the floor*) Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? (*No response*)

I now ask Yorkshire & North Derbyshire to move Motion 169.

**THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE
MOTION 169**

169. THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE

This Conference applauds the work done by the "think tank" Class in bringing forward alternatives to this Government's policies of austerity, inequality and privatisation.

It calls on the CEC to continue to support its work and to integrate it into a manifesto for a future Labour Government.

SHEFFIELD MCP & LIGHT BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

BRO. J. SHIELD (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I move Motion 169:
There is an Alternative.

President and Congress, for years we have been told lies that austerity works. This has caused untold harm and misery to the vast majority of us. It gets no better. While the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. This Government continue to lie and say that they have got it right. The work being done by CLASS, which is the Centre for Labour and Social Studies, and is a trade union-based think tank, which was established in 2012, has brought forward alternatives to the Tory policies of austerity, inequality and privatisation. We need Labour to make sure that these alternatives are turned into bold and radical policies that capture the imagination of Labour supporters. The CEC must continue to support this work and ensure that the next Labour government does the same. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Secunder. *(Formally seconded from the floor)* Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? *(No response)* If not, I call James Stribley, a member of the CEC, to respond.

BRO. J. STRIBLEY (CEC, Commercial Services): Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC on Motion 168: Equal Access to Press & Media. The CEC supports the motion with a qualification, which I will outline. The difficulties behind this motion, while agreeing entirely with the sentiments behind it, is that Britain's press, as opposed to some of the broadcast media, is privately owned by media barons from the Tory Party and other of its biggest cheerleaders. We support the implementation in full of the Leveson recommendations, something which David Cameron has yet to do for reasons I have already mentioned. Only a Labour government can deliver a level playing field by introducing the reforms within the industry to limit the power of the press barons. GMB is committed to do just that by mobilising our members by 2020. Therefore, Congress, please support Motion 168 with this qualification. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Does London accept the qualification? *(Agreed)* Can I now put Motions 168 and 169 to the vote. The CEC is supporting Motion 169. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? They are carried.

Motion 168 was CARRIED.

Motion 169 was CARRIED.

LAUNCH OF HARRY HARPAM PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAMME

THE PRESIDENT: Colleagues, we are now going to be setting up the stage for the debate. I will be asking Lisa Johnson to introduce the item.

SIS. L. JOHNSON (Director of External Relations and Training): Congress, I am really proud to be here today to launch the Harry Harpham Parliamentary Programme, which is something that Jeremy spoke about yesterday in his speech. Many of you will have known Harry. He was a good friend to the GMB and he was a good friend to me personally. He, sadly, passed away earlier this year after a short battle with cancer. Harry was, perhaps, the last deep coalminer who will ever enter Parliament. He was as tough as old boots and, despite being ill, and very ill towards the end, he still turned up to Parliament each and every week that he could. His last question, just a couple of weeks before he died, was to the Prime Minister, accusing him of hand ringing and crying a few crocodile tears about the state of the British steel industry.

He was passionate about politics and he was passionate about working class people and their politics. He embodied so much of what our Congress passed with our Political Strategy in 2012. He was a working class MP who had lived a real life and who got it. He put that into action.

As Deputy Leader of Sheffield City Council, Harry did things that practically impacted on the lives of all of our members. He brought council housing back in-house, and he introduced a living wage for council workers, and we were very proud to support him. That is why we are launching this programme here today, to build on the strategy that the CEC and Congress passed, to engage more working people into politics and to break down barriers through participation for working people, to help more people like Harry to get involved, and to get more people like Harry into Parliament.

Under this scheme GMB reps and activists will be able to apply to take in work experience with GMB MPs. That means the distance between the corridors of power and our branch meetings will be shorter, that people will be able to understand more of what happens in Westminster on their behalf. Hopefully, when they see that, they might think that they will have a go themselves.

So I am going to introduce our guests today before we speak to a panel of female MPs about female representation in Parliament as well as working class representation. Our next guest is Gill Furniss. When Harry died, it was really important for us that Harry's work be continued in Parliament, so we were very, very proud to support Gill. Gill is a working class woman who has spent her life in public service and has done some great things in her own right, but she was also Harry's wife. So we are incredibly proud to support her, and I would like to introduce her now to say a few words to Congress. Thank you. *(Applause)*

GILL FURNISS MP: Congress, thank you very much for inviting me here to speak to you today. I am a very proud GMB member, and before I speak about your fantastic new programme, I want to say a big thank you to you all. When Harry died it was not an easy decision choosing to stand in the by-election that followed. Dealing with speaking to party members about their votes in the selection while planning a funeral is not the ideal way to stand for Parliament, but GMB supported and encouraged me the entire time. I would like to thank my region, Yorkshire and North Derbyshire, and in particular Neil Derrick and Tim Roache, because your support has been crucial. I started as Harry finished, using my first Prime Minister's Question to call for an inquiry into Orgreave. We must have justice for the miners who were unfairly criminalised, which is something I know that you have campaigned on, along with justice for those who were blacklisted and the Hillsborough families.

My constituency is Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough. I am an Owls fan, born and bred. I know that you have Margaret Aspinall speaking later this week. I would like to offer my congratulations and support to help her and all of the Hillsborough families. Finally, we see some justice for the 96. *(Applause)*

Let me go on to say why I am here. Congress, I'm a working class woman. I started work at the age of 16 in my local library and, throughout my working life, I have worked in further education and our NHS. In fact, up until about 18 months ago I was

working regular night shifts in the Northern General Hospital. Harry was a Nottinghamshire miner. He stayed out during the miners' strike, even though most of his pit went back to work. He knew real poverty and that political change was the fix that. So it is an absolute pleasure to be here today to officially launch the Harry Harpham Parliamentary Programme, a programme which me and my fellow MPs will participate in to give GMB activists and reps work experience in Parliament, breaking down the barriers between the Westminster bubble and working people.

I have only been an MP for a few weeks, but I can tell you that a few more of you in the corridors of powers would be an incredibly good thing. (*Applause*) The number of folk there who haven't done a day's graft or worried about paying the bills is remarkable. Change was never handed to you, to your members, to working people. It has been fought for, and Parliament is just another front in that fight.

Thank you for inviting me, thank you for honouring Harry and thank you for your support. (*Applause*)

SIS. JOHNSON: Now, Congress, we are going to hand over to the MPs to chair a session on the representation of women and working class women in politics. I know that regions have submitted some questions. You should know who is asking them. The microphones are at the front if you are able to come and speak from those and put your questions.

Let me introduce the panel that we have today. I would like to introduce Jo Stevens, who is in the Chair. Jo is actually the chair of GMB's Parliamentary Group of MPs and she is the MP for Cardiff Central. We also have Ruth Smeeth MP, who is the MP for Stoke-on-Trent North & Kidsgrove. She is the lead on the GMB Executive for Commercial Services and Manufacturing. We also have Paula Sherriff MP, who is the MP for Dewsbury. She is a member of the Health Select Committee, but a lot of you may have seen her in the papers as a campaigning MP who has taken on the tampon tax. Jo, we are going to hand over to you to take questions.

JO STEVENS MP: Thanks, Lisa. If anyone who has a question that they would like to ask would come up to the microphone, if you are able to. Could you tell us who you are, where you are from and give us your question.

SIS. E. HEASMAN (Southern): Will Labour give full support in opposing the academisation of schools?

JO STEVENS: Thank you, Liz. Gill would you like to kick off on this one?

GILL FURNISS MP: Yes, certainly. Thank you for that question. I have been on a governing body for, probably, the last 20 or more years, and I have quite enjoyed the experience. It has been good to support the school where your own children go to, but my recent experience at a local school was one where our school did not do terribly well. I was there as a councillor, as a community rep, and we were told by the local authority that we had to go out and look for a partner to join in with us and make us bigger, better and brighter, which we did, because the alternative was to go into special measures and then we would have had some pretty bad stuff happening to us. So we did that. Then after about six months of being an academy — we found a

partner who we thought shared our ethos. It had the principles that we were interested in and all the rest of it — they decided to get rid of all. That is the only time I have been sacked, so I felt quite personally aggrieved about that. The fact is that we have completely lost the lead with accountability to local people, and that can't be right, because schools should form the hub of our communities. We should be there, being able to use the resources in schools at any time we want to. They have so much potential for bridging gaps with the communities and providing lots of other services. So I am most certainly not in favour of academies. To my mind, what makes a good school is a good leader and a good leadership team. You don't have to call something an academy or take it out of local authority control to get the best for our young people, and that's what we've got to fight for. (*Applause*)

JO STEVENS: Ruth, do you want to say a few words?

RUTH SMEETH: Just to add on to that, I am absolutely opposed to the academisation process, but also because of what it means for our kids. One of the campaigns that you are going to be debating later this week is holiday hunger. What happens to our kids who qualify for free school meals or their families just don't qualify for free school meals during the school holidays? Who is feeding them and what is happening to them? The reality is that our kids are starving or their parents aren't eating. Something is going wrong and there is not support for them. When you look at solutions for that and what we can do to help people, your natural instinct would be to open up schools during the school holidays and make sure that funding was in place and kids could be looked after in that way, but because of the academisation process we simply cannot. There is no way to instruct them to do it. So academisation is wrong on every level, and it also takes schools out of the community when we need them most. It is about how we don't just say no, but it's about how we start fighting for an alternative and put forward a different vision for the country and for our kids. (*Applause*)

JO STEVENS: Can we have the next question, please?

SIS. C. LINES (Northern): The common barrier that young people fear is that they cannot get experience until they get a chance, and they cannot get a chance until they have experience. How do you think the political process can help young members get over this barrier?

SIS. STEVENS: Paula, do you want to kick off on that?

SIS. P. SHERRIFF MP: I will start with that one. Thanks. It's a really good question. This is a really, really key issue. It is something that we all hear when we are out talking to people in our communities. I decided to start a youth forum for kids between the ages of 13 and 18. I meet with them every six weeks. We have a Q&A for half-an-hour and then they identify an issue that they want me to take forward to Parliament or a liaison with the local council. We have just kicked that off, and it is about engaging with those young people and making them see how politics is relevant to their lives. They have complete control over what we discuss and how I take that forward. So we are discussing issues like employment and opportunities, and it is absolutely amazing the ideas and the concepts that they are bringing forward. I think it is absolutely crucial — as politicians, we think we know a lot about what young

people think — that we listen to young people and taking on board their ideas. This is because it's 25 years since I was at school. Going forward, again, it is trying to make them see how they can influence things by using the vote, that there is something really powerful about trying to get rid of or certainly reduce the apathy.

Unfortunately, as you are all, probably, aware that we have a government that are tantamount on reversing much of the good things that the Labour government did, with trebling tuition fees, removing the maintenance grants and all the many other things. So it is an uphill struggle, unfortunately.

SIS. STEVENS: Thank you, Paula. We have seen young people getting shafted by this Government, haven't we, on every level? So we need young people engage to help us develop our programme for the future. Can we have our next questioner, please?

SIS. D. MILLS (Midland & East Coast): It is important to promote women in the Labour Party and politics. Will you help to provide paid internships to enable women to leave work and shadow politicians?

SIS. STEVENS: Thank you very much, Dorothy. Gill, do you want to have a chat about Harry's scheme as part of that?

SIS. FURNESS: Yes. I most certainly will be participating in the campaign because I just think it is so worthwhile. It is no coincidence that we are all women on this platform, and that we are all in pretty decent positions in terms of the Party. But it is not easy for women. I've been a lifelong trade unionist. It is not always easy in the trade union Movement. I think that things have moved on and we are getting more encouragement in things like childcare and what have you. What particularly grieves me is the fact that the structures that we work within are not women friendly, and that is what puts a lot of women off. When I was a councillor, we would have scrutiny-board meetings at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. If you have young children, you want to be at the school gates, don't you, really? That is the ideal world where you can balance your job with your childcare. So we have lots of very practical things that we can look at. Most certainly the Harry Harpham Campaign is exactly what you were asking for: male, female, whatever. Come along and work with us and see what it is like there and see if you would like the job. Personally, I have applied to go on the Women and Equalities Select Committee, because I am very passionate about getting more women into politics, and all groups that are under represented, because we are under represented in every area. We have got to work together to make that come right. *(Applause)*

SIS. STEVENS: Thanks, Gill.

SIS. Y, THOMAS (Birmingham & West Midlands): We all know that there is a rise in prices within the care sector. My question is: how do we tackle the crisis within the care sector?

SIS. STEVENS: Thank you very much, Yvonne. Ruth, do you want to have a go at how do we tackle the crisis in the care sector?

SIS. R. SMEETH MP: Absolutely. Well done. That was a brilliant question from my region. Before I answer that, I want to say that I was elected last year, so I am a new MP, and I wouldn't have been selected or elected without the help of the GMB in my region, of Lisa and of Tim Roache. For that I am really, really grateful. So thank you. *(Applause)*

In terms of the care crisis, we are seeing it every day. Every month at my surgeries I have people coming to me who don't know where to go, they don't know what services to access, and the bit that I have never been able to get my head round is that the people who we ask to look after the most vulnerable in our community are treated appallingly and paid worse. There is no Government scheme. This whole idea of integrated health and social care is not working. The Act that they have introduced is a disgrace. There is no dignity as you get older. What we have to do is to be honest. Let's invest and support care workers and make sure that they get everything they need, given that they are looking after the most important and vulnerable in our community. Today is the anniversary of the D-Day landings. We have people who served in the Second World War who are in care homes and we are not resourcing them well enough. We are not looking after them well enough. In my own constituency, in the last 10 days, we have had the announcement of a care home closure. That is more GMB jobs. For what reason? We still need the care homes. We still need people looked after. So we have got to do this properly. We've got to invest and take responsibility for those people who have taken responsibility for us over the last 70 years. We owe them this debt so let's start looking after them. *(Applause)*

SIS. STEVENS: Can we have our next questioner, please?

SIS. L. PARKER DELAZ AJETE (GMB Wales and South West): How would you suggest that women be encouraged to become more politically active?

SIS. SHERRIFF MP: I started off as a union shop steward, like many of you here today. I became a councillor. I had quite a difficult election to become a councillor. It was an all-women shortlist, which I absolutely advocate. I am really, really proud that the Labour Party is taking that positive action to try and encourage more representative councils and Parliament. Then I decided to stand for Parliament, again with a huge amount of help and support from the GMB. I was told that a woman would never win the seat that I went for, so that, genuinely, really empowered me. I think there are a number of things we have to do. We have to continue with positive discrimination until we see a Parliament that is much more reflective in terms of the gender balance. A pretty stark statistic is that there are more male MPs in this current Parliament than there have ever been female MPs. Clearly, we have a lot more work to do. I know that 44% of Labour Party MPs are female, but only 29% overall are in Parliament. Once again, it is about making politics more relevant. I'm working class. I've never been to university. I sometimes think that when people hear me speak and realise that I am a northern woman, they think "She can't be an MP". I'm never going to be the greatest advocate in talking about economic or fiscal matters, but you can effect real change. We took on the Government on the tampon tax. We have done some campaigns around gender pricing and various other things. I am about to start a campaign about getting the menopause recognised under the Disability

Discrimination Act. It is making working class women as well realise that they have a part to play in democracy. (*Applause*)

SIS. S. KEEGAN (North West & Irish): My question concerns the continued privatisation of our NHS. I would like to ask if you are committed to preserving our NHS and Bevan's legacy? Thank you.

SIS. STEVENS: Paula is an ex-healthcare worker, so I think you should kick off on this one.

SIS. P. SMEETH MP: I will try and be brief because I know I have just spoken recently.

SIS. STEVENS: If anyone else has a question, we have some time so please come up and join the queue. Paula.

SIS. P. SMEETH MP: I worked in the NHS for 13 years immediately prior to becoming an MP. After 11 years the service I worked in was privatised and it went to Virgin Care. I cannot tell you what they did to that service. It was an award-winning service previously. They absolutely destroyed it. I make no apology for saying that. They have since lost the contract, which appears to be calmer, but I am absolutely and unequivocally opposed to any privatisation in our NHS. (*Applause*) Both the Labour Party and the trade union Movement need to be absolutely crystal clear about that. If I had my way, we would take all of those contracts back tomorrow with no compensation, because these private companies, like Virgin Care, are a cancer in our Health Service. That is what they are. I would be very shocked if you could find a private healthcare company that puts its patients first because, ultimately, it's about the bottom line. It's about how much profit they can make from sick people. Watch this space, because I will be bringing further attention to companies like Virgin Care and what they really stand for.

BRO. A. ABDOOL CARIM (London): The Labour Party has done an awful lot, and rightly so, on gender equality. It is wonderful to see so many women MPs. When are we going to see the same effort being put into improving the representation of black, minority and ethnic members? There are not enough BAEM MPs, either male or female. Thank you. (*Applause*)

SIS. STEVENS: Thank you, Abdool. I am going to ask Gill to respond to that question first, and then we will come in with Tim Roache.

SIS. FURNESS MP: The programme that I launched a few minutes ago will, I am hoping, go some way to address that because we very much are looking at the diversity, at the way our population is made up. It is vital that we get people in councils and in Parliament who represent their communities and know how people live. I really, really, really say please come and put yourselves forward to have a look at that and to get more experience, etc.

Parliament is very inaccessible for people with disabilities. You may know that we had a Member of Parliament called Anne Begg, and she just struggled all the time she was there because the building is not suitable for people with disabilities. Looking at

the wider BAEM community, we really need to put more effort in. We need to talk to them about it. We need people to realise that it is about all of us. We must all celebrate our diversity because there is nothing like it. It's what makes the UK the UK. Really, we have to put some effort in. Do come forward and put your names forward for the Harry Harpham Programme, I urge you.

SIS. R. SMEETH MP: The Party needs to look like the people who we want to represent, and one of the things that is missing horrible is that there is not a single Sikh Member of Parliament in either the House of Commons or the House of Lords. Yet we take those votes for granted. We have got to start investing in people at every level of the Labour Party. The idea that we have a target just for the number of MPs never worked. It is about local government, it's about how we empower reps and it's about how we work with the wider labour Movement to make sure that we represent the people, that we look like the people who we represent. Otherwise, who are we? We will just be further and further away from our vote, and it is nonsense.

We have also got to be very careful about the language we use. I was on a platform a couple of weeks ago and it was pointed out to me that even within the Labour Party you pay more if you want to join BAEM Labour. We charge you to join BAEM Labour. It's like a tax for being different. Since when is that inclusive? We should be making sure that options are available. The Harry Harpham Scheme is a great scheme, but it is about making sure that that is not just at Parliament but it is all the way through. We all have a responsibility to make sure that our party looks like us.

SIS. STEVENS: I am hoping that in not very long we will have a panel up *here* for a future Congress which will be entirely BAEM MPs, and maybe female BAEM MPs as well. That would be good. We have an upcoming by-election in Tooting very shortly, where our candidate Rosina Allin-Khan has a good chance to win, but if any of you fancy coming to Tooting to help us campaign, you would be very welcome. Next questioner, please.

SIS. C. PINDER (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): A recent radio programme highlighted the issue of the social media bullying of female MPs. What are the panel's thoughts on this and what is the Party doing to address this?

SIS. STEVENS: Not enough. Thank you, Catherine. I am going to ask Paula to go first on this.

SIS. P. SHERRIFF MP: Yes. It is a huge issue, and it is definitely more disproportionately affecting women MPs. A recent campaign has been started by a number of colleagues, and I think all of us are also supporting it, called *Reclaim the internet*. It is about raising awareness in society but also working with some of the internet service providers who have got to take some responsibility for what is going on in terms of monitoring, blocking and cancelling accounts. As women, MPs and individuals, we have to be empowered to try and do something about the people who are doing this as well. After only being an MP for six weeks I was sent a really horrific rape and death threat one evening. It was very graphic. It explained in detail how they were going to rape me and they also said that they knew where I lived. Thankfully, this guy was later taken to court and convicted. What made me sick was the fact that he was a father of four daughters, but we send to out the message that we

won't tolerate it. So it is not just a case of putting up and shutting up, but actually showing that we are going to take these people on. It will always go on, sadly. Many of these people are keyboard warriors, but let's start targeting that inappropriate behaviour.

JO STEVENS: Absolutely. Well said, Paula. (*Applause*) Ruth, I think that you have had some personal experiences as well.

SIS. R. SMEETH MP: It is a delight getting elected. There are some wonderful things about being a Member of Parliament, but no-one warns you about what is going to happen on your social media feed. I am a Jewish-female MP. So you can only imagine quite what my Twitter feed and social media feeds have been over the last 12 months and what I have been responsible for. I didn't know that I was so powerful. I control the world. Who knew that? There are two bits to this. First of all, we have to look at ourselves in the mirror, too, and see what people think are appropriate from within the Movement to put on social media. Some things are said to my colleagues that we would not say to their faces, that we would not even engage with in public. We have to think about who we are and what we are saying. If you are a Party supporter, if you a member of the labour Movement, we are the movement of hope. We are not the movement of hate. So there is no room in our Movement for any of this nonsense, and those people should be turfed out. (*Applause*)

In terms of the general public, we have a responsibility to show them why they are wrong, not to engage because it is a waste of my time and our effort. It is about making sure that we say what the red lines are, and that is what this campaign, *Reclaim the Internet*, is all about. No one should be scared at every level about looking at their social media feed. It is nonsense. But if they are targeting people like us, and I got my death threat on the even of my selection as a candidate – that was my first death threat and no one should think about those things – but imagine what happens if you are a kid and you have online bullying. Social media is a massive vehicle for good. We all use it. This Conference is being Tweeted about as we speak. But, and it is a big “but”, we have got to be responsible at the same time.

SIS. JO STEVENS: Thanks very much, Ruth.

SIS. E. HUGHES (London): I am a local councillor in the London Borough of Hounslow, and we have gone beyond crisis as we are in a critical situation for housing. The private-sector housing cases I am coming across for single women and women with children in illegal or very dangerous and personally unsafe situations. What are your views on improving housing, particularly for these very vulnerable groups of single women and women with young children? Thank you.

SIS. STEVENS: Gill is going to respond to that one.

SIS GILL FURNESS MP: I have a passionate care about housing. I was a City councillor in Sheffield for 17 years. Just like you, we are really struggling. A lot of the problems we have emanate from the fact that, obviously, we have no or pitiful attempts at rebuilding council housing, which I was brought up with and which gave many of us an enormous start in life. It is not something to be ashamed of. We need more council housing. They are good, respectable and decent places to live, but this

Government will not do that. This Government supports landlords, and these landlords are charging more than a young couple would pay if they got a mortgage. They are absolutely riding roughshod through health and safety in terms of equipment, such as boilers and that sort of thing. Where I live, we did put a selective licensing in around a particular area in order to protect tenancies there. So that is one way local authorities can work. We also set up Sheffield Housing Company, and we are looking to build 2,000 new social housing units. So we have got to look at policies within councils, but we have to invest in housing. It is what we need. It should be everybody's right to have a decent home with proper services that are affordable. We have just got to keep bashing away at this.

It is difficult in opposition, but we have embarrassed the Tories into turning round before, and it is a fight that we have got to take up and take them on, because it is the right thing to do. Particularly for young women and children, it is quite discouraging and despairing to see some of the conditions they are in, and we have got to fight the battle for them. So let us all fight for decent housing and proper council housing, not just social housing, and let's rebuild our communities because that is what is missing at the moment. *(Applause)*

SIS. STEVENS: Our next question, please.

SIS. G. VALLANCE (GMB Scotland): We have many thousands of members in highly-skilled and well-paid jobs in the defence industry, whose jobs are dependent on the success of the Trident programme. The Labour Party's Defence Review seems to have been set up to overturn current Labour Party policies, to maintain our at-seat deterrent. Where do you stand and which way will you vote?

SIS. STEVENS: Thank you, very much. I know that Ruth is very anxious to speak on this.

SIS. R. SMEETH MP: I am really, really anxious to speak on this. I am quite clear. I stood on a manifesto that was committed to the renewal of the at-sea deterrent. I am our manufacturing lead for my union, and that means that I am in favour of renewal. Even more so, I am a member of the Defence Select Committee. The first responsibility of government and of people to take us seriously as a party of government is the safety and security of our people. In the current climate, that requires us to vote for renewal. Quite clearly, it is thousands of our jobs. *(Applause)* So not only will I be voting for it, but I will be speaking in the debate in favour of it, because it is about the future of the Labour Party and it is also about the future of our country.

SIS. STEVENS: Thank you, Ruth. Paula.

SIS. P. SHERRIFF: Thank you. I, absolutely, echo what Ruth said. I was born on the Faslane Naval Base, which I am sure that many of our Scottish comrades will know very well. So I come from a naval family. I thought about this long and hard. I, too, will be voting to renew Trident, for largely the same reasons as Ruth has just alluded to. We cannot take chance with the security of our country. Whilst I appreciate the threats, the threats that are posed to us are evolving and changing. All things considered, I have made my mind up and I will be voting to renew.

SIS. G. FURNESS: This is something — it is quite a hard question — that I have wrestled with. I have looked at both arguments, both the ideological arguments of not to renew and to me what is a very practical argument to continue. My view is that national security is absolutely vital to everybody in this country, and we have seen some rather unusual ways of being attacked over recent times. That does, actually, focus people's minds more on the issue about how they feel about safety for their families. I went to an event last week with the unions about what it would mean to them as well. We would lose so many jobs. On a small scale, I look at what happened to the miners where everything closes down in the communities. The knock-on effects really bothers me. If someone could persuade with something instead of Trident, then I might consider it, but, no, I will be voting and will probably speak in the debate to keep Trident.

SIS. JO STEVENS: I think we have got time, if we are quick on our answers, for two more questions. I am sorry for everybody else in the queue.

BRO. S. CARTER (Birmingham & West Midlands): I work for Birmingham City Council, and I am rightly proud to say that I have worked in the public services sector for all of my life. Birmingham City Council is a Labour-run authority, but it has a very clear and widespread privatisation agenda. From my experience, privatisation means worse conditions for workers, a worse service for the customers whilst putting money into the pockets of the private investors. So what is the Labour Party going to do both to protect and restore public services in this country?

SIS. JO STEVENS: As a Midlands MP, I think we should come to Ruth first.

SIS R. SMEETH MP: This is how to make myself unpopular with my colleagues in Birmingham, isn't it? I represent Stoke-on-Trent, so a different authority that, unfortunately, is run by Tories and a group called the City Independents, which, as far as I can tell, is the Anyone-but-Labour-Party. I am quite clear. There is no room for profit in our public services. If we have got to bring in different management to make things run better so that my constituents get a good service, then that is a conversation to be had, but in terms of privatisation of the services, there is no need, if they are being run well. There is always a really big conflict when the Labour Party is also the employer and our party. That is never, ever a straightforward relationship. It was not straightforward when we last ran Stoke City Council either. It is about making it clear that we have a responsibility to you because you are both our constituents, part of the labour Movement and use the services. So, across the board, this is complex, but there is no room for the private sector, unless it is in management, in my view.

SIS. JO STEVENS: Gill, do you want to say a few words?

SIS. G. FURNESS: Yes, sure. I think there are things that you can do. It is difficult, but my view is, probably, like yours, that there is no reason why public services are not run publicly. What is the point of having an organisation in that is going to cream off profit when you can get locally-provided services where the money goes on them. Even with the Labour Government we did have challenges. Perhaps you can remember the Decent Homes Programmes. We had to put our council houses into an arm's-length company in order to get the Decent Homes money. We did that in

Sheffield but we actually took them all back into local authority control about three years ago. Also council-housing repairs has been outsourced, but we are bringing that back into local authority control. Also our Customers Services were outsourced, and that will be coming back into local authority control. You have got to have that commitment as a council to do that, where you can. I know you can't do it everywhere, but it has got to be something that we are working towards to see how we can do that.

Local councils at the moment are absolutely strapped. It is just a case, really, of looking at budget cuts. They don't have a lot of choices or room to move because over the last five years they have been cut to the bone, but do look at other places and see what they can do to see if we can make a bit of a difference.

SIS. JO STEVENS: Thanks, Gill. There are some really good things going on in some of our Labour-controlled authorities by bringing services back in-house. We need to promote what is going on there to make sure that we get that spread all around the country. We now come to our final questioner. I am sorry to the others that we have run out of time.

BRO. P. HUNT (GMB Wales and South West): What does the panel think that the Labour Party has to do to achieve the unity necessary for electoral success in 2020?

SIS. STEVENS: Thank you very much, Paul. It is a shame that I am in the Chair because I would love to answer that question. I am going to kick off with Paula.

SIS. P. SHERRIFF MP: Wow! Thank you. We need to consider very carefully the areas that we are discussing both internally and outwardly as well. When we are knocking on doors and people are telling us what their issues are, I think it is important that we reflect those in our exchanges. People are not particularly interested in kneeling or bows before the Queen or kisses a hand and things like that. I think we have been guilty of having been distracted somewhat. Party unity is absolutely crucial, and I think Ruth referred to it in terms of trying to support our colleagues and showing some discipline within the Party of how we are using things like social media and talking to the media as well.

Let's be clear. Look at the Tory Party at the moment. They are absolutely split on Europe. You only had to watch John Major yesterday on the Marr Show, and it was "pass me the popcorn". I think it is incredibly important in the next few months that we really, really do show unity, and have some really grown-up mature conversations in private, where it is appropriate. When we have a PLP meeting and people go and speak to journalists afterwards, it will pay us all for that to stop immediately. We need party unity. Let's try and exploit the divisions in the evil Tory Party.

SIS. JO STEVENS: Ruth.

SIS. R. SMEETH MP: Let's be clear about why any of us vote Labour or why I am a Member of Parliament for the Labour Party. My opponents are not on my own side. The people who I got into power to beat are the Tories who sit opposite me. As far as I am concerned, it is about unity. We should be using this period of time to figure out why we have lost the last two general elections and about what we have got to do to

re-engage with the electorate to make sure that we can win in 2020. The worst day of my month is my surgery day. I do three back-to-back surgeries and I go through a box of tissues because my constituents are coming to me in tears. I did not become a Member of Parliament to hold their hands and say, "I'm really sorry. I'll write you a letter". I want to change the law. I want to change the country. I want to make it a better place for our communities. (*Applause*) Give me a vision, let's talk about what type of country we want to live in and let's get rid of the Tories.

SIS. JO STEVENS: Over to Gill.

SIS. G. FURNESS: I am immensely proud to be a Labour Member of Parliament. This party has always been a broad church. We have always had people from all ranges and views in the party, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. We should be welcoming people's views. I am really interested in party discipline. I used to be in the whips' office on council, and I think that if you have made against a decision, you might have spoken against it in your Labour group, but once you go out *there*, you are all speaking from the same hymn sheet, and I don't see why that should not apply to Parliament. I am really proud to have been offered a position as PPS to Lisa Nandy in the climate change portfolio, and I am really pleased to be in Jeremy's team. I do think that what Ruth said is absolutely right. None of us went into politics to do nothing. We went into politics to make things better for people out *there*, and our priority has got to be to moving towards winning in 2020 because we can talk about all the things we want to do, but unless we do we are not going to be able to deliver. My view is that we don't need to give the media excuses. They will talk about us and look at us through a prism and completely misrepresent us. Let them look at the Tory Party and actually start talking about them. Let us not give them excuses or give them even a hint that there is anything to look at, because I know that all the Labour MPs I know are there to win elections. That is the whole point of it. We want to make life better for working people. Thank you.

SIS. JO STEVENS: I am going to take slight advantage of the Chair because I want to have my say on this one. I have been an MP for a year, just like Paula and Ruth. Gill has been with us for a few months. We are a collective. No one person is better than the Labour Party. We are a collective. In the phrase of the trade union Movement: Unity is Strength. I hope and I wish that the PLP would put that at the forefront of what we do every day. So we are going to have our differences and we should keep them private. All we should focus on is attacking the current Government, because, my God, they're a shambles and we need to get shot of them. (*Applause*)

I am now going to hand back to Mary and Congress business, but I understand that she is going to say a few words first.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say that you did a good job in the Chair. Can Congress thank Jo, Paula, Ruth, Gill who are in Parliament to represent us from the grass roots, and that is what we want to see more of. Thank you all very much, indeed. In appreciation of you coming here, and we thank you for that, would you accept a little gift. (*Presentation made amidst applause*)

Colleagues with your permission, I have to announce a little change in the agenda.

GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT AND ADDRESS

THE PRESIDENT: It gives me great pleasure to ask our General Secretary to give you his Report. Tim. Before Tim addresses Congress, we are going to have a video first. (*Video shown*) Now, Congress, your General Secretary. (*Applause and cheers*)

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Congress, I am Tim Roache, a first-time speaker as GMB General Secretary. (*Applause and Cheers*) Congress, it is an absolute pleasure to be addressing my first congress as GMB General Secretary. It's with huge pride and humility I stand here before you.

The video we just saw – which as I speak is on it's way to every GMB member – shows the incredible, practical and life-changing work our members, activists, organisers and officers do, day-in and day-out, each and every day.

It's saving jobs, it's making work pay, it's dignity at work. It's real and tangible and we have to celebrate it – we're going to do that at this Congress, as we did with the blacklists yesterday — we are going to celebrate our successes this afternoon, and we're going to celebrate more often.

So I want to start by saying thank you. When I stood to be General Secretary, I stood on a platform of being the activist General Secretary, because this is your union, our union.

When members join us, they don't join because that cockney bloke just got elected General Secretary. They join because their reps in their workplace understand the challenges that they face, that they are skilled, confident and competent to represent them in their hour of need.

So thank you all for the long hours, the weekend work, those evenings when you often don't get home until after the kids are in bed and for those sleepless nights when you're worrying about representing our member at the next day's disciplinary hearing. And I want to thank our brilliant President and Vice President, Mary and Malcolm. for your support, advice, help and friendship. (*Applause*) I love you both to bits and can't wait to work closely with you both in meeting the challenges we face head on. Thank you.

There's a final thank you I want to say from this rostrum. He is sitting at the back of the hall, very typically. I want to pay tribute to Paul Kenny. (*Applause and cheers*) I've known Paul, off and on, for over 30 years but it was only during our handover period that I got up close and personal with him. And Congress, YES it's a Bromance! His warmth, his fun, his friendship, his skills, foresight and experience. A wonderful man!

I was at a retirement do the GMB Parliamentary Group threw for Paul a few months ago. It was Jeremy Corbyn who said that, in all of his years, he'd never seen such a smooth transition from one General Secretary to another. "It's usually a blood bath", he said, "but this is a smooth transition." That is a testament to the type of man Paul Kenny is and the absolute commitment he has to our union. I want to say this

unequivocally: Our union is still here today, let alone growing, because of the work that you, Paul, have done. (*Applause*)

So thank you Paul, for everything you have done for GMB, and for continuing to do it because, despite your best efforts to retire, we keep finding things for you to do. And my love and best wishes to Pat. Another fighter and fantastic person. Pat, we love you and thank you for everything. (*Applause*)

Congress, this union has been my life. I started out in the GMB London region post room at the age of 17. From the moment I started working here, it all fit for me. I had an employer who not only treated me well, but encouraged me to do better. From the post room I was given very little choice about whether to advance or not. My boss at the time, who some of you will remember, Harry Robertson, decided I would train to be a Legal Officer – it didn't matter whether or not I was keen on the idea, or whether it was something I wanted to do — so he told me to pack my bags and head off to Midland and East Coast Region. I thank, whatever higher power intervened, that I listened. Because for working class lads like me, back in those days, from my background – my dad working on the docks, and my mum was a part-time shop worker – we didn't train to be legal anythings. Most of the lads who I went around with usually needed a lawyer rather than to train as one. That insistence that I could do better - could do more - is a big reason why I'm here today.

From being a Legal Officer, I went on to be an Organiser, working across the public and private sectors. I organised one of the earliest school's recruitment campaign in Notts County Council. I also remember organising our clothing and textile section membership, celebrating with Kath Slater – the Branch Secretary at the time – when we reached the 1000 member milestone in the branch.

But then times changed. On almost a weekly basis those clothing factories were closed one by one. I watched our brilliantly skilled women members left broken, going from skilled work to stacking shelves, their jobs shipped offshore. A story that is far too prevalent still today.

I moved on to be a Senior Organiser for the central team, and that was my first foray, my first experience of management. It taught me a few things very well, and I worked very closely with Andy Worth that different people have different strengths and bring different things to the team, and you have to treat them differently. We did so. We moved the central team in the Midland Region from the bottom to the top in terms of our success and our performance. It was a fantastic 23 years in Midland Region. I have some wonderful friends, colleagues and comrades who I will remember for ever. Then, as you will all know, nine years ago I was appointed Regional Secretary of Yorkshire and North Derbyshire, joining, frankly, the noisiest delegation a Regional Secretary could hope to be part of. (*Cheering*) They never used to do that when I was there. Together we created a region that people are proud to be a part of, a region that went from 55,000 to 64,000. It's a region, and it is no coincidence at all, where we built our activist base from 300 to 1,300. That was the key to our success. Because it's you, our reps that will always build our union. That's a track record I stood on to be our General Secretary, and that's the sort of General Secretary I'm going to be.

But we can't kid ourselves about the challenges ahead, the challenges that by working with Mary and Malcolm I intend to meet. Congress, the world of work is changing. The working world my daughters are entering today is a long way from the one I started out in. I might be showing my age but who would have thought that people now would carry a handheld computer when 20 years ago you could not even envisage that happening. Twenty years ago I could not even envisage that I would be sitting on a train ordering my shopping. That was a thing of science fiction films when I was a kid. Now it's how many workers get their work, as crowd working and apps replace employment agencies and job ads.

As the world changes, we need to change with it. That's why everything you have and will hear at this Congress is about building a 21st century union. 21st century work needs:

21st century organisation,

21st century communication,

21st century politics,

and, yes, a 21st century Congress as well. But that doesn't mean changing everything. We have some brilliant practices and stand on the shoulders of some true giants and never will our union forget that, and I pay tribute and thanks to them all. So, what does that mean? It means looking at the world as it is and finding ways to make it as we would like it to be. It means updating our training so that all employees, activists and members have access to the best, most modern training as and when they need it, not waiting weeks or months to get the support they need. It means embracing modern communications, to be an ever present part of our members' lives, because, as the world changes the reality is that when people wake up in the morning, rather than turn the telly on or read the paper, they are as likely to look at their mobile computer and go on Facebook, Twitter or Snap Chat, let alone the sort of mail bags of post I used to lug around the post room as a 17 year old. It means looking at politics a new. I am Labour. I am unashamedly Labour. I've knocked on doors. I have been a constituency chair and I've spoken from the platform at Party Conference but I am not complacent about the challenges we face politically. GMB will be staunch in our support for our Party – as we have always been - but frank in our views with our brothers and sisters in Labour.

21st century politics must work for 21st century workers. That means practical policies rooted in real life, practical discussions about how we improve the lot of our members and an acceptance that the Party can, must and should be more inclusive of trade union members and, in particular, young workers.

As we have said as a Congress many, many times it also means a politics that looks and sounds like the people we represent, and it is not a bad start, is it, when you see the panel of four wonderful GMB MPs who we have just heard from. What a great start and what a fantastic session. Thank you all. (*Applause*)

So let me be clear yet again in my message to Labour. People will not vote for a Party that is divided, so stop the nonsense, get behind the democratically elected leader and who knows what we will achieve!

On Congress, we will have a discussion this week about the future look of Congress but before the rumours start, let me be clear. That does not mean ripping up the traditions we hold dear and what is not up for grabs is Annual Congress, nor the fact that it is you, the Activists, who will always decide. They are not up for grabs. But just this year we had 320 motions to Congress; 320 to an Annual Congress! On the one hand, some were on Health & Safety, on the EU, Housing and the Trade Union

Bill, but on the other, it's 5p carrier bags, replica football shirts and the Elgin Marbles! It's no wonder it's a long week! That's why we're having a debate on that this week.

Please, in that debate on Wednesday afternoon, don't hold back. Be honest, be open, be creative and have your say. The GMB has never been afraid of pushing the boundaries. What is possible, not what is now, that's my starting point, and it's been my starting point as your General Secretary in GMB head office – restructuring to mean that we have the best team and structure possible to support you, your regions and our industrial aims.

We have three brand new National Secretaries – Rehana Azam, Justin Bowden and Jude Brimble. And yes, two of them are women, (*Applause*) women who were appointed not because it was their turn or because of their gender, but because they were and are the best three people for the job. Well done you three!

We have brought all of our external-facing functions under one roof in an External Relations and Training Directorate, led by Lisa Johnson. Lisa, well done. That's with the aim of having a consistent, clear message that supports and advances our industrial aims and brings GMB communication into the 21st century. But, again, that doesn't mean ditching the brilliant Air Wars we have fought to complement our industrial agenda over many years over many years on blacklisting, private landlords, private equity and many more. That, of course, will continue. As we will hear at this Congress, our CEC are proposing a wholesale review of 'training' to make sure you, your branches and your reps get the support they need, when they need it, tailored to the way we organise and represent our members.

That's just the start of adapting to and trying to shape the changing world in which we live.

Congress, throughout my 37 years I've worked in 3 regions. I passionately believe in our regional structure. It is in local workplaces that reps trained to the highest level by their region will recruit, organise and build our great union.

Those workplaces will be in regional branches, branches that submit development plans to the Regional Committee and that play a full part in the democracy of the union.

From this platform, in my first Congress speech as your General Secretary, I want to thank and pay tribute to the nine Regional Secretaries for their support, their innovation, their challenge and for buying into my vision of building a 21st century union. I support you all. (*Applause*)

In Southern Region it's Paul Maloney's team that uncovered the disgraceful bullying and corruption of our members in Swindon that ultimately led to the scandalous blacklisting of workers coming to light, a case that, as we heard yesterday, resulted in justice for so many whose lives were blighted, and not just their lives, but that of their families as well.

In Wales & South Western Region, John Phillip's team has just won a CAC recognition application against Lidl, despite the employer throwing tens of thousands

of pounds at the very best lawyers to resist our application. That success not only be about Lidl, but will undoubtedly have massive implications for GMB in Asda as well. In London Region under Paul Hayes, we've seen our members in Barking and Dagenham fight, not just for their own jobs and terms and conditions, but taking a stand on the future of local government and the jobs, livelihoods and services for this generation and the next. And now through Gary Doolan, the leader of Barking has been dragged to the negotiating table – great work! Well done. (*Applause*)

In Birmingham Region, Joe Morgan's team drew up the Carers Charter – you heard from Branch Secretary Rachel Pincher in the video - a brilliant piece of work highlighting what a vital public service our members provide and what we demand and will fight for with them.

Congress, from this rostrum today I want to give our care workers the recognition they deserve for the brilliant work you do, above and beyond the call of duty, on behalf of our elderly, our sick and ailing people, day in and day out. (*Applause*)

In Midlands Region, Andy Worth's team has led on the 'Dying to work Campaign', a campaign that is fighting to stop terminally ill workers from being dismissed because of their terminal illness. What a campaign, and one that is growing with real momentum. Well done! What a Campaign and one that is really gaining momentum. Yorkshire Region, under Neil Derrick's leadership, continues to innovate with the brilliant "The Activist" online magazine, designed to keep reps up to date with issues affecting, most relevant, to our members. And industrially, in refusing to back down in the face of victimisation and union busting in the two-year long dispute against Green Co, a dispute that we finally won only this week, and we will hear from the reps this afternoon. Well done!

In Northern Region, Billy Coates' team is leading the fightback for our members' jobs in the steel industry and fighting to maintain The Blue Book National Agreement which is under attack by unscrupulous employers. Stand firm, brother. Well done!

In GMB Scotland, Gary Smith, typically leading from the front, is holding policy makers and politicians to account for decisions that impact on our members – from winning equal pay for North Lanarkshire Council workers to defending shipbuilders on the Clyde and, yes, to Trident and associated industries.

I want to pay tribute to our Young Members' Network. Their own brilliant talents are what can, do and will attract other young people to join and get involved in GMB. They've taken a lead on the GMB's '£10 Now Campaign' for young people working at McDonalds and Pizza Hut. These are employers who weigh their profits in the millions, and make those profits based on offering young people a zero hours or a minimal hours contract, if you are lucky, and paying you the absolute minimum that they have to. What a scandal and a disgrace and together we will fight that.

And last but by no means least, North West & Irish Region, led by Paul McCarthy.

Paul, from this rostrum, I pay tribute to you, brother, for the way that we conducted the General Secretary campaign and the hustings comradely and brotherly. I love you, mate, I look forward to working with you for many years to come. (*Applause*)

Congress, that region held their 15th Women's Conference — talk about leading the way — and that tied in with their Justice Campaign.

Congress, this year has been a big year for justice. After 27 long and dark years, Hillsborough victims were finally vindicated and their families given a measure of peace.

On Thursday we will hear from Margaret Aspinall, Chair of the Hillsborough Family Support Group. Margaret lost her son in the tragedy. I'm incredibly proud of the work your region has done, Paul, to support her and her cause, and Hillsborough is also very personal to me, because I was at the match. At the time I lived in Nottingham, and all my friends were Nottingham Forest supporters. I was standing at the other end. If you will forgive my vernacular, my language — it was 27 years ago and things were different then — but this is how it looked to me. First of all, the match kicked off, and then five minutes later you see all of these fans spilling on to the pitch. Indeed, the response from the Forest fans, me included, was “Oh, here we go. Here go the Liverpool fans ruining the match” as they came over the barrier. Then I remember people running and rushing. It was as if there was organised chaos. I remember seeing people pulling people from what you could easily see was so packed from one stand up to another, literally to save their lives. Then I remember seeing people break down the advertising hoardings and run to the other end and put people on them as they were fighting for their very lives. We were all still standing there watching all of this unfold, thinking “Is the match going to be re-played or not?” Really, that's what we were thinking. Then I remember, before we were able to leave the ground, some people ran with this advertising hoarding and put it in front of the crowd where I stood. It was a fellow of about my son's age. They thumped his chest and they thumped his chest, and he responded with nothing. He was dead! That was the first time I had ever seen a young man dead in my life, and I hope it's the last. There were four of us. Then we walked back to my car — I was driving — and in those days there were no mobile phones. It was a transistor radio. One of my mates had a transistor radio. As we walked to my car, he said two people have been pronounced dead. As we got to my car, it was four people who were dead. As we drove from Sheffield to Nottingham, which isn't far — it's 40 minutes — we heard on the radio that there were 10 dead. Then there were 12 dead. I dropped my mates off, and as I got into my house, I was thinking “What on earth's happened?” As I walked in the door, the phone was ringing. If anyone who knows me, they will know that my hero in my life is my mum. Everything I purport to be as a decent human being is from my mum. My mum passed away 10 years ago. The phone was ringing, and I picked the phone up. My mum was in tears, and she said, “Thank God you're all right”. Can you imagine how many young people did not pick up the phone to their parents that day?

Congress, it makes me so proud about the work that the regions have done. But you know what? Not everyone is pleased and proud of that success. Indeed for some, that success is opposed to their view of the world.

This Government showed its true colours with the Trade Union Act – attacking our fundamental right to organise both industrially and politically, not only attacking us but trying to rig the rules of the game with boundary changes, changes to voter registration, reams of bureaucracy and red tape and attacking the freedom of the BBC, all designed to make our country a one-Party state, free from dissent. A one-Party state that works for bosses, not workers.

But Congress, looking around this room – I'd much rather be on this team – a team of 640,000 members and growing, than quaffing champers with Cameron and Osborne on their benches. Actions speak louder than words so what are the actions of the so-called Party for working people?

When British Steel jobs were at risk, the Secretary of State was swanning around in Australia, his team having enjoyed some lovely nights out on the tab of the bosses while our industries and workers are systematically consigned to the scrapheap. Congress, we fought the Tories on the Trade Union Act, we'll fight them again, because we know that it's a matter of when, not if they come back for more on the NHS, on care, on schools, on wages, on the social security system, on tuition fees and on our rights at work.

Cameron, I, on behalf of GMB, have a message for you. Your actions say it all. You bend over backwards to China to dump their cheap rubbish yet won't bend the rules on business tax to save thousands of jobs. You're not the Party of workers, you are the Party of austerity, inequality and misery, and we will fight you every step of the way. *(Applause and cheers)*

That brings me to Europe. Congress. I've had a lot of emails from members who are, rightly, concerned about the EU referendum, and I have responded to each one personally, because it is an issue that will define a generation. We may not have another vote like this in my life time. So let me say, clearly, that Europe is far from perfect, but Congress, seeing what this Tory Government means for working people – it is the final line of defence when our rights are under attack.

From protections against discrimination to a right to four weeks' paid holiday, from rights for agency and part-time workers to protecting equal pay – many of the most progressive employment laws we have are from or are underpinned by EU legislation that cannot simply be swept away by the Tories in Number 10. Whilst it's far from ideal being in the same corner as Mandelson and Cameron on this issue, I'd prefer that to being in bed with exit people, like the snivelling Michael Gove, Priti Patel (surely, a contradiction in a name!) and, best of all, Boris wannabe Tory leader Johnson, Boris doing the work of 2 men on the Brexit Campaign: Laurel and Hardy! *(Laughter and applause)*

There's one issue in particular I want to tackle head on, and that's Immigration. For far too long politicians have stuck their heads in the sand and ignored people's concerns about immigration. When we do that, UKIP and the far right fill the void. There are far too many unscrupulous employers in this country who use migrant labour to undermine the terms, conditions and pay of British workers. These are employers who only advertise jobs abroad, or try to recruit in Eastern Europe before they do so here. That is wrong and GMB will continue to expose that and we will fight that with all that we have.

However, we must never allow worker to be pitted against worker. Migrant workers are exploited by employers just the same in pursuit of profits for their shareholders. It's time those employers shared those profits with those who make them.... workers, our members, by a secure contract and decent pay.

So GMB's Angry Remain recognises Europe is far from perfect but the simple truth is that on balance we're better off in the EU than out of it.

So, when you go back to your branches, please take that message with you because we know our members trust us, they trust you, far more than they trust their politicians.

Congress, there's lots to do. There are both challenges and opportunities ahead. Our union has such a proud past, from Will Thorne and Eleanor Marx, in our formative years, campaigning for an 8-hour day, to the great battles for workers' rights and fairness waged throughout the 20th century.

We see and feel those battles, triumphs and hardships in the banners that are dotted around this hall today. In everything we do, we stand on the shoulders of those before us. But now, it's our challenge, our challenge to take the values our union is founded on and embed them in the next generation. Our challenge is to push the boundaries, the existing order and to build our union. Our challenge is not just to honour our past, but to build an even brighter future.

That means together. Together we will build a 21st CENTURY UNION that we, our forefathers, our kids and grand-kids can all be proud. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, I will now call for a vote on the General Secretary's Report. Before that, would like to move your Report? Do we have any questions on the Report? (*No response*)

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: I formally move the General Secretary's Report to Congress 2016.

THE PRESIDENT: I second. Colleagues, are you agreed? (*Agreed*)

The General Secretary's Report was ADOPTED.

THE PRESIDENT: We now come to Composite 1.

**UNION ORGANISATION: GENERAL
GMB STRUCTURAL REVIEW TO MAINTAIN A STRONG UNION
COMPOSITE MOTION 1**
(Covering Motions 4, 5 and 6)

C1 Covering Motions:

4	GMB STRUCTURAL REVIEW	Wales & South West Region
5	MAINTAINING A STRONG UNION	Yorkshire & N. Derbyshire Region
6	TRADE UNION BILL CHECK OFF	Southern Region

GMB STRUCTURAL REVIEW TO MAINTAIN A STRONG UNION

This Conference recognises the huge strides we have taken as a union to achieve financial and administrative stability over recent years. The union needs a sound structure if it is to protect its members and take on those campaigns, we must fight either against bad employers or ideologically driven Governments intent on attacking working people.

This Conference further recognises the threat posed to GMB and other unions and both deplores and denounces the insidious Trade Union Bill, the clear intention of which is to weaken trade unions by restricting the right to strike, placing financial constraints upon our ability to campaign politically, removing check-off facilities and reducing time off arrangements for undertaking union duties.

Conference endorses the unconditional opposition shown by the GMB against the Bill, but recognises the threat that it presents to our capacity to effectively represent the interests of our members at the workplace, regions and beyond. Although we may plan to fight it and counteract its measures we must also be certain that our union's structures, organisation and administration are as robust as they can be for the many challenges we face.

Therefore, upon the completion of the current Direct Debit switchover campaign in Public Services, Conference calls upon the CEC to:

- Commence an immediate full and thorough review and extensive examination of the state of GMB's finances and administrative health.
- Assess the impact of this on income and membership and what if any structural changes - either in the form of regional boundaries or administrative centres - the union needs to make to ensure its survival as a strong campaigning union.
- Examine our internal financial, operational and organisational structures, including existing regional constituencies, taking into account the effect of the recent legislation and how the union is best served and protected going forward and ensuring that we retain the ability to recruit, organise, retain and represent members to optimal effect.

(Carried)

BRO. I. JONES (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Madam Chair, Secretary, warm-up act, guests and colleagues, I seek to move motion C1. In essence, it calls for three things: an immediate an extensive examination of our internal financial, operational and, importantly, organisational structures, a review of the state of the union's finances and administrative health, and a thorough examination of our structures, taking account of legislative changes.

The vast majority of our income — £65 million — comes from subscriptions. 54% of this income is spent on wages, with 20% spent on admin. That leaves 25% in every pound to do something with. Our accounting teams are using those funds prudently, and this year we ended with a cash surplus of £12.5 million. I acknowledge that we are, de facto, a cash-rich organisation. In maximising income growth, it is arguably necessary to invest some funds in the stock market. We need joined-up thinking between finance and Congress. We debate motions in relation to people working with carcinogens, and yet we have £750,000 invested in tobacco companies.

In December 2015 GMB Scotland stated that Mitie Plc held an unacceptable attitude towards workers and pay. We hold £34,000 worth of their shares. In February 2015 the GMB placed on its website an article criticising the HSBC Bank Plc, and we hold three-quarters of a million pounds worth of their shares. It makes no sense to undermine ourselves and, importantly, Tim, when he has to make important speeches by investing in companies that conflict with our stated ethical policies. This time last year HSBC were laying off our members, yet we have increased our holding with them. I urge the CEC to adopt, jointly with the accounting team, an ethical, transparent and credible policy that accords with motions passed by Congress. It is

our money, hard earned and freely given, but to abrogate management of it without proper control to an outside portfolio manager is unacceptable.

I understand that we may wish to buy shares in a company that treats our people badly, so that we can maintain a voting right to effect change from within. One share will suffice. Please sell the shares in the tobacco companies and invest the money in our people through an increase in the training budget, and by putting funds into the GMB Credit Union to allow our people the opportunity, if required, to avail themselves of a short-term loan at an affordable rate of interest. Following that realignment, I invite the CEC to consider in depth and through a consultative process with the regions an examination of whether and to what extent, if any, boundary changes would make the union stronger, more robust and better administered. Thank you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ian. Wales and South West.

BRO. S. LOCK (GMB Wales and South West): Congress, I second Composite 1: GMB Structural Review to Maintain a Strong Union. Some of us here today will remember the days between 2003 to 2005 when our great union, spawned from the courage and sacrifices of the Beckton gas workers and others, faced a crippling financial crisis that threatened its very existence. Under the inspirational leadership of Paul Kenny the days of doubt and disunity created by previous regimes quickly passed and the GMB set out to re-organise its finances and structures.

In short, the union was saved and its future secured. No one should ever forget how Paul Kenny, very much one of our own, by sheer commitment and ability masterminded the transformation of the union, so close to financial collapse or amalgamation, into a vibrant and campaigning organisation with balanced books and independence.

Our branches and activists are under immense pressure in public services, especially to maintain provision to members in a climate-changing, increasing privatisation, fragmentation and political hostility, whilst at the same time the loss of public service jobs are reflecting falling membership and income to our union. We need to do a number of things but, mainly, to ensure that we have enough resources optimally allocated to meet all of our operational and policy obligations, to set up and ensure that the necessary processes, procedures and protocols are fit for purpose, both now and in the future, to achieve seamless integration with the wider financial and organisation strategy of the union in order to achieve our continuing financial stability and viability, to critically examine where we operate from and whether existing structures and boundaries are conducive to the delivery of cost-effective service to members. Many of the changes that will be necessary to ensure our future may be easier to implement if there were adjustments to our regional structure. Therefore a review of the numbers, boundaries —

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Can you sum-up now? You've got the red light. There are other people who want to speak in this debate.

BRO. LOCK: I second.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I call Southern Region.

BRO. D. MANDERS (Southern): President, I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am speaking in support of this composite. We now know that Conservatives are no friends of the trade union Movement. No sooner do they get elected than one of their first pieces of legislation was to attack the trade unions with their anti-trade union Bill. If it was not for the strength of the GMB, the trade union Movement and our political contents, they would have introduced legislation that was aimed to cripple the trade union Movement and negate our political influence by attacking our rights to support GMB members who are standing for or are elected to Parliament. Effectively, they were introducing a single-party state. Call that dictatorship, if you will.

Congress, the trade union Movement must constantly be ready to challenge anti-trade union laws and legislation. We can only do this within the GMB by being battle ready at all times. If this means we have continually to review our sectional, regional and national structures, that's what we have to do. We should, therefore, now take stock of our strengths and weaknesses within our structures and not be afraid to take necessary action to protect the only movement that protects working people within our communities and country. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Would Birmingham Region wish to come in on the debate?
(Declined) Does anyone else wish to come in on the debate?

BRO. B. HELEY (Midland & East Coast): Congress, I am speaking on Composite 1. I have no issue with the composite whatsoever, but I would advise caution. Let's ensure, if we are looking at the structure and changes, that this is lay-member led. We must get it right from the roots up and that it is not dictated down. If we do it right, it will work.

THE PRESIDENT: It's good to see you, Bill. Anyone else? *(No response)* In that case, I call Andy Newman to speak on behalf of the CEC.

BRO. A. NEWMAN (CEC, Commercial Services): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC in support of Composite C1. Comrades, this composite arose after bringing together motions that came from branches in the context of the Trade Union Act. The Trade Union Bill, in its original form, if it had been enacted in that form, would have been a serious challenge to our membership, our finances and, therefore, our independence. We saw off the worst of that Bill, but that Tory Government is still in power, they will still come for us and we need to be ready for them. We need to be absolutely clear what the importance is of sound finances. We are a 21st century union. If we are dealing with a good employer, where the interests of our members overlap with their business interests, we can work with them in a constructive way, but a bad employer, who bullies, exploits and oppresses our members will mean that the GMB will fight. To have the will to fight means the means to fight. We never want to be in a position where we can't stand up for our members because we don't have enough money in the bank. Comrades, this composite is not about a charter for closing regions. It is a look at our internal structures, our regional boundaries, our administration centres, the way we do things

and to make sure that we have good value for money, good governance and cost effectiveness. The CEC wholeheartedly recommends this composite. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Andy. The CEC is supporting. All those in favour, please show? Anyone against? That is carried.

Composite Motion 1 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, you are 10 minutes early. I am making up for last night. Congress is adjourned for lunch. Return at 2 o'clock, please.

(Congress adjourned for lunch)

AFTERNOON SESSION

(Congress reassembled at 2.00 p.m.)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Congress, come to order, please. If the General Secretary is late we will penalise him. He will have to pay a forfeit. I will tell him about that later on. Okay, let's get down to business. Congress, it gives me great pleasure to ask Helen Johnson to move Standing Orders Committee Report No.3. Helen?

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE REPORT NO.3

SIS. H. JOHNSON (Chair, Standing Orders Committee): President, Congress, withdrawn Motions. The SOC has been advised that the following motions have been withdrawn: 115, The Trade Union Bill, standing in the name of Wales & South West Region; 116, The Trade Union Bill/Act, standing in the name of Northern Region; 117, Challenging the Trade Union Bill, standing in the name of Wales & South West Region; 118 The Trade Union Bill, standing in the name of North West & Irish Region; 119, Anti-Trade Union Legislation, standing in the name of Wales & South West Region; 120, Trade Union Rights, standing in the name of Southern Region; 121, Trade Union Bill, standing in the name of Midland & East Coast Region, 122, Trade Union Bill and the Impact on Women, standing in the name of Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region; 197, British & European Workers Look to a Future with a more Social Europe, standing in the name of Southern Region; 198, Europe, standing in the name of Wales & South West Region; 199, The European Referendum, standing in the name of Wales & South West Region; and 252, Care Sector Funding, standing in the name of Midland & East Coast Region.

I will just repeat those numbers for you, that is, withdrawn motions, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 197, 198, 199, and 252.

Bucket collections, Congress, the amount collected for the President's bucket collection for the Alzheimer's Society yesterday has raised £1,770. (*Applause*)
President, Congress, I move SOC Report No. 3.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Helen, very much indeed. Accept Standing Orders Report No.3? Yes? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Thank you, Helen, and thank you all.

Standing Orders Report No.3 was ADOPTED.

THE PRESIDENT: The General Secretary is not here so the forfeit will come when he sits down. Helen, how much was that, again? (*Cheers*) £1,770. Okay. He may need smelling salts.

I have been joined on the platform by our National Training Officer, Carl Parker. Oh, dear, he is here. We will now move to the first of our Special Reports on GMB Training & Education. You should all have a copy of it. Hang on a minute, Carl, because I need smelling salts for the General Secretary. It has just been announced by Standing Orders that my bucket collection has reached £1,770 and in true tradition as this Union does at Congress – say that again, £4,000?

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Penny, couldn't you have been late like I was?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, god, he will need smelling salts now! £4,155. (*Applause*) Thank you so much. That will help those vulnerable individuals, young and old, who have nobody to help them. It will help those individuals who do not have families or who do not worry about them. Tim, in the normal tradition, Congress usually with the authority of the General Secretary doubles those collections.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: How did I know that was coming? That's why I asked Penny to be a bit later than she was. Mary, it could not be a more worthy cause and with your support, Congress, yes, I think that is absolutely the right thing to do. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all so, so much. Thank you. Now, Carl, take the platform.

CEC SPECIAL REPORT: GMB TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Introduction

This GMB Congress Special Report sets out where we are currently with workplace organiser training and explains the challenges that face us in the future. We find ourselves in an ever changing world and if we are to provide the best possible training and development for our reps we need to be able to adapt to our new surroundings.

The main recommendation from this paper is that we start with a review of the training and support we provide for our new reps. It is essential that we make sure that those GMB members who choose to stand up on behalf of their fellow members get the best possible start to their role as GMB representatives.

Background

The Government is cutting the funding that colleges receive in order to run Trade Union Education. A significant part of our training is provided by colleges and the funding cut for GMB amounts to the equivalent of at least £0.5million. This amounts to a 50% cut and it's possible that further cuts will follow.

This means that the number of colleges offering trade union courses will reduce and that we will face charges to put on courses that are currently run for free. GMB is working with the TUC, other unions and the colleges to ensure that we are able to continue to offer courses once the cuts have taken place.

The cuts are obviously unwelcome and are a further direct attack on trade unions.

Most GMB Regions use colleges to run courses and we will now need to look at whether this system is sustainable. There has been a growing sense for some years that we risk our control of the quality and consistency of the delivery of our training through “contracting out” our offer to third parties and that more of our basic training should be provided in house. The funding cuts prompt us to look at this more closely.

There is some variation across the Regions as to the types of courses that are available to reps although all Regions offer Initial Support and Training (IST) and a standardised induction course for new reps. These standard elements were introduced several years ago but have been delivered in different ways across Regions since then. The Government funding cuts prompt us to review and standardise how we deliver training and development to our new representatives.

At present our training courses can exclude some new reps as they are often held during term time only, in local colleges on weekdays, and during the hours of 9 to 5 – and in some cases spread over 10 or 12 weeks. A proportion of reps do not make it to their induction training despite having received their Initial Support and Training session with their Officer and in some cases there is too long a delay in getting on their first course.

Future Challenges

The funding cut described above is the most pressing challenge that faces all Trade Unions. Plans are already in place to deal with the immediate impact this will have but we need to think for the longer term. The cuts are one part of a Government agenda that is intended to damage our ability to stand up for our members in the workplace. Facility Time and time off to attend courses is also under attack in the Public Sector and we can expect this to creep into other areas. We obviously need to stand firm with employers who seek to restrict training opportunities for our activists.

Our workplaces are changing, with many of our members and reps not working typical 9 to 5 shift patterns. This has always been the case but shorter working weeks and days, weekend working, short hours contracts, term time only working, etc are now much more prevalent.

Also, a number of members volunteer for roles as activists or contacts but do not want to take on the full role of Workplace Organiser (and consequently either do not want to, or cannot, commit the time needed to attend a full GMB training programme).

We are now in a world where working hours are much more complicated for our reps, where there is increased pressure not to take time off for union duties or for union training, and where our volunteer activists have a range of different roles. This means we need to think about how we can be flexible in the ways in which we offer training.

Currently, we use very little technology to aid the delivery of the training and support we offer GMB representatives. At a time where Primary School kids routinely use iPads in the classroom and most organisations offer access to information and learning via the Internet, we

need to look at how we can use technology to supplement and enhance (but not replace) the training we currently provide.

For GMB@work to be successful we need to ensure that we have well trained, motivated and active representatives. This means ensuring that reps get the developmental training they need when they need it and we need to take stock to look at how we can deliver this.

Review of Training

There is a lot to be done and some priorities are more pressing than others. In the first instance, we will be carrying out a review of Rep Training with the following terms of reference:

To look at the way reps training fits into how the GMB as a whole develops our activists and help them grow the union, including:

- What GMB wants Reps to be able to do at the end of their IST and ten day induction
- How the IST and induction can be aligned to deliver this
- How we ensure that the induction is delivered in a way that helps to bind new reps to the aims and values of GMB and the organising principles behind GMB@Work
- How we can secure a stable platform for GMB rep training in difficult financial circumstances that will withstand the inevitable pressures created by cuts to trade union education funding
- How we can ensure we have the right tutors delivering the right course content
- Improving the link between classroom training and the on the job support and coaching provided by Officers
- The wider provision of training opportunities for reps.

This is not going to be a review that takes years to conclude or where you don't hear anything about it for months or years to come. It will start immediately after Congress and will be concluded by the end of 2016. We will be reporting back to Congress 2017 on what we have done and the improvements that have been made.

We will be working with the Regional Secretaries to ensure that the review is done in collaboration with those affected by it. We will also be asking reps to give us their views by a survey which will be issued shortly.

Summary

We face the following challenges in how we deliver training for GMB Representatives:

- Government funding cuts
- Attacks on facility time and time off for training
- How we can deliver more training "in house"
- Changes to the work patterns and availability of reps
- How we can make better use of technology to support training

We will be addressing these concerns through a review of training, which will be concluded by the end of 2016.

BRO. C. PARKER (National Training Officer): First off, a big thank you to the 40-odd delegates who attended yesterday's lunchtime fringe meeting. A lot was said and a lot of good ideas came forward, and it was all good stuff. Thank you to those who came yesterday. That was the start of the consultation process and the reviews that were expressed yesterday are really genuinely gratefully received.

Congress, you do not need me to tell you about the importance of rep training, nor about how important it is that we get it right. Reps need to be trained quickly and to a good standard. As a convenor at the fringe meeting said yesterday, new reps are expected both by managers and their members to be immediately effective from day one and in order to be effective reps need to be trained in order to get started. That means we need to make sure that their initial support training is delivered quickly and on time, and that it is very quickly soon followed up by their induction training.

Of course, it also means that when we get reps into the training room that we give them the best possible learning experience that they could possibly have so that when they go back to the workplace they have more knowledge, more confidence, and they know how they can be supported in carrying out the vital work that they do in order to organise workplaces and deliver for our members.

Now, we had a good debate at the fringe meeting yesterday and a huge number of good ideas were put forward by delegates. I now have a huge list, a list as long as your arm of new initiatives that reps said they would like to see introduced as a consequence of the fringe yesterday. Herein lies the problem, really, here is the rub, that we do not have infinite resources to be able to do everything that everyone wants. It will be great if we could. What we do need to do is take a pause to review it and to see what we can do using the resources we have available.

Of course, the resources that we do have available to run training and deliver training for reps has just been made that little bit worse, or a whole lot worse because of the cuts that the Government has introduced around trade union education. We should just pause to think a little bit about those cuts. I think we are all aware of the Trade Union Bill and what a Trade Union Bill means to unions in the UK and the attack on values and our ability to organise, but more quietly the Government is attacking us in other ways and the cuts to trade union funding is just another way in which we are being attacked.

The current arrangements for funding of trade union education have been in place for 20 years. For 20 years, Congress, we have had a good system of funding for trade union education that has worked. So, why now do the Government want to change that? There can only really be one answer to that question of why the change now, that is, it is another attack, it is another way of keeping unions, keeping pesky union reps off management's back, and stopping us from our ability to organise and to deliver for our members. We should recognise that for what it is. (*Applause*) We need to be clear that this funding is a direct attack on our ability to organise.

Coming back to the review, we should be proud of what we have achieved through the training that we deliver already and the training that we provide for our reps and activists. We already achieve a lot but that does not mean to say that we can stop and stand still and not try and do more. As the paper refers to, we face a number of

challenges in how we train and develop our activists. Firstly, we need to deliver courses so that it does not matter what hours you work that you are able to get to a course. It should not matter whether you are a 9 to 5 worker working Monday to Friday or whether you work two or three days a week and varying hours each day, it should not matter what hours you do and what days of the week you work, we still have to be able to put courses on that you are able to get to, and we need the review to be able to address that, and that problem is going to become even more acute in the future as we face attacks on facility time and attacks on release for training, and the ability for people to get to courses. We just need to look at how we can be more flexible in the way that we deliver our training.

We also need to make sure that we have a response to the funding cuts. Across the whole of the UK unions we are facing £8m worth of cuts in one financial year to trade union education, of which we are affected to the tune of, effectively, a million pounds. We need to know what our response to that is and how we can make sure we can continue to deliver effective training for reps.

We also want to be in a situation where training can be delivered consistently across the whole of GMB where all GMB reps have the same opportunities and chances to develop themselves irrespective of where they work, who they work for, or which part of the country they live in.

We also know, Congress, that training in a classroom is only the beginning of the learning process and we need to look at how we can build links between what we train in the tutor room, in the classroom, and what people do when they go back into the workplace and start to deliver for our members. We all know it is one thing to learn on a training course how to represent a member at a disciplinary hearing and how to face down a manager who is determined to disrupt you as the rep from carrying out your role, we can teach that in a training room but it is a whole new world of experience to actually go out and do it and deliver it in the real world. We need to make sure that people are supported when they go back into the workplace in order to put into practice what they have covered on training courses.

We also want to make sure that we make better use of technology in the delivery of our courses. We looked at some ideas at the fringe yesterday and we have some more ideas to take away but just to be absolutely clear here, what we are talking about with technology is never ever replacing what we do in the tutor room but finding ways in which we can supplement it rather than replace it.

I will wind up by saying that the CEC Special Report teases up for a review, a review that we will do quickly, we will get implemented by the end of the year, and I ask you to support it. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Carl. I call Penny Robinson to second, please. While Penny is coming to the platform, Congress, I will go round to each region to see if they wish to have an input into the special report. Thank you.

SIS. P. ROBINSON (CEC, Public Services): Proud to be seconding the CEC Special Report on Training. Congress, we should be massively proud of the training we provide for our representatives. In 2015, over 1,000 reps attended a 10-day induction

course. Just think about that for a second, that is, 10,000 days worth of high-quality training delivered in just one year. That is just for new reps. In my own region, London Region, we delivered 3,500 days worth of training in 2015, covering not just the induction course for new reps but also more specialist training on employment law, organising the workplace, equalities, health and safety, and so on, and so on.

We are clearly getting a lot of things right in terms of the training we offer and I would like to congratulate the regions, the regional education officers, their support staff, and everyone else involved in making sure that we have well trained reps. Well done and keep up the good work. *(Applause)*

The reason why we put all the effort into training reps is simple. We know the GMB is only going to deliver for our members by ensuring we have a huge army of reps who are well trained and supported. It is our workplace reps who make the biggest difference for our members and it is right that we properly invest in them. That is why it is time to have a proper look at the training we provide, how we deliver it, and what we want to get out of it. This is what the review referred to in the special report will deliver.

As Carl has said, the review of training is partly driven by the cuts the Tory Government are imposing on trade union education and we should be clear this is yet another attack on working people by a hostile right-wing government who are determined to destroy the Trades Union Movement. The Tories and their big business paymasters know what we also know, that well trained union representatives in the workplace are a force to be reckoned with. *(Applause)*

When a GMB member steps forward to volunteer their time and services to help other members we owe it to them that they get the best possible start to their time as a rep. We owe it to them that they have a meaningful initial support and training session with their organiser as soon after their election as possible, and we owe it to them that they quickly get onto to an induction course that equips them with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective in their roles. We owe it to them that they continue to learn and grow in their role as a rep no matter how long they are involved in delivering for GMB members.

This review of training will help us deliver on all these things and the CEC ask that you wholeheartedly support this special report. I second. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Penny. Thank you. I am now going to go round the regions and call the regions in sequence. Midland & East Coast Region, to be followed by Wales & South West, to be followed by Northern Region.

SIS. C. CLARKSON (Midland & East Coast): Speaking in support of the document. President, Congress, GMB Training and Education, I was very lucky because when I became a shop steward for the GMB the GMB had a national college with full-time tutors who had a background in the union activists. But that is now in the past. We now need to move forward and the young people who we need to encourage to become activists and represent our union are a lot more IT savvy than we are. I think education can now be attacked in several different ways. Yes, we do need some class tutoring but maybe not so much. Maybe once a month some information could come

down on your computer or iPad, some industrial law, or some other type of learning. Then things about our terms and conditions we can do in the workplace, and how to represent in disciplinaries and grievances. We need to have courses to suit our individual workplaces. I support any move to have education and training to take you forward. I hope that you all feel the same and get behind the CEC Special Report: GMB Training & Education. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Carol, it is wonderful to see you doing so well. Keep up the good work and welcome back. (*Applause*)

SIS. G. BRINKWORTH (GMB Wales & South West): Speaking in support of the CEC Special Report: GMB Training & Education. President, Congress, a quote from the past that is as true today as it was then comes from internal document Decision 84 and says: For the vast majority of our members it is the shop steward who is their first and main contact and in some cases their only contact with the union. We need then to provide far more background training to the men and women who take on this difficult job.

If anything, Congress, the demands and diversity and the difficulty of the reps role in 2016 is greater now than it was then. The newly appointed rep must receive the best possible training and support. None of us here would argue with that. This review may be forced upon us by the funding crisis inflicted on the TUC Education Service in England but we need anyhow to keep monitoring how we train our activists to ensure it remains cost effective and relevant.

The Tory attack on TU education and further education too is inevitable as it is obvious; they would hardly promote a process that liberates the mind, challenges injustices, teaches people to think critically, and to act collectively. Breaking away then from the ever depressing cycle of reduced public funding may not be the Domsday scenario that some are predicting. We should, therefore, not see this as the end of something but as the beginning of something different.

Surely, Congress, the value of GMB itself delivering what we want to deliver when we want to and to whom must be clear to all and that a return to fuller control is an imperative and not an option. Perhaps we should be looking beyond our tutors just giving out information but instead inspiring a thirst for challenge and change, or is that too radical for us? If it is, it should not be. Collective learning and getting reps together is fundamental to our approach to training but we should also consider alternative modes of delivery, including online and blended learning approaches.

Let's also look at how training is arranged. The report recognises diminishing facility time and the major changes to traditional working patterns so we should also consider how we might offer more flexible access to courses. Congress, this is a much needed and well authored report that embraces the key areas for consideration and will be based on input from all of us. Let's pave the way for the next generation of activists and the ones after that by reviewing and revising where necessary and perhaps, above all, getting our reps to understand why we do what we do and not just how we should do it. Congress, I commend this report to you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Northern next and then I will be calling Southern, Birmingham, and Yorkshire. No? Okay. Thank you. I now call Southern.

BRO. D. TUCKWELL (Southern): Speaking in support of the CEC Statement on Training & Education. Congress, GMB's main purpose is to organise and represent people at work. This is and should be done by local lay representatives. We must give our representatives the very best training and with it the confidence to do the job. We must be fully trained on grievance, disciplinary, appeals, health and safety, and in organising, in addition reps should be trained on pay bargaining, GMB structures, conferences, and Congress. We need to review our training and education to combine the best practice from across the regions, to develop a core national programme for training and education with a menu of relevant courses.

In the course of this review, we could consider starting reps training with a half-day initial support training. The ISTs can be delivered on an individual basis as they are currently but why not make the IST central to our learning programme and hold them in the classroom and in groups. The IST is the first introduction to GMB and should form the basis of our support to our new reps giving them the skills and confidence to carry out their role. We need to be flexible in our approach and adapt to the needs of our workplace activists, to reach those we do not currently, and to ensure we increase the diversity of our representatives, and of course our members, and to give equal opportunity to all. We should deliver training courses in workplaces when the need is there and we ought to ensure all reps have easy access to the training they require.

At our Congress in 2015 in Dublin we saw a training facility being set up in the city by GMB, despite our best efforts we are not aware of any representatives who can access this facility. If it is not accessible to all representatives, we could consider setting up similar training centres on the mainland. Congress, training and education is vital in supporting the lifeblood of our organisation, our reps, our shop stewards, and our activists. Southern Region fully supports the CEC Statement. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Well done. Birmingham?

BRO. B. JONES (Birmingham & West Midlands): The Government is attacking and cutting the training funding for union education courses which has already had an impact on the Midlands area. Derby, Stoke, and Solihull colleges have already had cuts to their training personnel, resulting in a loss of highly skilled and experienced tutors which we may never get back again. Training and support is still vitally important for our reps and the power and improvement, and knowledge, this training will give them is still crucial.

This review comes at an excellent time to see how the GMB undertakes training to make our reps smarter, and to look at all delivery tools possible, to educate and support, to have shorter training modules, evening, weekends, and even online courses, utilisation of upskilling existing reps for mentoring purposes to their peers. The Birmingham and West Midlands Region welcomes and supports this timely review of education within our union. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Yorkshire? Then I will call London, GMB Scotland, and North West & Irish Region.

BRO. K. HENSBY (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Speaking in support of the CEC motion. (*Cheers*) I was fortunate, colleagues, last year to be in Dublin when motion 24 for the setting up of a national learning committee was launched and from that day we now have this excellent CEC Report on training and development. I was also fortunate enough yesterday to sit with Carl in the fringe meeting and listen to ideas that were being brought on by our members, some good ideas, but good ideas that require a lot of work to be undertaken.

Training of our representatives is of paramount importance. We need those people in the workplace to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of our members. However, if we look at some of the employers that are out there, they seem to think it is an expensive exercise to send people away on courses. I do not call that expensive, I call it incompetence on behalf of the employers, and that has to be addressed.

It is not just ULRs we need to consider, it is all our officers, branch officers, even Tim perhaps may need some training from time to time. We need to be across the board with what we say, what we do, and how we train our people. For example, we have spoken about the importance of trade union reps but how are we going to get there. Some of the ideas I have in my mind are about having a national database on all people, a register whereby we have a list of people and their training, and a training learning programme which states that if someone has not been on a training course for some time we will give them a ring, we will get hold of them.

What about the people who go on a training course and then fall from the net? We need to be aware that some people out there are vitally important to our cause. How do we do that? Obviously, you have your standard college training courses, office training courses, but we now have new technology that comes along, e-learning and Webinars where we can hold conferences with our colleagues in a way to learn.

Remember this, folks, people learn differently, people have different ways of learning, and we are encouraging our reps to come forward. We do not discourage people to become reps, but they need to have the right training. If any disabilities are out there that will prevent someone from becoming a rep, it needs to be addressed, it needs to be addressed quickly. There is nothing worse than a person coming on a course and then because they do not believe they can cope with the content of that course leaving it. That is a cost to everyone, especially the individual.

In addition to that as well, think about this, the trainers that we have on our courses need to be competent, they need to be trained in such a way that they can deliver the right material to our people. Me as an individual, I say we should look towards training our people to the highest degree we can; by doing so we can save on the cost and effort of having to defend an accident at work.

To finish off folks, I would just like to say three words, educate, agitate, and organise, and by doing that we will have a 21st century training programme that meets the needs of our colleagues and our learners. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. London Region?

BRO. H. PRANLAL (London): Good afternoon, Congress, President. The review considers establishing a network of mentors from experienced reps to provide ongoing support for the new reps. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Thank you. GMB Scotland.

BRO. J. McCROSSAN (GMB Scotland): First time speaker. Very nervous. (*Applause*) GMB Scotland welcomes the Special Report on GMB Training & Education. Our shop stewards and activists are the greatest asset we have and they are the backbone of our union. Supporting, training, and development of our activists is absolutely vital if we are to fully realise the potential of this great union. GMB Scotland, effectively, outsourced education and whilst there is no doubt there are good quality TUC tutors in Scotland, not having a comprehensive internal education function has been to the detriment of our activists and GMB Scotland as a whole.

Through the review GMB Scotland will be arguing for investment in training. Tory cuts should not mean reduction in investment in our shop stewards. We will be arguing for consistency. We are a UK-wide union and all our activists should have access to the same standard of high-quality education. More importantly, we need a comprehensive consistent training programme beyond induction training.

Congress, GMB Scotland supports the Special Report and welcomes the commitment to education and training of our brilliant activists. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Jim. Well done.

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): Hello, Sis! All time delegate, all time speaker. (*Applause*) Colleagues, there are going to be many good debates over the next few days but this is vital. My region supports this report. It supports it because it lies at the very heart of the strength, the vitality, and the energy of this Movement. It is not just about trade union education, it is not just about how many reps we can get, it is not just about whether we can do a neat shop stewards training, health and safety training, the battle now is for the integrity of the whole adult education training agenda across this land for working people.

I want to see people inspired by education and training to take up the battle at the grassroots. I want to see leadership that is coming from the grassroots that is taking the battle to where it matters. Thank you, Tim, for your compliment to the region before in your speech for the Women's Conference in the region. I see that conference as many of you do, not just as a conference for women but as a conference to inspire others to be trained and educated through events like that so that education is not in isolation, it is not a single silo, no more than I see adult education, read the Glue agenda, it is about an integration of the whole education agenda across the whole of this Movement.

If the Government has done anything it might have done us a favour because I think the danger is we have been sitting back waiting for other people to fund the work that we need to fund for ourselves. It is why this region, the North West Region, has six

learning centres across the region and in Northern Ireland. If the worker cannot go to the education, let's take the education straight to them, and find new ways of delivering it. It is about inspiring the leadership of tomorrow through an integrated education and training and we welcome this report but we must not see it in a silo, we must work together to develop it in a way that we have never seen it before.

The final point, six million workers in this country have below level one qualification and many of those have none. Do you know what the figures are in six years' time, read the report, three million people will be required in the labour market in six years' time who will have low skills. What is going to happen to the other three million of them? Are we going to abandon them? That is why this report is so important. This is why education is so important. Education and training not just for the Trades Union Movement but for the principles on which we stand. This region supports you and moves this report. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Kevin. Is there anyone else who wishes to come into the debate? Silence is golden. Carl?

BRO. C. PARKER (National Training Officer): Thanks, Mary. Thanks, Congress, and thanks to all the speakers that have just taken part in that debate. Congress, I do not think there is any better advert for trade union education than the speakers who have just been to the rostrum and spoken today. I can think back when I first became a rep and there is no way I could have come to a rostrum like this and spoke at a conference like this without the training that I received from trade union tutors in my time as a rep. Thank you very much to all those contributors and well done for the points that have been made.

I am going to keep this short because all the contributions were supportive. I want to reassure people that everything that has been said gets taken on board and we are listening and we will be acting on what has been said at the rostrum today. We clearly have a lot to do and we are going to crack straight on with the review with a view to getting it finished by the end of the year.

I agree with Kevin and other speakers who said we should now view the cuts to trade union education as an opportunity rather than a disaster. It is not a disaster, it is an opportunity for us now to take control and to do things the way that we want to do them, in the way that we train our reps. Congress, we have 10,000 workplace organisers. We have another 10,000 activists and people involved in the union. That is 20,000 people who all have a right to demand training and a right to call on our resources. It is now time that we used the review to make sure that we deliver with the resources that we have the most effective training that we can to cover those 20,000 people who stepped forward and volunteered to represent our members across GMB.

The speaker from Wales & South Western mentioned that a shop steward is the first point of contact that most people have with the union. In fact, for most people it is the first and only point of contact with the union and that is why it is so vitally right that we get their training right. It is also why it is so important that when we deliver initial support training we make sure that that training is an opportunity for the officer to

spend some quality time with their brand new rep to induct them into their role and make sure they are properly supported and developed to get started in their role.

Congress, when we look to implement this review, we will be making sure that we will be inspiring the next generation of union activists, we will be building their confidence, and we will be building their effectiveness so in turn they can help build GMB and the Trades Union Movement. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Carl. Thank you. I now put the Special Report: GMB Training & Education, to the vote. All those in favour please show. Anyone against? That is carried. Well done to you.

The CEC Special Report: GMB Training & Education was ADOPTED.

THE PRESIDENT: I say to the Liverpool, North West & Irish Region, I have chaired 13 of the 15 conferences in Liverpool, North West & Irish Region and was always proud to do it. Thank you. You led the way. (*Applause*)

We now move on with the business for this afternoon and thank all those who participated in the discussion. It was quick, lively, and to the point.

UNION ORGANISATION: EDUCATION & TRAINING

THE PRESIDENT: I now ask the movers of 61, Lifelong Learning Opportunities for GMB Members, North West & Irish Region; Trade Union Education, Composite 4, to be moved by London, seconded by Southern, and priority in debate for Midland; 65, Branch Secretary Training, Southern Region to move. Then I will move to Composite 5, Apprenticeship System and the Apprenticeship Levy (Motions 67 and 68 which are incorporated), GMB Scotland to move and Southern Region to second. Thank you. I now ask North West & Irish Region to move 61, please.

LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GMB MEMBERS MOTION 61

61. LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GMB MEMBERS

This Congress calls on the GMB to develop a national lifelong learning training and education offer to all members. Education is a key to the GMB's success and its offer to members. We call upon the GMB to examine ways in which opportunities can be extended beyond traditional Trade Union education.

Lifelong learning has already proven to be valuable recruitment and engagement tool across all sectors within the union. The development of such an offer would not only increase members' opportunities and benefits but would also engage members outside of these traditional industrial settings.

This motion asks that the opportunities and methods in which lifelong learning can be presented to members and the wider community be explored fully in working towards a coherent regional and national training offer. The current system excludes members depending on their geographical location. In light of technological advances and affordability of

distance learning platforms, many of these barriers to learning can be overcome for GMB members.

Congress, this is a vital service the union should offer against the background of significant cuts in adult education budgets and the expectation by government that employees and those seeking further skills should pay for it themselves through loans.

P42 BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

BRO. D. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): I want to start by sharing some words: give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime: never a truer word spoken when it comes to education. Education is and always will be core to union business. The Union Learning Agenda and access to Lifelong Learning is probably one of the most positive life-changing services we can offer within our workplaces.

In my own region I am proud to call myself a Union Learning Rep and work on the Union Learning Fund Project *Reach Out*. I also work alongside colleagues from other regions with similar projects and see daily the difference Lifelong Learning makes to people's lives. The latest Glue magazines that you have seen on your desks this morning tells some of that story. These projects since 2010 have supported over 11,000 members, recruited over 7,000 new members, and trained over 800 Union Learning Reps.

This motion is asking to explore new opportunities and methods of delivering Lifelong Learning opportunities to members nationally, ensuring a coherent regional and national training offer. The current system excludes members depending on their geographical location but in light of technological advances and affordability of distance learning platforms this could be one way in which we extend this vital service. Adult and further education is currently experiencing its most challenging period in history against the background of significant cuts and the expectation by government that employees now seeking to improve their career and life opportunities should have to pay for training at almost every level.

We need to make training accessible to all. If Cameron and Osborne think education is expensive, they will get a shock when they realise the price of ignorance. Currently, we are too dependent on the third party providers and sources of funding which can often dictate the learning agenda. We need to take that control back, supporting and training according to the needs of our members and not just to the tune of the Government policy or funding bodies. A fairer structured GMB Lifelong Learning strategy would ensure our members have access to and engage on quality, focus, support, and training quickly. Education helps people in times of redundancy. Education helps people find employment. Education provides hope. Education helps improve life opportunities. Education helps job security. Education improves people's health. Education helps people in times of financial crisis. It empowers people to challenge injustice and inequalities. Education shapes the world in which we live. Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you are to live for ever. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, David. You can tell it was a family affair, can't you? Formally? Okay. You jumped the gun there, then, didn't you, David.

The motion was formally seconded.

THE PRESIDENT: Anyone wish to come in on this particular debate? No? The CEC is supporting this with a qualification but we will give you that later. I now move to Composite 4, to be moved by London Region, Southern Region to second, and Midland Region gets priority in debate.

COMPOSITE 4
TRADE UNION EDUCATION FOR GMB MEMBERS
(Covering Motions 62, 63, and 64)

C4 Covering Motions:

62	UNION EDUCATION	London Region
63	MORE EDUCATION FOR UNION REPS	Southern Region
64	REFRESHER TRAINING FOR REPS	Midland & East Coast Region

TRADE UNION EDUCATION FOR GMB MEMBERS

Knowledge is the most powerful weapon and all Reps need to update their skills to provide a good service to the membership.

Conference truly believes that knowledge is the best weapon in our daily fight, not least against H.R. To be given the opportunity to be educated to higher levels in order to gain real qualifications, e.g. in H&S, The Law at Work, Equalities – to name a few, will help give union reps the tools they need. It would also give some reps the opportunity to develop their skills and enable them to undertake further education.

This Congress notes that Trade Union education is suffering from attacks and cuts in funding from this Government (along with everything else).

Our reps must not suffer from the lack of proper TU education to equip them to do their job in this difficult time. The British Trade Union education system has long been admired internationally and we cannot afford not to adapt and develop it.

This Conference calls for more education for union reps and resolves to:

- Do a cost study of providing a two-day refresher training course for all Reps who have been in post for more than five years and who haven't received any training since their initial training.
- To set up "Train the Trainers" courses in all regions. Within the GMB, we have many very skilled and talented members who could deliver training for other reps on a branch or area basis. This would enable skill-sharing with small expense to great benefit of the union. GMB would thus continue to deliver high quality education, rather than just rely on officers using their own chequered past stories and experience.

(Referred)

SIS. A. COUSIN (London): President, Congress, this motion was conceived before I knew about the CEC Special Report on Training & Education. I am happy to see the

content of what this motion is calling for is covered in this report and much more besides. Thank you, Carl.

Sitting here in this hall today is a wealth of knowledge, experience, and talent, assets we need to tap. Lay members could be used to train other reps and members on a branch or area basis. I can give you a good example of this. We have a lay member in London Region, Keith Dickson. He is employed by Asda as a home shopping driver and is our region's national shop steward negotiating on a regular basis with Asda in Leeds. He has skills and knowledge he was willing to share. So, with support from the region and officers, he has put together and trained several two-day courses for over 17 new Asda shop stewards. It is thanks to Keith's commitment and drive that these new stewards have learnt how to deal with Asda's specific issues and problems, including Asda policies and what rights they have under the partnership agreement we signed with Asda at Congress in Dublin last year; rather than generic training it is relevant to all of them. If one lay member can do all this, just think of what other lay members can do in their workplaces and regions.

Reps and members need and deserve high-quality training. It is time to use modern methods, IT, and resources to do our training. I have been on many courses taught by trainers at TUC, I think, who have no idea of the individual challenges reps face in their very varied workplaces. I have worked through far too many out-of-date work books which are littered with spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, and which rely on students filling out flipchart after flipchart. It can be a very boring and totally frustrating learning experience and it just causes you to switch off.

Let's get behind this special report, have a GMB training programme that is fit for purpose and gives us the knowledge and skills we need. Let's utilise the experience and enthusiasm in this Congress Hall and in our great union. Please support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Southern Region.

BRO. G. WARREN (Southern): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) Sisters, brothers, education is the process of facilitating learning, the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs. To learn is to change. We need standardised modules on politics, health and safety, employment law, and equalities, to name but a few, an organising force all to be delivered by professional trainers across all regions, annual refresher courses and training for experienced reps, organised progression routes in order to build a union truly representative of its membership. To learn is to change. We need to constantly change as our world constantly changes around us, aiming higher and achieving more in order to build a union fit for purpose and reflective of its membership; a truly 21st century union. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Gary. Well done. Midland.

SIS. S. STEVENSON (Midland & East Coast): First time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) I am supporting Composite 4, Refresher Training for Reps. Why is it necessary to retrain? Well, do we think we know it all? We know knowledge is power and laws do change. Working times and the minimum wage are just a couple in this last year or so that have changed. As GMB reps we cannot allow ourselves to

become complacent. How embarrassing is it when we are ignorant of facts. Remember when you were a first-time rep how nervous you were? It is important if we want to deliver an optimal service to our members that we maintain our learning and our knowledge skills, and our negotiating skills, and how we use them. Employers should adhere to the laws and it is our role to ensure they do.

So, if we want to be confident to deliver an excellent service to our members, we need to retrain, update our knowledge, and revalidate our skills. We cannot afford to let down our members. I support this composite. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Sharon. Does anyone else wish to come in on this part of the debate? No? Thank you. I now call Southern to move 65, Branch Secretary Training. Then I will call Composite 5, GMB Scotland to move and Southern Region to second.

BRANCH SECRETARY TRAINING MOTION 65

65. BRANCH SECRETARY TRAINING

This Conference agrees that the role of Branch Secretary is an often undervalued, challenging and time consuming role that requires more ongoing support and training than is currently provided by the GMB. Conference agrees that the GMB should resolve to develop an initial training course for Branch Secretaries, backed up by quarterly Branch Secretaries meetings to encourage cooperative working and solidarity across Regions.

B61 BRACKNELL FOREST & WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCILS BRANCH
Southern Region

(Referred)

SIS. N. DANCEY (Southern): This is not a big tub-thumping speech but it is something that I feel really passionate about. I wrote this motion myself. I was elected to Branch Secretary about a year-and-a-half ago and the branch at that time had pretty much been dead for a number of years almost. There were no other activists in place to help me. It covered about 350 workplaces. I had about 1,500 members in it over an area of two counties. That is what I fell into.

Now, before that I came with a few skills, I had done a few cases, I had done lots of activism around equalities and student issues, and stuff like that. I was a delegate to my local trades council. On top of that, I am not generally a particularly nervous person. I am not that easily daunted by a lot of things. But I do not mind holding my hands in the air and saying that when I first became a Branch Secretary I was daunted. There were times I struggled to sleep the night before certain meetings because I found myself thrown almost immediately into numerous consultations, pay ballots, redundancy situations, TUPE transfers, trying to recruit and organise groups of workers in workplaces I knew nothing about. Of course, you always have that ever-present phone ringing with reams of members needing answers to questions and

expecting me to have all those answers. So, I remember wading through reams of documents, some of which seemed really complex to me at the time having not done a lot of this. I did not really know what was important in those documents, what was not, when I should be speaking up, what I should be saying, and who I should be saying it to. It was hard. I don't mind admitting that at all.

It gets easier. After about six months I had learned what I was doing and an awful lot more. It all got a lot easier but that first six months it was really, really, difficult. If it was not for a couple of people around me who spent real time and effort mentoring and supporting me way above their job descriptions, I am sure there is absolutely no way that the branch would be doing as well as it is now and, frankly, there are a few times that I probably would have quit if I had not had that unofficial support.

So, in my region we do have a two-day training course for branch officers. It is a good course. It is a good introduction to branches but I think that every Branch Secretary in the room who remembers being brand new knows that there is no way that two days of training with general info about branches is actually going to prepare you for the reality of becoming a Branch Secretary, especially perhaps in one of our larger general branches. I think we need a specific course, it needs to be a thorough course, and one that does at least give the basics to new activists at a level that is better than the education that we have at the moment. I think for all of us it is very easy to forget what it is like to be new once you have been round the block a few times. It is easy to forget that. We do need to make a very conscious effort to remember what it is like for newbies and offer them all the training and support they deserve. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Secunder? Secunder? Southern, somebody seconding? Formally? Thank you.

The motion was formally seconded.

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to Composite 5, to be moved by GMB Scotland.

COMPOSITE 5
APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM AND THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY
(Covering Motions 67 and 68)

C5 **Covering Motions:**

67	THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY	Southern Region
68	STOP ABUSE OF THE APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM	GMB Scotland

APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM AND THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY

This Conference needs to highlight and debate the abuse of the Apprenticeship System by businesses.

Apprenticeship is defined as training lasting at least twelve months and including 1 day a week off-the-job training. CBI statistics show the reality with

- 10% of learning through "Training on courses"
- 70% of learning through "On The Job" training

- 20% of learning through “Mentoring or Coaching”

Many businesses are abusing the system when putting new starters on an “Apprenticeship” merely to pay the lowest pay rate that they need to pay.

Many of these positions are unskilled, the time taken to learn the job being short. But workers are kept on Apprenticeships so employers don’t have to pay their full rate of pay. This is confirmed by the CBI’s figures that only 20% of training is through mentoring or coaching.

Furthermore, the apprenticeship levy will come into effect in April 2017 and will be payable by employers in the UK at 0.5% of the total payroll costs of all employees. The OBR has calculated that the apprenticeship levy will raise £11.6billion by 2020, which will be used to fund apprenticeships. Only employers with a total payroll greater than £3million will have to pay the levy, however, this covers thousands of GMB workplaces across every region.

All GMB reps, including ULR, should be actively negotiating with employers to ensure only high quality apprenticeship programmes are set up in GMB workplaces. This will ensure apprentices are not being exploited while giving the next generation jobs with good levels of pay, pensions, health and safety and collective bargaining rights.

This Conference urges GMB to support a campaign to make Apprenticeships meaningful and not a means of cheap employment.

(Carried)

BRO. U. ALI (GMB Scotland): President, Congress, apprenticeships should be meaningful and not a means of cheap employment. The footballer, Alan Shearer, once said: “Somewhere along the line you have got to do your apprenticeship, but I would have liked half a chance to have been successful at it.” A pivotal point, yes, apprenticeships support people as they travel on their road to success but that does not mean that the system can be abused or left to be a ground for exploitation. Instead, we must invest, invest in apprenticeships, invest in workers, and invest in people. This way we can create fair apprenticeships whereby workers are respected and rewarded, and likely to achieve higher productivity, and therefore a welcome boost to our economy.

Congress, many of you may recall last year when I spoke at our Congress to move the Employment Journey motion. The Employment Journey was a fresh perspective on how we could set people up to succeed in life as opposed to set them up to fail, as has been the case for far too long. Fair apprenticeships, good, high quality, well paid apprenticeships, was a practical focal point as part of the employment journey and now it is a practical focal point that requires our urgent attention and redress.

Facts and figures from CBI tell us that many businesses are putting new starters on an apprenticeship just so that they can pay them the lowest rate they can get away with. That is shameful, especially when many of these positions are low skilled and the time to learn the job is short, with only 30% of learning being conducted through courses, mentoring, or coaching, and particularly when many apprentices adopt a good and hard work ethic, then to disrespect them, to treat them badly, and to pay them less is just scandalous.

So, Congress, what can we, you and me, do about this? We can take to our branches, our workplaces, and our streets, to call upon governments and business, to use the incoming apprenticeship levy that employers with payrolls greater than £3 million will pay come next April. We want them to use this levy to invest in creating fair apprenticeships. Many of these workplaces are GMB workplaces and this why we call on all of our reps, including our Union Learning Reps, to be actively negotiating with employers to ensure that we have fair apprenticeships in all workplaces. In doing so, we move towards ending the exploitation of workers. We will create fair apprenticeships. We will give current and future workers the good levels of pay, pensions, health and safety and collective bargaining rights that we all seek for ourselves. Most of all, we will invest in apprenticeships, invest in workers, and invest in people to build that 21st century union and that 21st century Britain that we can all be proud of. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Southern region to second.

SIS. C. HYMAN (Southern): First time delegate. (*Applause*) President, Congress, the principal goal of education is to create men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done. The second goal of education is to form minds which can verify and not accept everything they are offered, so said a famous Swiss revolutionary over a century ago. He could have been speaking of our times.

In the last few years we have seen our education system turned upside down and inside out. We have seen the privatisation of our schools and we have seen the tripling of tuition fees. We have seen the number of high-quality apprenticeships shrink. Our members' education matters. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create thousands of high-quality jobs. Let's grasp the opportunity to negotiate with our employers around education. Let's grasp the opportunity to be at the forefront of the key class battle. Let's grasp the opportunity to include thousands of young people in our Movement. Our Movement has to be the movement to capture that hope.

The apprenticeship levy is not an upsurge in poor schemes unless we let it be. It is an upsurge in investment in the working class. It is an upsurge in opportunities for thousands of young people. It is an upsurge in our ability to negotiate high-quality schemes and recruit young members over the coming years with GMB leading the way. Let's stand before the world as the leading union of education, equality, and socialist change. I support Composite 5. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate on 65 and Composite 5? No? Thank you. I now call Margaret Gregg, the North West & Irish Region, to respond on behalf of the CEC. Hi, Margaret.

SIS. M. GREGG (CEC, Commercial Services): President, Congress, the CEC is asking that Composite 4 and Motion 65 be referred to the CEC for further consideration, and that we support Motion 61 with a qualification.

We have just adopted the CEC Special Report on Training and Education which means that we are now committed to carrying out a review of our rep training and that

will be completed by the end of the year. We are not really going to hang about in getting this review done and getting its findings implemented. That is why we are asking Congress to refer Composite 4 and Motion 65, to look at the best way of implementing the ideas that have been put forward as part of the solution to the funding costs we face.

Ideas such as train the trainer, training from work experience reps, in my own region we already have a number of reps who have delivered the training so this is an idea where they have very serious consideration. We know how important refresher training is and we will use the review to look at it. We should not just train new reps and then say, "That's it." We all benefit from continually developing and making sure that we stay on top of our game.

We also know how important Branch Secretary training is. This is something that we already are doing in a number of regions and again the review of training will look at the best way of sharing ideas and best practice so the things we do well are spread out across the Union. Branch officers are a very important part of the GMB and our democracy. We obviously want to ensure that they are properly trained and supported so they can carry out their role to the best of their abilities. We do, however, need to pause and take a reality check.

The potential cost of the cuts to trade union education are somewhere in the region of £1 million to the GMB. This is a cost we have to make. It is simply just not an option for us to say that we are not going to train reps. Of course we are going to train reps and of course we are going to make sure the GMB reps are the best trained and supported reps in the Trades Union Movement. They deserve nothing less and, Congress, I am sure that you expect nothing less than this also. Our reps are our most important asset and I am proud that we are taking their training and development seriously.

So, we have to find a way of contending to deliver first-class training despite having a massive funding cut. We will do it but in doing so we will need to prioritise what training we deliver and how we deliver it. We are moving in the right direction in training our reps and I look forward to seeing the review of training being completed later this year and its findings implemented soon afterwards.

Finally, on Motion 61, on Lifelong Learning, unions have long been associated with making sure that working people have access to continuing education in many regions, including my own, and you heard how Kevin and David are so passionate about it and work with our members and the wider community to do just this. The CEC qualification on Motion 61 is simply that a full cost benefit analysis is required for a national Lifelong Learning programme and this provision, and any future provisions, will be considered alongside the training review.

The CEC welcome these motions and hope that you are prepared to refer Composite 4 and Motion 65 for further consideration by the review, and support Motion 61 with the qualification I have just given. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margaret. Okay, Motion 61, North West & Irish Region, do you accept the qualification? (*Agreed*) Composite 4, does London

Region, Southern Region, and Midland Region accept to refer? (*Agreed*) I heard one. London? (*Agreed*) Southern? (*Agreed*) Yes. Okay. Does Southern Region accept reference on 65? You do? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Congress, can I put 61, Composite 4, and 65 to the vote. All those in favour please show. Now can I go down to Composite 5 to vote. All those in favour please show. Anyone against? They are carried. Thank you.

Motion 61 was CARRIED.

Composite 4 was REFERRED.

Motion 65 was REFERRED.

Composite 5 was CARRIED.

SOCIAL POLICY: EDUCATION & TRAINING

THE PRESIDENT: We now move to Social Policy: Education & Training, 260 Apprenticeships, to be moved by Northern, 261 Modern Apprentices in England, to be moved by London. Then I will call Composite 10 after these have been voted on. Carry on.

APPRENTICESHIPS MOTION 260

260. APPRENTICESHIPS

This Conference notes the under investment in practical skills by a series of governments. Congress notes the dire state of the UK in terms of ability to make things and compete on a level playing field in the EU and beyond. Congress believes that it is a fundamental duty of Government to support British industry and calls for much greater funding to resource sustainable jobs with high quality skills and apprenticeships across the UK.

T25 NEWCASTLE & NORTH TYNE GENERAL BRANCH
Northern Region

(Carried)

BRO. P. SAWDON (Northern): Moving Motion 260, Apprenticeships. As the motion says, a serious lack of investment in particular skills has been a massive problem for several decades, where successive governments have failed to fill the gaps left by apprenticeships. When we had heavy engineering it left a lot of questions but the problem has got dramatically worse since the Tories entered the coalition in 2010, and it is getting worse. Congress, the Tories are cutting back even more now they have a majority. The facts are that in Europe, in countries such as Germany, apprenticeships are treated much more favourably than the UK.

Congress, apprenticeships are investing in particular skills for the future. This Government time after time finds a reason not to support British industry. Areas like manufacturing, the energy sector, public workers, all could help employ apprentices but this Government seems to show no interest in encouraging investment in the future.

Congress, another bone of contention is the way in which major employers would rather just sit on large amounts of funds, and have failed as much as successive

governments to invest in the future skills and the future workforce. In areas like ours, where manufacturing is desperately needed, we need a government that is on our side. We need employers to invest and we need quality pay for quality apprenticeships. If we do not invest in the future and we do not invest in youth, we will become a low skill, low wage economy that so many of the right of British politics would like to happen. We need to celebrate good apprenticeships as the Government fails to do. I second. I got that bit wrong! (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: That's all right, Peter, don't worry about it. Okay. Thank you. Do we have a seconder from Northern?

BRO. R. DOWSON (Northern): Seconding Motion 260, Apprenticeships. Comrades, investment in apprenticeships has taken many forms over the last 30 years but we have failed as a country to have a balanced approach to education where apprentices get practical education that is vital for their learning and for their pathway into proper work. Past governments have used youth enterprise schemes and youth opportunity funding as a way of fiddling unemployment figures. We have also had the scandal of rogue employers cutting the rate for the job as well as the lack of investment in their real skills. Comrades, we need a balanced investment in practical skills. If we do not, we will become a low wage, low skilled economy, and I think we are nearly there anyway. We need companies to spend money and take on apprentices into quality education. We need as a country to get back to valuing young people in the modern workplace, to get back to valuing practical skills in the workplace, to get back to investment in apprentices. Comrades, please support the motion. I second. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Ray. 261, to be moved by London.

EQUALITY FOR MODERN APPRENTICES IN ENGLAND MOTION 261

261. EQUALITY FOR MODERN APPRENTICES IN ENGLAND

This Conference calls upon the CEC to campaign for equality for modern apprentices in England.

Modern apprentices in the rest of the UK, still receive free prescriptions.

ESSEX PUBLIC SERVICES
London Region

(*Carried*)

SIS. C. HOLLAND (London): Congress, most apprentices are young people. Does the Government think it is cheaper for these people to live? With rents at an all time high, not all apprentices want to or can live at home but are forced to unless it is untenable to do so. It does not take a brain surgeon to work out that they may not be able to continue with learning a skill and a lot will stop because, believe it or not, for under 25s the Tory Government have taken away most benefits, so half the time they cannot afford to live. Prescriptions are free in Scotland and Wales. Are we not part of the UK? Why does England not get the same benefit? There is a push to engage in more apprentices but in some cases, especially in Essex, I found they take them on, use them as cheap labour, they do not supervise them, and half the time they are left to their own devices and just paid a few pounds. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Cath. Secunder.

BRO. P. BLOCK (London): Afternoon, President. Afternoon, Congress. I am a first time delegate and speaker. (*Applause*) Thank you. I am seconding Motion 261, Equality for Modern Apprentices in the UK. The prescription cost in England is now £8.40 per item. The minimum wage for an apprentice is only £3.30 an hour. This means it could take over two-and-a-half hours' pay for just one item. If the apprentice requires two items it now costs them over half a day's money. The fact prescriptions are free in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland for all is one matter. Surely, apprentices should be brought into the list of people in England who do not have to pay for their prescription as their wages are so low. I suppose you could look at this another way and say why not pay them a proper minimum wage. As we often hear, is Britain not one of the richest countries in the world? If this is true, it follows that we should assist some of our lowest earners to pay for their prescriptions.

Apprentices add a lot of value to business in England and bring fresh, new ideas and skills into the workplace. It seems to me that it is time as a country that we started to recognise the value added and started treating them a bit better. It is now a long time ago that I was an apprentice, however there are some values I think that were more common in that era. I think we need to show young people genuine commitment in both offering high-quality training, and also treating them fairly, with respect and dignity. Congress, I therefore ask you to support this motion and help apprentices get the fair and just treatment they clearly deserve. I second. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Paul. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate on 260 and 261? No? I now put it to the vote. They are both being supported by the CEC. All those in favour of 260 and 261 please show. Anyone against? They are carried. Thank you.

Motion 260 was CARRIED.

Motion 261 was CARRIED.

EMPLOYMENT POLICY: RIGHTS AT WORK

THE PRESIDENT: We now move to Employment Policy: Rights at Work. I ask Southern to move Living Wage and Pay for Workers under 25, and London to second. I will give the opportunity to Yorkshire and Wales & South West if they want to come in on the debate as they withdrew motions in favour of Composite 10.

COMPOSITE 10

LIVING WAGE AND PAY FOR WORKERS UNDER 25

(Covering Motions 126 and 127)

C10 Covering Motions:

126	PAY FOR UNDER 25 YEAR OLD WORKERS	London Region
127	LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN	Southern Region

LIVING WAGE AND PAY FOR WORKERS UNDER 25

This Congress believes that George Osborne's so called National Living Wage is nothing more than spin.

This Congress further notes with concern that from April 2016, the so called National Living Wage will be £7.20 an hour for workers aged 25 and older but the minimum wage will still apply for workers aged 24 and under.

This Congress agrees that workers of whatever age should receive a real Living Wage of £10 per hour and calls for the implementation of a negotiating strategy into every Branch development plan for 2017, to focus on the £10 GMB Living Wage campaign.

Further, that the national proposal be to adopt £10 per hour as the minimum and that all future pay negotiations should include this as a priority.

(Carried)

SIS. T. HOOD (Southern): I would like you to support the GMB's £10 per hour campaign. Please include it in all of your pay negotiations and make this a priority. Many of our members are low paid, no more so than those in the care industry. Do you know that over five million workers get less than £9 an hour? A lot of these are under the age of 25, with young families, and they have to work opposite shifts as they cannot afford childcare. I found recently an article in *The Independent* by a Tory minister called Matthew Hancock. He says that workers under 25 do not deserve the Living Wage as they are not productive. I have two words to say to him, but I don't swear. My Mum tells me off!

Congress, once again I say to you, please support this motion. Let's have a strategy that every branch in every workplace include a minimum of £10 per hour in all wage negotiations and make this a priority. Congress, I move this motion. Thank you.

(Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Tina. London?

BRO. E. SIDDALL (London): First time delegate, first time speaker. *(Applause)* My partner is 24 and she earns 50 pence less than her colleagues who are over 25. Is that fair? No, it is not. She does exactly the same job and she has exactly the same terms and conditions but the Government say she is not worth 50 pence more. I spoke to my local Tory MP and he turned round to me and said, "Who's going to pay for this? The country is skint. The employer pays corporation tax and business rates." Well, the employer charges £800 a week per room. My partner is a carer. They are going to pay for it, the shareholders, reduce the profits that the shareholders make and make sure that they pay the right wage. *(Applause)*

Congress, we need to go further than this, we need to make sure that we get £10 an hour for all our low paid workers and stop the Government subsidising low paid employees through tax credits and housing benefits. We need to make sure that we get the £7.20 abolished and we get the £10 an hour. This was devised by a multimillionaire chancellor and prime minister and it is all wrong. We need £10 an hour and we need it now for our low paid workers. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Edward. Does Yorkshire wish to come in on the debate and does South Western wish to come in on the debate?

BRO. B. O'CONNOR (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): No longer a first time speaker but I am still a young member. I quickly wanted to point out that this different pay for age is effectively discrimination. We would not allow it for anything else. I am also a disabled member. Should I be paid less because I am disabled? No. There are people sitting on the Tory benches that actually have that as what they believe. My MP, Philip Davies, believes people should be able to be paid less because of their disability. We would not allow it for anything else, like I said, disability, race, religion, sexuality, why do we allow it for age? Thank you. *(Applause)*

BRO. D. FRENCH (GMB Wales & South West): Speaking in support of Composite 10. Madam President, and Congress, the Chancellor compliments both himself and the Government for introducing the so-called National Living Wage but for those under 25 it is another example of the Tories abandoning young people. It is a blatant raw deal for young workers compounded by the fact that some who were previously earning £7.20 an hour are reduced to £6.70 just because they fell beneath the age threshold.

As we all know, colleagues, the National Living Wage is not an actual living wage, namely, the amount that a full-time worker needs to afford a decent standard of living. Even before being excluded from the wage young workers have watched their wage plummet in recent years. Consequently, they have to prioritise, wearing old clothes because they cannot buy new ones, not turning on the heating in cold weather, and walking everywhere due to not being able to pay for the public transport.

Congress, by moving those under 25s from the scope of the Living Wage is a blatant generational inequality, nothing more and nothing less. Add this to the unfairness of rising university debt pressures, the abolition of maintenance grants, and housing benefits for 18 to 21 year olds, and you begin to see a clear picture of young people taking a disproportionate share of the impact of austerity, along with, of course, jobs that are the most insecure in our economy.

Taken together with those other age related policies that remove the young from the Living Wage just goes to show the class bias of the Government as middle-class children do not suffer the same degree of difficulty as those from a working class background. The view that the under 25s do not deserve the wage by reason that they do not produce enough is as false as it is arrogant.

Congress, we all realise that the Living Wage is not what it claims to be. It is more of a surviving wage. If anything, to exempt young people from its coverage is nothing short of scandalous. All it does is add to the perfect storm of personal wage inequality, fierce competition for jobs, the reducing possibility of owning one's own home, and the failure to afford young people the decency of a living wage is a reflection of their value in the eyes of this Government.

The abysmal cycle cannot be allowed to continue so let's campaign for the changes needed to ensure fairness for the young. Please support this composite. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. We have a policy in this union, if you are doing the same job irrespective of your age, you get the same pay, and that will never change. I now ask the movers of 128, A Better Wage, Midland, 129, Poverty and Insecure Work, North West, 132, Zero Hour Contracts, North West, 136 “Umbrella” Companies and Bogus Self-Employed, Yorkshire, 137, TUPE, Northern, 138, GMB Campaign for an Amendment to Statutory Redundancy. Okay, can you all come to the fore, and then I will call Gordon Gibbs.

A BETTER WAGE MOTION 128

128. A BETTER WAGE

This Conference calls on the CEC to support the living wage by negotiating pay only, not bonus. There are a lot of companies out there that will look to pay the living wage using bonus as a way around the bill that has been put forward. We are now seeing big companies doing just this, and if we don't do this we may end up with members having a pay cut.

LONG EATON CFTA BRANCH
Midland & East Coast Region

(Carried)

SIS. M. L. LOWREY (Midland & East Coast): President, Congress, we ask the GMB to campaign for a true living wage of a minimum £10 basic hourly rate for all. This should not include any shift pay or bonuses as some ruthless employers do at the moment. In our society today the rich get rich and the poor get poorer and the gap between the rich and poor is greater now than ever, not only in Britain but worldwide. In Britain alone there are 10 million people living on or below the poverty line. Pensioners have seen their pensions decrease in value by 43% since 1979. The average wage is now 7% less in real terms than in 2010.

Workers, especially the young, are exploited by the employers in the so-called services sector. They do the same jobs and hours as the over-21s and over-25 year olds but for a much less hourly rate. Studies have shown that in recent years our lowest paid workers have actually suffered pay cuts at the hands of ruthless employers who have continued to receive their big fat pay rises.

The true living wage, not this £7.20 being spouted by the Conservatives, is calculated according to the absolute basic cost of living in the UK today, which is roughly £8.25 an hour if you live outside London and £9.40 if you live in London. This covers paying all your bills, your utilities, your groceries, your rent, your food. This, therefore, means workers are living to work – they are working to live not living to work. No, I got that the wrong way round. They are living to work, not working to live. To pay for such luxuries as family days out or holidays they are having to work extra hours.

To improve their family lifestyle a true living wage would give them the chance to work but also the free time to enjoy living also. The causes of poverty are very complex and diverse. I am not qualified in this field, nor do I profess to be, but to improve lives there has to be a number of solutions across a wide spectrum of policies, one of which, I am sure, is a true living wage of a basic £10 per hour that

would go a long way to help improve family life and lifestyles. Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Maryann. Secunder.

SIS. C. ROBERTSON (Midland & East Coast): Second time delegate, first time speaker. (*Applause*) President, Congress, I am seconding this motion to support the living wage of £10 an hour. As we strive to achieve this we also protect workers' rights, the right to hourly premiums for shift workers, the extra payments for Sunday and bank holiday working, rather than allowing employers to rob workers of the rights we as a union worked so hard to achieve. Yes, fight for £10 an hour but we have to ensure that workers are no worse off and all rights are protected. I second this motion. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks very much, Carol. 129, North West.

POVERTY AND INSECURE WORK MOTION 129

129. POVERTY AND INSECURE WORK

This Congress calls on the Union to work with a range of charities, social enterprises and others to help highlight the damage insecure work has on people, children and communities, as well as its contribution to the growth in poverty.

The continuing insecurity of work for many people and families is a matter of serious concern. The link between insecure and low-paid work and the growth of poverty is evident across the UK.

This growth in poverty is increasingly impacting children across the country. Over the past few years, the number of children and families living in poverty has grown.

This growth in poverty is a disgrace in a modern affluent society. It points to something seriously wrong with the way our economy is ordered and how employment legislation is failing people. At the same time as some people at work are receiving less income, we also see others taking more than they should while failing to contribute fairly to the taxes that pay the support for the poor in our communities.

Congress, the GMB is a campaigning Union, we are at the forefront of challenging what is wrong for members and the wider community. Poverty and insecure work is not just a Trade Union issue, however our collective strength puts us at the forefront of this vital battleground.

We ask that GMB makes this a key campaign and seeks to work with other agencies, to support anti-poverty initiatives especially in the world of work and economic life. To actively seek out and promote practical initiatives that confront and address the barriers to good work or access to the employment market.

Finally, to bring to the attention of employers, government agencies, policy makers and local authorities the need for sustained initiatives to address economic poverty and to secure a decline in poverty due to insecure work.

Q22 BRANCH
North West & Irish Region

(Carried)

BRO. K. FLANAGAN (North West & Irish): Long time no see, sister! I will try and be a bit quieter. Congress, brothers and sisters, the growth in poverty in the UK over recent years is a scandal. Over the past 30 years wealth in the UK has grown and doubled. Believe it or not, at the same time poverty has doubled. What a disgrace. What an absolute disgrace. In other words, the fruits of the UK economy are being earned on the backs of the poor. That is the reality, that is the truth, and we need to keep saying that truth. The rich get richer while the poor get poorer, consigning families and their children to live less than adequate lives, facing fuel poverty and, sadly, increasingly relying on food banks, and yet they are in work.

Congress, one in five children are now brought up in cold or damp houses quite simply because they have to choose whether they can afford to heat the house or eat, or damp houses because they cannot move into decent accommodation. Worse still, 33% of adults in work are now deemed to be in poverty or insecure work which in itself is often a major factor as to whether people have enough to live on and whether they are themselves in poverty: 30% of working adults. What a disgrace for a modern economy.

The true purpose of human work is to help people to provide for their families and this has been exploited, it has been exploited for the benefit of the rich and we have to say No, No, No. How can we live in a society that calls itself fair and just when we are actually impoverishing children? What an absolute disgrace.

What is the measure of a fair society? Surely a measure of the common good of work has to be that people live with a reasonable adequate income and yet we see in Great Britain the poor getting poorer and the numbers increasing while massive wealth is sucked out of the country to offshore islands while others have more than they need to live.

We have to be the advocates for truth, for justice, for integrity, and for putting an end to this disgrace. I am proud to be part of the GMB because not only have we campaigned about this issue but we have campaigned consistently also in the international relations and long be it because the poor is increasingly not just here but throughout the world. That can never be right. Insecure work, poverty pay, insecure livelihoods, can never be acceptable.

Congress, I ask you to support this motion and actually to do things and to join in partnership with others in addressing this and taking it to the door of decision-makers and policy-makers. This is no just and fair society. This is an unequal society and we can never be part of that. Congress, I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Kev. Secunder.

SIS. L. MERCER (North West & Irish): Madam President, nice to see you again. Nice to see all you again. When Mother Teresa visited England she called it a third world country. This is over 20 years ago and I wonder what she would think now with over 30 million people living in poverty, working people depending on food banks and other handouts, more homelessness than ever before, overcrowded properties, and people living in squalor.

In my lifetime I have seen different things happening throughout the country and I myself have been a single parent and suffered from homelessness, but right now it is worse than ever it was when I was younger. Half of working families have one person on less than the minimum wage. Is that right? I know a family, a lady of 50, who is a single parent. Her son, who is 30, is on a zero-hour contract. She is on a zero-hour contract. Her daughter is 25 and on a zero-hour contract, and on less than the minimum wage.

Please support this motion and make this a key campaign to work with other agencies that support anti-poverty initiatives in work and economic life and bring to the attention of all that we need to have a sustainable initiative to end poverty. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Linda. North West & Irish Region, 132? Withdrawn? Thank you. Does the region agree? (*Agreed*)

Motion 132 was WITHDRAWN.

THE PRESIDENT: 136, Yorkshire.

“UMBRELLA” COMPANIES AND BOGUS SELF-EMPLOYED MOTION 136

136. “UMBRELLA” COMPANIES AND BOGUS SELF EMPLOYED

This Conference, the GMB Yorkshire region congratulates the construction union UCATT for its continued support in opposing the use of “umbrella” companies and other forms of evasion in construction and other industries.

Not only are these schemes depriving workers of their basic rights, a dubious privilege for which the worker pays the employer’s NI contribution, they are also depriving the exchequer of approximately £3,800 per worker per annum.

Campaigning by unions has resulted in the Welsh Government banning the use of umbrella companies on its publicly funded projects so that all workers will in future be directly employed.

As many as 460,000 people could be ‘bogusly self-employed’ meaning workers miss out on holiday pay, government loses tax revenue and responsible businesses could be undercut, says Citizens Advice.

In its report “Neither one thing nor the other” Citizens Advice highlights how unscrupulous employers can compel staff to be self-employed when they should in fact have employee status. This means employers can avoid paying the minimum wage, employers’ National Insurance, sick pay, holiday pay and pension contributions.

Responsible employers can also lose out as firms forcing people into self-employment means the savings they make can be used to undercut competitors’ prices.

A combination of factors including work hours set by the employer, using the business’ equipment and having tax deducted from their pay by their employer could mean an individual should be an employee rather than self-employed.

The research also identifies specific financial losses felt by the bogusly self-employed and the Government:

- An average of over £1,200 per worker per year lost in holiday pay
- People pay an extra £61 per year in National Insurance that they would not pay were they classified as employed
- The loss of employer National Insurance contributions costs the Government over £300 per person per year.

We therefore call on Conference to continue to work with UCATT and partner trade unions to campaign for a similar ban on publicly funded projects and the employment of “bogus self-employed” workers where ever the practice takes place.

BASF CHEMICALS BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(Carried)

SIS. E. ROBINSON (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): God’s county of North Derbyshire. (*Cheers*) President, Congress, today I talk about “umbrella” companies and I do not mean the companies that make these! (*Umbrella*) For those that have not heard what umbrella companies are and how they operate, they are a con on a great scale. Umbrella companies operate mainly within the construction industry but they are now spreading further afield to lots of employment agencies.

Agencies use legal but very complex pay structures to pass on to workers because of the employers’ National Insurance and processing pay. Employment agencies are able to pass on these costs normally met by the employers by putting an umbrella company between themselves and the staff that they recruit. By using middle men to pay workers, employment agencies have created a situation where the rate of pay received is a lot less than the rate advertised or agreed, sometimes ending up with the basic minimum wage. In some agencies workers are forced to sign to an umbrella company or risk losing their jobs, and in the construction industry most jobs are available only through agencies.

Agencies use complicated and confusing pay slips to hide the fact the amount of pay received is significantly less than the rate agreed. Deductions include administration costs in weekly wages and include a rolled-up section of the holiday pay which means instead of being paid when they take holiday leave, employees are paid a fraction of holiday pay as part of their weekly wage. Basically, everyone is a winner except of course the actual employee; they pay for the privilege of working.

In addition to this, the con deprives the Government of tax revenue compared to when they are directly employed. Just to give an idea on the scale of this, a worker whose gross pay is £500 a week, the loss of tax revenue is almost £3,800 a year. Since the legislation was passed in 2014 to clamp down on false self-employment, there has been a significant rise in umbrella companies. All it has succeeded in doing is where agencies used to pretend workers were self-employed to avoid paying employers’ National Insurance, they have now legitimised umbrella companies avoiding paying tax and National Insurance contributions.

The construction union, UCATT, have done considerable work in opposing the use of umbrella companies and other forms of evasion. These schemes deprive workers of their basic rights. We call on Congress to continue working with UCATT and partner trade unions to campaign for a similar ban on publicly funded projects and employment of bogus self-employed workers wherever the practice takes place. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

BRO. B. O'CONNOR (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I am here to second Motion 136. If you get a job, someone has hired you so you're not self-employed. Then why are you paying the employee's National Insurance, or your own National Insurance? It is something that HMRC says is illegal. The group that looks after umbrella companies have a deal that you sign up with HMRC. It seems a bit dodgy. So you are not self-employed but you are employed by the umbrella company, which is your legal employer, but you pay their National Insurance. It is not just in construction. As you said, it's spreading. My first job was eight years ago — I work in the IT industry — and I worked for an umbrella company. I didn't know the difference. I had a job and they just told me "This is what you do". It is not right. If you are an employer and you need to get workers, you hire persons. If the job is not for long, you get given a fixed-term contract. You are given a proper job. If you are not sure what it is, sub-contract to someone. Don't pretend that you are sub-contracting to people when you are just getting cheap workers to undermine their pay and their skills. Thank you, Congress.

THE PRESIDENT: I ask Northern to move Motion 137 on TUPE.

TUPE MOTION 137

137. TUPE

This Conference calls on the Labour Party to commit to legislate to bring in a much clearer approach to TUPE, so that existing workers who transfer to another employer or new workers that come into a business post a TUPE transfer have to be provided the same terms and conditions of service as existing workers. TUPE under this Government and with the direction of travel of legal judgments is becoming ever more in favour of employers and Congress calls for a fundamental redressing of the balance.

N33 NEWCASTLE CITY LA BRANCH
Northern Region

(Carried)

SIS. A. HAY (Northern): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. (*Applause and cheers*) I move Motion 137: TUPE. The GMB continues to be at the front of the queue in fighting the watering down of TUPE regulations that have developed. Ever since the previous Coalition, the Government have scrapped the code of practice in workforce matters in local authority service contracts. The last Coalition government and this Tory Government want to use the TUPE regs to favour employers. Legal judgments have made matters even more favourable for the employer. We are paying the price of constant privatisation of public services, we are paying the price of undermining terms and conditions and we are paying the price of the race-to-the-bottom culture. Anyone involved in organising workplaces where

TUPE is a constant threat knows that there is a constant battle with employers who think that they can do what they like.

We know that this is an issue where we recruit and organise members, but the point is that it should be the law of the land that workers who are at the sharp end should not have to pay the price of some spiv employers wanting to make a fast buck. It is scandalous that Labour councils in some areas are battling with austerity cuts by outsourcing even more work, and using Tory TUPE changes to get their local policies through. What does that say to our members in those councils? Do they see Labour as being on their side? I don't think so. Congress, we need a radically different approach. Workers who transfer to another employer or those new starters should not be on poorer terms and conditions. We need the Labour Party to commit to legislate to bring in a much fairer approach to TUPE and make it clear to employers what is to be expected in a fairer society. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Angela. I call the seconder.

BRO. D. IMMS (Northern): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am seconding Motion 137: TUPE. As the mover has said, TUPE regs have got worse over the last few years. In my view, they have always favoured the employer. That is why we have two-tier workforces. TUPE wasn't brought in for the good of our members. It was brought in for the bosses. It has led over time to the diluting of terms and conditions. Congress, TUPE is part of the problem. It is part of a culture that has developed over 30 years that has led to the face to the bottom, zero-hour contracts and more people in work claiming benefits than ever before. TUPE, backed up by Tories and judges, has been part of that process. There is a much bigger gap between the bosses on high pay and workers on low pay than ever before. TUPE needs a radical overhaul. We won't get that under the Tories. That much is certain. So we want a Labour Party nationally to change things as part of their policies for government, but we also want Labour councils to do their bit now. Our members must not have their terms and conditions cut. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. We will now move on to Motion 138, to be moved by Wales & South West.

**GMB CAMPAIGN FOR AN AMENDMENT TO STATUTORY
REDUNDANCY
MOTION 138**

138. GMB CAMPAIGN FOR AN AMENDMENT TO STATUTORY REDUNDANCY

This Conference recognises the unfairness to longer term faithful employees with more than twenty years of service, if and when they are being made redundant. Therefore, we call upon GMB to use its influence and lobby the Westminster Government with a view to abolishing the twenty year maximum service limit that is applied when calculating statutory redundancy.

Such a limit is disadvantageous to employees who have committed a working lifetime to an organisation and could even be ageist and needs to be amended.

RHONDDA CYNON TAFF CBC BRANCH
Wales & South West Region

(Carried)

BRO. M. BOWLER (GMB Wales and South West): Congress, I move Motion 138: GMB Campaign for an Amendment to Statutory Redundancy.

Colleagues, the motion calls for the GMB to use any influence it has to lobby the Westminster Government to get an amendment to the 20-year restriction that the employer has to pay when considering redundancy. An employee's right to a redundancy payment has been long established when statutory redundancy became a mandatory requirement with the introduction of the Redundancy Payment Act 1965. This introduced the universal minimum provision to recognise that more honourable employers would have their own improved scheme. Since the success in getting such a guaranteed minimum payment enshrined in law, the trade union Movement, via the TUC, has, on several occasions, challenged and successfully campaigned to change it, but have increased the amount of weekly pay cap, bringing about an increase from the original £40 to its current £479. However, this figure is still very much a declining payment, not having kept pace with average earnings.

The Employment Equality Regulations 2006, which is a European Union directive, has brought about further debate on statutory redundancy and raises the concern that the age-related calculations for payment could not be illegal. There has been much debate around this issue with the Government, the Department for Trade and Industry and the TUC affiliates, but the legislation appears to be giving an exemption after minor tweaks allowing under 18s and those over 65 to qualify for payments.

This motion is calling for a different approach, bearing in mind that the figure of twenty years compensation has never once been challenged. There could be an opportunity to prove a breach of the 2016 EU Directive. I suggest that if it is now wrong for an employer to advertise a vacant post requiring several years of experience, then, surely, to restrict compensation payments to a maximum must also be age-discriminatory.

Through past work on redundancy the TUC has firmly established that older workers are much more likely to become longer-term unemployed when faced with redundancy, and to experience a substantial fall in pay if and when fortunate enough to find a new job. Therefore, a concerted campaign to increase the amount of longer-serving employees' redundancy can only be welcomed by the trade union Movement, and be a good thing for raising the profile of the GMB. It is time, again, to put statutory minimum redundancy back on to the campaigning agenda of the trade union Movement, given that, as a country, the European Union or internationally, we have all been entrenched in an unnecessary agenda of severe austerity, which is not only putting our public service workers out of work but it is having a detrimental impact upon all areas of the economy. We are seeing many of our members at risk of losing their work through redundancy. Very often, there is an additional sting at such unpleasant times, with many of those more reputable employers using the excuse of austerity to curtail reducing back to statutory the minimum what used to be generously enhanced redundancy packages.

Colleagues, support this motion and let's get the GMB at the forefront of a newly-invigorated campaign, fighting to fairly reward longer-term employees who, after

giving nearly a lifetime of service to an organisation, find themselves being dismissed through no fault of their own and having much of their many years of loyal service unjustly discounted. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, very much. Secunder.

SIS. J. STAGG (GMB Wales and South West): Congress, I second Motion 138, relating to statutory redundancy. I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* Once again, two recent developments have served to confirm the Government's contempt for workers' job security and their need for financial protection when they lose their employment. Firstly, there is the steel-industry crisis, where Cameron and his cronies emulate Nero by fiddling around, offering insincere offers of support whilst another part of this country's great industrial heritage goes up in smoke. Secondly, there is their intention to impose a cap upon public-sector exit payments, which will have a significant impact upon matters such as staff retention, pension decisions and, of course, the ability for those individuals who lose their jobs to survive financially afterwards.

The purpose of this motion is to seek the necessary changes to the statutory redundancy payment scheme and for those employees who benefit from enhance payment arrangements. This is less significant. As Mark has clearly explained, payments that can be assessed under the state scheme has long since been called into critical question. The formula was set in a bygone age and has not been revived since 1965. Congress, people who suddenly find themselves without a job need all of the help they can get to get back on their feet, although many never have the opportunity to work again. As usual the Government's response shows their support for employees, yet it argues that changing the scheme will place an additional burden upon already hard-pressed businesses. The reality is that scaremongering claims are without fidelity and are just used to prevent moral and financial progress being achieved. I wouldn't know, but I am told that the '60s was a good time to live in. Unfortunately, it is a different world for many today, with so many living in poverty. We need to campaign for change, so, please, support the aim of this motion to reform the redundancy-payment method. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, as North West and Irish Region withdrew motion 132, I don't have any need to call the CEC speaker, Gordon Gibbs, so I will now go into the vote. I am sorry, I didn't see you. I can see two delegates who wish to come in on the debate.

BRO. D. FAITH (London): I wanted to contribute to the debate about TUPE, because my employer, British Airways, has found a novel way for TUPE to undercut its obligations to its employees, which I thought was worthy of extending the debate by a couple of minutes. Our IT department, and the work of many of our colleagues — I will talk about this at the sectional conference tomorrow — is being outsourced to Tata Consultancy Services, the same Tata of Tata Steel. From day one, the work is intended to go out to Chennai, but both BA and Tata have said that TUPE still applies. So your work is going to Chennai but you are still being TUPE'd. Now, obviously, with only statutory redundancy available on a Tata contract, our members were facing a drastic reduction in their redundancy. We have been able to fight that by getting opt-outs. That is part of a wider campaign about what is happening, but it goes to

show the need behind this resolution for clarity over TUPE. We have talked about the protection of employees, and it is now something that has become for the protection of the employers. I support this motion entirely.

BRO. R. HOLDEN (North West & Irish, and GMB Young Members' Communications Officer): Congress, I did not speak loud enough when it came to the £10-an-hour motion, so I would like to say a bit of a word in support of the motion that is calling for a real living wage of £10-an-hour. As the National Living Wage only applies to the over-25s, it means that those aged 18 to 21 can be paid 26% less for the same work, and those aged 21 to 24 nearly 7% less. That is a young person struggling to afford a home of their own being paid 26% less. That is also a young person struggling to support their family getting paid 26% less. GMB young members have been proud to campaign for a real Living Wage of £10-an-hour, because in 2015 — let me take one example — many staff in McDonald's, aged 21 and over, were paid just above the minimum wage, and 80% of them were on zero-hour contracts. This was all whilst McDonald's was grilled by the GMB in Europe over its tax-avoidance schemes, avoiding €1 billion in corporate tax. Congress, to be frank, this is wage dodging and tax dodging at its very worst, and we will not let McDonald's get away with this.

Finally, whilst we welcome any increase in wages, this Government's National Living Wage is merely a re-branded minimum wage that devalues the contribution that young people make to society and the economy. GMB Young Members is launching a petition that calls on this Government to include under-25s in their so-called National Living Wage, and I ask you all, please, to sign it to give a fair deal for young workers. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely, Ross. Well said, Ross. There is nobody else wanting to speak, so I will now go through and take the vote. We are voting on Composite 10, Motions 128, 129, 136, 137 and 138, which are all being supported by the CEC. All those in favour, please show? All those against? They are carried.

Composite Motion 10 was CARRIED.

Motion 128 was CARRIED.

Motion 129 was CARRIED.

Motion 136 was CARRIED.

Motion 137 was CARRIED.

Motion 138 was CARRIED.

THE PRESIDENT: We will now move on to Union Organisation, and take Motions 40 and 45.

UNION ORGANISATION: REPRESENTATION & ACCOUNTABILITY TUPS MEMBERS ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER REGIONS MOTION 40

40. TUPS MEMBERS ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER REGIONS

Congress agrees to establish systems to enable TUPS members whose regions are different to those in which they live or work to be able to register with their local GMB region, and to be

able to participate in its activities and functions, whilst still remaining full and voting members of their branch.

As a TUPS branch, the RCN is sponsored by GMB London Region. This means that RCN GMB members are only able to engage with activities and participate in the governance of London Region, irrespective of where they actually live or work in the UK. RCN GMB members not residing or working in London would like to continue to be a member of the RCN Branch, but also be able to have some engagement with the activities of their local GMB branch and/or region. We believe this to be an issue that is of concern to other TUPS whose members are not contained within the same location.

Congress is urged to give this matter consideration.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING BRANCH
London Region

(Referred)

BRO. B. SHAW (London): Congress, I move Motion 40. The GMB is the union for other union employees and political staffs. They are dealt with by the London Region. However, the GMB and other unions, like my own, PCS, has a regional structure with staff all over the UK, which causes issues with their ability to participate in the activities of the region. London Region has developed a fantastic equality structure involving a growing number of members. I would say that as I am the actual regional equality chair. It is fantastic. But other regions and indeed nations have good equality structures, too, and members who live and work in those regions and nations should be able to participate in those regions' and nations' activities.

A few years ago a person from the RCN actually came to the TUC LGBT Conference as a delegate from London Region. He lived and worked in Manchester. He wanted to get involved in the activities of GMB Shout in London Region. It is a bit difficult when it is 200-odd miles away, whereas ideally he should have been able to get involved in North West & Irish and work with them in terms of developing around Pride and everything else. It is also equally important to ensure that people in other parts of the country who are members of the members of other unions know what is going on in terms of campaigns and activities so they can actually be involved. I appreciate that, in terms of this motion, it is difficult for people who are members of unions or political organisations that they will remain in the London Region. Therefore, it would be difficult and wrong that they would be allowed to stand for regional committee or regional council, but this is about allowing members to become active in the part of the country that they actually in. Therefore, I urge you to support the motion.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Brian. Secunder.

BRO. M. PLATT (London): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and now a second-time speaker, seconding this motion. My branch proposed this motion as a TUP. We have members all across the UK. They can't, they don't want and they shouldn't have to go to London, great as London is, to get involved with GMB activities. We have built a 21st century union. Let's start by allowing our TUPS members to give their energies to the regions in which they live. Let's start building our 21st century with their energies. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: I now call Motion 45.

**MISCELLANEOUS MEMBERS
MOTION 45**

45. MISCELLANEOUS MEMBERS

This Conference calls upon GMB to recognise the disparity within the union between miscellaneous members and those working in an organised workplace, and the need for more resources to be made available for the recruitment and training of accredited representatives to support miscellaneous members to the same level as those organised ones.

R26 READING BRANCH
Southern Region

(Referred)

BRO. I. FALL (Southern): Congress, I move Motion 45: Miscellaneous Members. I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause and cheers)* That's lovely. Thank you very much. That's very kind of you.

Down to business. This Conference calls upon GMB to recognise the disparity within the union between miscellaneous members and those working in an organised workplace, and the need for more resources to be made available for the recruitment and training of accredited representatives to support miscellaneous members to the same level as those organised ones.

Congress, at various workplaces, through trade union facility agreements, the case has successfully been made and one for GMB workplace organisers to undertake *GMB@Work* training. This is achieved by a recognition due to a strong density of membership and a well-organised workplace. This is often far from the reality that our miscellaneous members find themselves in. By definition, they are often isolated, being in a minority as a union member and working for short-sighted employers who do not recognise or value employees being union members. In fact, and shamefully, they often act to make life within the workplace more challenging for those who openly discuss their trade union beliefs and values. These members, without a workplace representative of their own, often reach out to their branch for support, advice and representation. This, understandably, stretches the capacity of branch reps whose time is, typically, taken up supporting members at their own workplaces, but are always there to support and represent them. So given the clear benefits of having workplace organisers to support members in organised workplaces, more resources should be made available for recruitment and training of accredited representatives to support our miscellaneous members to the same levels as those in well-organised workplaces. This would help to stop the perception of our miscellaneous members feeling like the poor relative at the table compared with others.

I believe that by recognising the disparity between miscellaneous members and those who work in organised workplaces, and by putting in places measures to both recruit and train workplace organisers, we will see a real growth in membership which were laid in the struggles and fights towards obtaining recognition, which in the end improves the lives of workers in those workplaces. Congress, I am recognising the difficulties that our miscellaneous members face on a daily basis, and I am stepping

up with them here today. I want you to do the same with me. I understand that the CEC stance is that they wish to refer. I move. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: I call the seconder. (*The motion was formally seconded from the floor*) Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? (*No response*) I now call Margaret Clarke to respond on behalf of the CEC.

SIS. M. CLARKE (CEC, Commercial Services): Congress, I ask Congress to refer Motions 40 and 45. The reason we are asking Congress to refer Motion 40 on Trade Union and Political Staffs is that it is difficult to see how the intent of the motion could easily be made to work within GMB structures. We are asking Congress to invite London Region to assess the level of demand for such arrangements from TUPS branches.

The reason we are asking Congress to refer Motion 45 on Miscellaneous Members is that a lot of work is currently under way to ensure that our training provision becomes more inclusive to members in non-traditional workplaces or working patterns. This issue would best be picked up as part of that training review. Please refer Motions 40 and 45 as outlined.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Margaret. Does London Region accept reference back? (*Agreed*) Does Southern Region accept reference back? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Does Congress agree reference back. (*Agreed*)

Motion 40 was REFERRED.

Motion 45 was REFERRED.

THE PRESIDENT: I now move to item 6, covering Motions 33 and 36.

**UNION ORGANISATION: RECRUITMENT & ORGANISATION
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF MEMBERS
MOTION 33**

33. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF MEMBERS

This Conference is concerned that due to the introduction of Tory government legislation the recruitment of new members and the retention of existing members is becoming challenging.

Therefore, we call upon this Conference to actively participate in developing a long term strategy that is successful in recruiting and retaining members.

SHEFFIELD MCP & LIGHT BRANCH
Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Region

(*Carried*)

SIS. C. GAVIN (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I move Motion 33: Recruitment and Retention of Members. President, Congress and gaffer, Tory legislation has had a significant impact on the recruitment and, moreover, on the retention of our members. To overcome these attempts at destabilising our union, we need to have a concerted effort and a strong strategy to fight back. We need a plan. Membership recruitment and retention strategies are symbiotic. It is common for our members and leaders to have differing ideas of what is best. Members of our unions

may focus on ideas such as respect, pay, social concerns and continuing education. Our leaders may focus on the big picture, such as the long-term viability of our union; for example, the recent issue with check-off, political positioning and workforce re-tooling. Members will rally behind the big picture only if they see equal time spent on their needs. We need to approach all goals with the same enthusiasm, as the members will win for their wants and they will focus on our long-term needs.

Members have little free time or desire to engage unless they feel that the return will be significant. We need to find ways to engage with our members. Regional events, open days, news letters and the one such as my region does — *The Activist* — every month, keeps our members up to date with what is happening in their region. Branches also need to be active and lead by example. We need to organise groups to attend and support events in their areas. This will highlight the union and show that we are open to all. We also need inter-branch relationships that share best practice and ideas. We need to combine together sporting events and work together. We can also make branch links across regions and, again, support each other in events to make the union more visible. A good example of this is Pride events across the country.

It is very common for our leaders to position themselves in such a way that they appear unapproachable. We would like to see our regional leadership teams branching out and communicating with our members. This may be awkward for them at the beginning, but the impact can be life-changing for members who have never had a chance to interact face-to-face with the management and officers of their union. We need regular events and meetings with regional leadership teams and open days where members can see the inner workings of their union, how it is structured and what we do. We need to let them drive our goals and ideals. That can ensure that our union does not become fixed and immovable and allow effective recruitment and retention. We need to give our members a forum to have their say and ask questions.

Recruitment fails if members decide to lapse after the first year. It is harder to gain a new member than recover a lapsed one in most cases. We need to reach out to these members, and this can be the difference between salvaging a membership or losing one. But what happens when we have a lapsed member? Does every branch have an action plan or do we simply let them fall off the list? Do they call these members when they fail to renew and how do we track their reasons for ending their membership? What will be our reply? Will it be to give reasons or will we just nod our heads and make a check mark next to the box? Knowing what to say to a member and when to relay issues up the line are critical. We need an education plan to give the branches tools to do this. Change can be difficult but it is inevitable. The union of 20 years ago is vastly different to today's union and will not succeed until it has continued to adapt its mission. The best ideals fail without strong member support, and a union without its members is powerless. I move. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Well done. Secunder.

BRO. R. BYWATER (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I second Motion 33: Recruitment and Retention of Members. I am seconding this motion as I believe that recruitment and retention of members begins with all GMB branches as they are the root and core of

our great trade union. We already have a good recruitment strategy, or that people joined because the issue at present is personal to themselves, such as the restructure of their workforce, pay issues and redundancies. At present, once the issue has been resolved a high percentage of our members leave the union. It's the idea of "I'm all right now". We need to change this approach and keep these members involved, and interested with the union's daily on-goings and campaigns. As my comrade has already stated, we need to be adaptable. In Congress 2014 we saw the motion moved for the introduction of the GMB YouTube Channel. This has not been fully utilised two years on. We need to make the most of this, along with other social media interfaces. Branches should move with the times. Most should have Twitter accounts, Facebook pages and other outlets to keep our members up to date with ongoing issues and campaigns.

Recruitment is very good, but fails in that we have not retained our current membership. This will keep them engaged and active. We must spread the word that we do as a union: Engagement and activeness equals retention and power. We need to feed the roots for the tree of our union to grow. Thank you. I second. *(Applause)*

RECRUITING STREET TRADERS MOTION 36

36. RECRUITING STREET TRADERS

Congress agrees street traders' help communities thrive. They are significant contributors to the economy and follow a long tradition of offering variety in food and crafts to their local communities. Yet, independent traders are being squeezed by authorities and market managers where no regulation is in place to protect these small start-up businesses.

This branch notes that there are more than 33,000 street traders in the UK with an estimated turnover of £2.4billion.

There are 1225 retail markets in the UK, 65% of retail markets are run by local authorities and 18% are operated by private companies. The remainder comprise retail markets managed by trade co-operatives, social enterprises and community interest companies.

Market traders provide formal employment to 27,500 people, including 1,000 apprentices, a total of 55,000 people employed directly on retail markets.

GMB believes this situation should be condemned because:

1. Local Authorities continue to run the majority of the market but there is little protection for street traders and their business.
2. There is no legislation in place for market managers and market traders. Market managers can set any pitch and commission fees and can shut a trader down for no reason.
3. The trader is often powerless to fight for what is fair because a market manager can just close the door.

GMB resolves:

1. To start a campaign to recruit street traders of all kinds.

2. To work with organisations like the National Market Trade Federation and Mission for Markets.
3. To demand fair treatment of street traders.

HOLBORN BRANCH
London Region

(Referred)

SIS. H. VICKERS (London): Hello, everyone. I'm from London Region, and I'm a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Cheers and applause)* I am branch secretary, and the equality officer in our branch is called Ray. She has a tea business with her partner, which she takes round local markets. The story she tells us is of how powerless the traders are and what they have to put up. They are just appalling. The market managers hold all of the power. Basically, they decide whether you trade and earn. It is all down to them. There is no contract no paperwork. If you want a pitch, you just turn up, you ask the managers and they decide yes or no. They can ask you to leave at the drop of a hat. A trader spilt oil on the floor of a market and it left a stain, and they were banned from the market. That was it. They were asked to leave and told they couldn't come back. There is discrimination and gentrification involved as well. Ray traded at an Asian festival on the South Bank recently, and someone turned to her and said, "Oh, I didn't know there were so many white people doing Indian food". There aren't, but it was a trendy festival and the organisers had prioritised those traders over everyone else. Effectively, they had pushed out the lower class and the non-white more-established traders. There is corruption in the markets, too. Some traders will slip more money to the market managers to ensure that they get prime spots or just to guarantee that they get a place. No one knows quite what everyone else is paying, and this is pitting the people against each other.

If you want to complain about any of this stuff, if you have a problem with a manager, the process is that you go to that manager, complain about them and they then decide whether or not to uphold your complaint and what to do about it. Again, they hold all of the power. We all know how important health and safety and duty of care are. It is just not good enough in markets. Councils require all the stuff like food hygiene certificates, gas certificates, etc., but the managers only both to check for these is an inspection is due. Markets just aren't safe enough for the traders or for the people who are buying stuff in the markets. There is no legislation, at least not which traders know about. Ray says that many of them just don't believe that they have rights and they are too afraid to speak out. Being a trader is not a hobby. It is their business. For many it is their sole livelihoods and it is a big part of our economy, yet markets are exploitative, discriminatory, corrupt and unsafe.

This union has got pretty good form on dealing with exploitative, discriminatory, corrupt and unsafe workplaces. When I was talking to Ray it was so obvious that what the traders needed to do was to get together, to unionise, to share information and to go and bargain for collective rights. We should be the union to do that, to recruit traders, to help them take the power back and to improve their lives. Thank you. I move. *(Applause)*

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Harriet. Thank you. Secunder.

BRO. D. BYRNE (London): President and Congress, I second Motion 36: Recruiting Street Traders. Many of you who live or work in towns and cities will be familiar with street traders selling food, fruit, vegetables, arts and crafts and so on. Some of them trade once a week. Others will have a pitch five or six days a week, and they make a significant contribution to the local economy. Many of us, as trade union activists, will sometimes visit these stalls during our lunch hours, but how many of us have ever given a thought to the stallholders' respective struggles and to what the GMB might be able to do to assist them.

Local authorities run the majority of these markets and the market managers have the freedom to set commission fees and, potentially, to shut down a trader for no apparent reason. The traders are often powerless to fight for what is fair and there is no legislation to protect them from unfair treatment by market managers. Street traders work as hard as any other group of workers in our society, often putting in very long shifts to transport their wares to and from the trading sites, long before and long after the times we actually witness them trading. This motion calls for the GMB to begin a campaign to recruit and organise street traders in markets and other retail outlets around the UK. We urge the union to work with organisations like the National Market Trade Federation and demand fair treatment for street traders. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Well done, Danny. Does anyone wish to come in on the debate? (*No response*) No. Then I call Gordon Richardson to respond on behalf of the CEC.

BRO. G. RICHARDSON (CEC, Manufacturing): President and Congress, I am speaking on behalf of the CEC. We are asking Congress to support Motion 33 on Recruitment and Retention, with a qualification, and refer Motion 36 on Recruiting Street Traders into the GMB.

The qualification to Motion 33 is that the long-term strategy for recruitment and retention in the face of Tory attacks and new economic threats in the jobs market is already in place within the *GMB@Work*. This policy has delivered continued membership growth under not only Labour but Tory and Coalition governments in good and bad economic times, and has proven to be a successful and flexible approach. Discussions are already under way over how the principles of the *GMB@Work* could best be applied to the changing jobs market and the strategy the motion speaks of should become part of that discussion.

The reason why we are seeking to refer Motion 36 is for a more detailed examination by the regional organisation teams regarding the viability of the project in their regions and the likelihood of success. We have a long-standing policy of assessing all potential projects by the access we can secure to potential members, the issues we can organise around them and the momentum we can achieve on their issues once they join. For me, it has never been only about recruitment, but much more importantly service and retention.

In summary, Congress, please support Motion 33 with the CEC qualification, and refer Motion 36. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Gordon. Will Yorkshire accept the qualification on Motion 33? (*Agreed*) Thank you. Will London accept reference back? (*Agreed*)

Thank you. I will now put them both to the vote. All those in favour of Motion 33 and the reference back on Motion 36? Anyone against? They are carried.

Motion 33 was CARRIED.

Motion 36 was REFERRED.

THE PRESIDENT: We now move on to item 7.

REGIONAL SUCCESSES

THE PRESIDENT: Congress, we now come to a new approach to Congress, and I will hand over to the General Secretary to introduce how this will work. Tim Roache.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you very much, Mary. I will introduce how I hope it works, or I will introduce how I think it might work. So we are going a little bit off-piste now, and we will see how it goes. We just felt that it was important to try and celebrate some of the successes that you achieve day in and day out, and week in and week out, on behalf of our members. I think it is right that if you hear from the people who achieved success on behalf of our members, then we can celebrate them and, maybe, we will learn a few things, best practice and all of that.

This situation really came about when, very early on in my new role, I met with the Smart Metering reps, led by Steven Whittle. They were in the Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Regional Office. I happened to go in and they did this presentation to me. I was so astounded and it was such a brilliant presentation that it set the seed in my mind that we really ought to celebrate some of this stuff much more. So without further ado, I will ask Steven and his magnificent team to come up to the stage, please, and take us through a PowerPoint presentation. They may also speak you through it as we go, and let's hope you will be inspired as I was. So, Steven, and your please come up and address Congress. (*Applause*)

BRO. S. WHITTLE (North West & Irish): Congress, my name is Steven Whittle from North West & Irish Region. I am the lead rep within British Gas Smart Metering. *These* are the reps we have got and we are incredibly proud of what we have done, and why we wanted to come here and tell our story. There are 36 of us nationally. Just for those who don't know, smart metering is, basically, how we visit people's houses, we install meters that are going to make redundant estimated bills, so effectively we are aiming to save people money (a) by making the bills more accurate and (b) focusing on the cost of energy. We have 16 million meters to fit by 2020. That is the role that we are supposed to be doing.

We started in 2011 and we had 200 members and about 10% density. So we did not have much experience as reps. We had a business. A lot of people think that in British Gas, because of the obvious history that GMB has within British Gas, that it is a fairly easy ride and a smooth ride for reps within British Gas. That wasn't the case within Smart Metering. Smart Metering is very much a spin-off from service and repair. We had a lot of managers who had come in and they very much thought that they knew best. They didn't want the union, it was very clear that they didn't want the union and they told us that they didn't want the union. We had to work with the business. So we started to recruit people. In the last 12 months we have recruited

over 1,200 people. We have taken the GMB density from 10% up to 97%.
(*Applause*) What we want to do today is to tell you the story of how we not only made the business listen but we also made them want to listen to us. We made them want to listen to us because, by listening to us, they could have a far more effective business, a far more successful business and a far more engaged workforce than we first started with. I will pass on to John.

BRO. J. WRIGHT: Colleagues, I am a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Today my colleagues and I are going to tell you the story about the birth of smart metering within British Gas. For those of you who don't know, British Gas set up Smart Metering three years earlier than its competitors, and decided to do it in-house rather than use contractors to fit the meters. This is not a fairy story. I was one of about 30 tradesmen who started before Smart went live. Basically, our job was to work with trainees in the field after time in the national training academies. It all started wonderfully. All these bright-eyed, bushy-tailed eager trainees were delighted to have successfully secured a role within British Gas.

Boom! That's the fairytale over. British Gas turned these eager, bright-eyes trainees into what I can only describe as juddering wrecks, who were frightened to put a step out of line for fear of dismissal. The trainees were quite right to be afraid, because in the first year you had a 50% chance of being dismissed. Out of 250 trainees, 50 were suspended awaiting disciplinary/dismissal. The reason was, as my colleague said, that the managers, the district managers and the head of operations were not from a technical background. They were from an office-based background and tried to run Smart Metering with an office-based mentality. You could not run a field-based workforce with this mentality. It was obvious to members who had worked in the field for most of their lives that this was not the case. The management did not have the skills or the technical knowledge to make for a smooth-running workforce that blundered on regardless. They kept sacking and making trainees' lives a misery, while informing the hierarchy within British Gas that everything in the garden was rosy and how great Smart Metering was. So, of course, British Gas was telling everybody from the media to the Government, and anyone else who cared to listen, that everything was brilliant, and how great a customer experience it was. But what they did not say was that the systems they had in place were not able to deal with the technology we needed to install smart meters. Therefore, they were sending trainees out to customers to fit meters that could not be commissioned so, in effect, could not work, as smart meters can only work to certain standards.

Comrades, you couldn't make this up. There was no set mechanism in place for trainees after an initial week of mentoring. Trainees were being sacked for minor offences that did not even merit a talking to in the real world. But the arrogance of this situation was the "business knows best" attitude. They thought the best way to deal with anything was to discipline.

My colleagues will carry on, and you will listen to the progress we have made from those dark times, and say to yourselves "Well done, you guys. You have turned us around". Comrades, this was an uphill battle. Every single day we were mentally and physically drained. We had targets on our backs. The business tried every underhand tactic to silence, to undermine us and to discredit us, and they still do. We asked ourselves, when we had had a particularly hard week or even month, "Why do we put

ourselves through this?" We all came up with the self-same answer. It was our overwhelming desire to fight for right over wrong and fight the good fight for people who were unable to have their voice heard. To me, comrades, this epitomises trade unionism. It is that and solidarity. Solidarity, comrades. (*Applause*) I will now hand you over to Chris Weller.

BRO. C. WELLER: Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am a district rep for the north of Scotland. I look after 120 members. I am here to talk about working for British Gas Smart Metering pre and post the GMB. I started five-and-a-half years ago, right at the beginning of Smart Metering. Before I got the job, I was working as a financial adviser. I was delighted that, at the age of 29, to get an opportunity for a career change to do something hands on, something that I wish I'd done on leaving school. I still remember when I got the call to say that I'd got the job how great a moment it was in my life, to know that I was getting a chance for a new career and to do something that I knew would make me happier. To get this chance working for a company with the brand and reputation of British Gas was even sweeter.

British Gas is a good company to work for. The pensions, benefits, vans, tools, etc. are all the best, and right from the start I thought I was going to enjoy my job. However, although I loved what I was doing, it became very clear to myself and my colleagues that the company and the way it worked was not at all what we expected. We became very disillusioned about how the company operated. It is worth pointing out that British Gas Smart Metering was a brand new company and was, in effect, separate from other parts of British Gas. It seemed as though the company had been thrown together without proper thought or planning. The training was done by people who had more experience than fitting meters. It was haphazard, and when we finally completed our training we were thrown out into the deep end with no support or help available. It was a case of sink or swim. Unfortunately, quite a few people sank. There was a lot of pressure from management to get the work done, but as the majority of engineers were inexperienced, they did not have the skills or experience to do every job they encountered. But due to the pressure from above, people tried their best, but this led to mistakes happening everywhere. There were gas leaks, electric faults, etc. The management's response was zero tolerance, leading to people being sacked left, right and centre. At this time, it was a strange feeling for me, personally, because whilst I loved doing the job I was very scared at making a genuine mistake and ending up being sacked. I have a young family, and losing my job would have been devastating. I used to go home at night and sit and worry about the jobs that I had done that day, worrying, like some of my colleagues, that I would get a dreaded phone call saying that I had made a mistake and my van would be collected the next day. I still feel bad for my colleagues that this happened to and the injustice that they lost their jobs through the failure of the company to train and support them properly.

Before the GMB was involved, all we had was an employee forum, which was as much use as a chocolate teapot. We, as engineers, had no voice. Management had a face-fit attitude, and bullied people into doing what they wanted under the threat of suspension or sacking. Thankfully, the GMB got involved and their presence made a huge difference to myself and my colleagues. I started to sleep better at night knowing that the GMB was there to stand up for me. It seemed like overnight, but the improvements that the GMB succeeded in achieving were monumental. People stopped losing their jobs for genuine mistakes, the reps attended our meetings and let

us know what was going on, the tools and PPE were improved, thereby making life a lot easier. Our rosters were improved, leading to a better work-life balance. We now have collective bargaining, pay increases and someone to talk to. It can be a lonely job at times, and it was nice to know that there was someone available who actually cared. I will always be grateful to British Gas for giving me a job, but I will be eternally grateful to the GMB for turning a good job into a great job, hence the reason I became a rep myself. Thank you. (*Applause*) I will now pass you on to Keith Muller.

BRO. K. MULLER: Thanks, Chris. Good afternoon, Congress. I am a GMB health and safety rep from Norwich, Norfolk. I am a member of the Norwich General Branch. I am a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Prior to the GMB gaining recognition within Smart Metering we had soaring rates of sickness, largely relating to stress and depression, and the business made no intent of supporting any of its engineers with the issues that management were creating. This led to too many cases of dismissal through capability. Seeing the impact that this was having on our members at this time, we started campaigning for recognition of mental health issues and procedures and practices that were initially recognised and then supported. A large portion of absence that was caused by stress, depression or anxiety, as well as other reasons, but the membership were afraid to be labelled as such. They were afraid to show their perceived weaknesses and afraid to let the bullying management-culture of the day become aware of their struggle to cope with the immense pressure they were exerting on the workforce. Seeing your colleagues being dismissed on a whim or for making silly mistakes was also stressful. Then when the business makes a simple mistake, they say sorry. They say it was supposed to be acceptable. After all, the business knows best. We believe that changes should be made to some key areas of the procedures that would make significant improvements on members' working day and work-life balance. Those were the areas we targeted. We had to make sure that the business would accept the responsibility for the issues they were creating and to fix them. They were basic requirements like having enough stock, issues of excessive travel times between jobs and the commission of the smart meters was a never-ending challenge. It was never explained to the members why they faced these issues day after day. We demanded communication from the business and, importantly, timely communications.

Bonus has been one of the biggest consequences of stress as the scheme was unfair, complicated and largely unachievable. It was driven hard by the managers who were forever demanding more, but not providing the tools with which to do it. All these issues I am describing to you today have been the consequence to this being unachievable, hitting people's pockets and creating employment insecurity. We had no negotiation paths over bonuses, as it is not a part of contractual pay. We have now agreed a number of safety measures. We have broken down the wall of silence where members were afraid to voice their opinions or feelings. We have campaigned for the business to face up to the culture they created. We want no more "face fits", and no more managers' pets getting the cream of the pay pot. It is made fair. The accountability for the wellbeing of their employees is in the hands of the management. Thank you very much. I will now pass you over to Peter. (*Applause*)

BRO. P. CANOVAGH: I am a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) PPE – personal protective equipment — that protects the employee from the hazards and the risks of

the job. When Smart began the management promoted how safety was paramount and that they would lead the way with PPE. So *this* is what they wanted the workforce to wear when working on an electric meter. You can see it is a big overcoat, a visor with a hard hat, a pair of rubber gloves and a pair of leather gauntlets. Not only was it over the top (*Laughter*) but it also put the fear of God into the customer. (*Laughter*) So you can imagine it, can't you, when you come in like that: "Ah, Billy, there's a Martian in the living room!" So the reps went to the members and asked them their views, and this is the response they got: "It's not fit for purpose. It's too much. We can't use tools with it. It's so safe it's unsafe, and I'm not wearing it". So the GMB approached the business and said that it needs to be reviewed as it is not fit for purpose. "Oh, no, no", said the business, "none of our employees will get hurt wearing this PPE. It is the best and we are not changing it". We said, "Well, you'd better re-think this because the workforce are not wearing it". The business could not understand. "What! What! They're not wearing it?" "No, because it's not fit for purpose, so are you going to review it?" So the business, on realising the seriousness of the situation said, "Okay".

After reviewing it, this is what was agreed. As you can see, it is one pair of gloves and a fire-retardant jacket. (*Applause*) It has been tested on numerous occasions, and the only thing that needed changing was the members' underwear. I won't go into the detail, but I'm sure you know what I mean. The business knows best? No. The workforce knows best. I will pass you over to Mark now, who is going to talk about tracker.

BRO. M. HIBBS: I am also a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Tracker is a device that is fitted in all British Gas vans. It is used for insurance purposes as well as safety purposes. However, line managers in British Gas Smart use it as a weapon of choice. They use it to discipline engineers, to spy on engineers, just like Big Brother. They use it to follow them to the property they visited and see what jobs they have done and what they have not done. They then turned it into a weapon of mass destruction. It was mass destruction regarding trust, trust amongst the workforce. A typical morning for a manager would be to take his children to school, drop them off in his company car, head back home, watch Jeremy Kyle on the television and a laptop on the table watching little blue vans driving round on a map. That was followed by him ringing the engineers to find out why they were so long at certain properties. Nine times out of 10 it was pipe work or rewiring, or phoning up to find out why they were standing in Tesco. Again, nine times out of 10 the guy was having his meal break. This behaviour by management caused such a problem with trust, moral and strain. Apparently, it went to show that the business knows best, but they did not know best. There was a complete lack of trust, no trust, no love and no belief. A number of engineers were taken to disciplinaries, and some of those engineers were sacked. Some engineers were taken to supermarket car parks for quiet conversations with the managers to be told how they could be sacked. There were discussions about their driving, their whereabouts and their timekeeping. With this now a national issue, it was time for the GMB to act and support its growing membership in Smart Metering.

After several meetings with senior management, which were heated, rather exhaustive and over the top at times, we gained some positive results. Now the trackers have been removed from the line managers' laptops, and now only senior managers have

access to the tracker, but to access this they need to raise it with the GMB district reps and give the reason why they want to access it. (*Applause*)

We, the GMB, monitor this with a report which shows exactly who has accessed the tracker and who they were actually looking at. So now we can track if someone is accessing it without permission. It is a bit like now we are tracking the managers. To get this overall result, we needed a solution to the trackers' safety use, and after a number of trials we now have a product in place called a Skyguard, which my colleague, John, will tell you about later on. You may ask why am I passionate about the tracker? One reason is that I was one of the engineers in a supermarket car park being told how I could lose my job by leaving my house at a certain time and spending so long at a customer's house. This was the straw that broke the camel's back for me. When the district rep received a complaint about it in my area, I couldn't wait to jump on it. (*Applause*) I have finished and I will hand you back over to Steve who will talk about rosters. Thank you. (*Applause*)

BRO. S. WHITTLE: Just to explain, our rosters were a disgrace within Smart Metering. People didn't have a right to a social life or a family life. British Gas made itself into a business that liked to publicise itself as a family business, and people could go there and have family time. We worked one-in-four Saturdays, one-in-four lates and one-in-four out of hours. If we were lucky, we had one weekend free a month to be able to spend time with our children and on our social life. It got to a point where people were off sick, attrition was high and engagement was at an all-time low. It got to a point that we had to raise it within our pay negotiations, because we had to put rosters into the pay negotiations. So we did a comprehensive survey of the workforce. We asked people who were on long-term sick, we asked people who were short-term sick, we asked high performers, we asked low performers; in fact, everybody around the rosters. From every single person we got comments, stories about people, and we, basically, took it and did a 40-minute presentation to the Director of Operations, who is John Craig, and who still is the Director of Operations. We spent 40 minutes taking him through the results of the survey. There were heart-wrenching stories of people who had left the business through capabilities. At the end of it, he had one comment. His only comment was "And?" That was it. He had a complete disinterest. He had no interest in trying to fix the problem and no interest in trying to understand the problem. So we decided to take the business on, and we did. Now we have completely overhauled four of the rosters. The rosters are now built by each district rep, who goes to a meeting point with the members and they write their own rosters. They do it. (*Applause*) Rosters now are built from the bottom to the top. We, in the vast majority of our districts, are effectively a Monday-to-Friday, 9-to-5 working business. We do that. Every single six months we fight for that and we will stick to that. If people have chosen — I say "chosen" — to work Saturdays, if they find it easier to work Saturdays, you will be lucky if you do it for one in every 14. Their lives are far better and they have improved. We will fight this every six months. The new rosters come every six months, and every six months the business will come to us and say "The customers need this" or "The business needs this". Actually, one of the ways we did this — yes, it was about engaging the workforce and it was about making things easier for them — was to prove that it was better for the business. The business lost 0.6 in productivity and about 10% in the completion rate at the weekends and out of hours. So, actually, if that is over 2,000 people, they are losing about 1,700 jobs per week, so this was not only better for the workforce but it

was better for the business. It took them six months to acknowledge that. With that, I will pass over to Ash. (*Applause*)

BRO. ASH: Good afternoon, Congress. My name is Ash. I would like to talk to you today about mentoring within Smart Metering. Mentoring is an integral part of life for any engineer. It lays the foundations for what type of engineer you are going to become. Most importantly, it gives you a chance to put into practice what you have learned in the classroom out in the real world. There were two main problems that we faced from the business and from the membership. The first one was from the business around accountability. They were only interested in who was accountable for the mistakes that were made, be it the apprentice or the mentor. I hope you can appreciate that when mistakes are made in the world of gas and electricity that they are not taken light-heartedly. The second one was from the membership, because when you have someone new out with you it slows you down. This would impact their targets and, in turn, impact their bonus and their take-home pay. All of this had an undercurrent, a running theme, a short-sightedness, a quantity-over-quality attitude from the business. We tackled both of the problems head on. The first thing we did was to make sure that mentoring was one-on-one, which sounds logical to a lot of people in this room, but there were too many instances of two, three or four apprentices out with the same mentor. That hampers their educational experience, it looks unprofessional and, most of all, it compromises safety, so we put a stop to that. Also every mentor-to-be had to take a class with our learning development department, and it set out the roles and responsibilities of the mentor and also the apprentice. We underpinned all of this by getting documents sent out to the workforce, which clearly stated what everybody's rules and responsibilities were.

The second problem was the issue around the bonus and the membership. It is important to point out at this point that no other business unit within British Gas gets paid the mentor. So it was an uphill task to begin with, but we did manage to do it. The crux of it is that if you have been mentoring you are able to pick from a quarter where you were not mentoring if it has impacted your bonus, which was a massive, massive win for our membership. Thank you for making me feel welcome. I am now going to pass you over to Nick. (*Applause*)

BRO. NICK: Good afternoon. My name is Nick, I am from the London Region and working in London, and I am going to speak about the meeting points we have at British Gas Smart Metering. As a remote workforce these meeting points are essential to help build strong teams. It is our one chance to get together, to meet new team members, to share ways of working and experience. Of course, the company can impart their agenda; information, business updates and safety briefs.

My life started at British Gas as a TUPE, and one of the first things said to us was, "We do things properly at British Gas". I was a little disappointed as someone who prides himself in doing things properly, as it was clearly suggested that we had not been doing so up until now. It also set high expectations, expectations that were soon dashed, and team meetings were one of the reasons. They were poorly organised; essentially, death by Powerpoint. They were often cancelled, there was no team time and no travel time was taken into account, and refreshments were rare and did not cater for all. Rooms were not booked and equipment was not working. Signatures for mandatory briefs and safety briefs were treated as an attendance register, and that

could come back and bite members. When there was an investigation, a manager would say, “You must have understood it. Here’s your signature!” We would see managers playing catch-up in car parks, and there was certainly no input from us. Then, on one occasion, Brian, who unfortunately is not here today, had enough and put a stop to an overly-long and overly-complicated brief to do with the requirements of the distribution network for new install sites. He could see that the essential information was being lost. It caused a bit of a stir. But after the toys were recovered and put back in their prams we began to talk. We are now part of the governance of the agenda and its contents. Recognition of the workforce is better. More thought is put into travel time and catering, and a commitment not to cancel planned meetings. Importantly, team time is built in, which is an opportunity for us to talk to our members and, of course, to listen to what they say. We made a difference. Thank you. (*Applause*) Now I turn to Monica.

SIS. M. GOOD: I am going to talk to you about the rag status. When we started in Smart Metering life for our members was very different to what we see today, as my fellow reps today have been explaining. Each day we would receive our work on a tablet. All of our appointments for the day would be lined up with a progress or rag status, which is simply a red, amber, green traffic-light indicator, telling you whether you were on time or overdue for an appointment. Appointments were poorly planned and despatching was dysfunctional at best. On any given day, you could log in and have eight to 12 jobs lined up for your eight-hour shift, bearing in mind that each of those jobs could take two hours, and often more. There was no sign of a meal break or any consideration given to the fact that you would have travel between each appointment. To add to this, the app was over-complicated, it was restrictive with many duplicated requests for data which just added unnecessary time to each appointment. This is where we saw the effects of the rag status. To give you a bit of perspective of what that felt like, for those of you who have been up on this stage or will be during the next few days, this beacon *here* that is changing colour when you are working your way through the speech that you have carefully planned has turned amber now, and you can feel that pressure building. Now it has turned red and your heart is racing, and you’ve got lovely Mary breathing down your neck to be finished. Replicate that feeling, times it by nine every single day, but it’s not the lovely Mary breathing down your neck any more, it’s your manager, your manager who is 50% likely to dismiss you for any minimal mistake, your manager, who is demanding your productivity and increasing your completion rates, all whilst working on live gas and electricity, dressed up in a lovely space suit that you saw me in a few moments ago. This caused untold issues for our members and stress levels soared. Our members already had a million other things they had to think about on each job. So, after many months of campaigning and attending workshops, and fighting the business opinions that is supposed to be an effective tool, but in reality it was just used to squeeze all they could out of a decent, hardworking, committed workforce, which finally one. The app was completely transformed, with no more rag status, no more duplication and no more overdue jobs flashing in red. It was a huge win for the GMB and a huge win for our members. Thank you. (*Applause*) I am now going to hand over to my colleague, John Franklyn.

BRO. J. FRANKLYN: Thank you, Monica. I will be talking to you about personal safety devices. Lone-working engineers could find themselves in difficult and hazardous situations. The business kept telling us that safety was of the utmost

importance to them, but this was not being borne out by their actions. At the beginning, with British Gas, Smart engineers were given no back-up except that of a mobile phone. We were asked to do warrant runs, sometimes without stab vests, out-of-hours work, from eight in the evening through to 8 am in the morning. It felt like very little thought had been put into the safety of the engineers, only how many exchanges they could carry out within a given a time. We were also asked to inspect installations not only for safety reasons but also to detect dangerous and possible tampering. Naturally, the threat of prosecution and serious consequences could quickly turn a situation into an aggressive and hostile one. Also engineers often working alone could be vulnerable to slips and falls. Should an unfortunate incident or accident occur, having no immediate help at hand, they could leave the worker vulnerable to a worsening and crucial situation.

The GMB decided that our engineers were entitled to a high-level of back up and response to back up the business promise, and stated part of their mantra of safety being of their utmost importance, thus providing us with an essential means of communication in the event of an incident such as a physical assault, which has happened on occasions. Through the Tools Forum we pushed for a means to give our fellow workers some reassurance, and together we settled on some guidelines. *This* is my SOS personal safety device. The “My SOS” is a key-sized fob, a state-of-the-art personal alarm, that enables you to raise the alarm at the touch of a button. As soon as this alarm is raised, the controller at the incident management centre will know who is calling, their exact GPS location and can listen in via the two-way audio functionality on the unit to find out what is going on. All alarm-data calls are recorded for evidential purposes. Also should a user slip, trip or fall and unable to manually raise the alarm, there is a man-down sensor within the device which will activate the alarm and staff will be alerted to a potential problem.

The Skyguard device has already been proven in use when one of our engineers came across a serious road incident in a rural location. Not knowing the location, through the use of the GPS location technology, the emergency services were directed to the exact location, via the Skyguard controllers. This has now been issued to over 3,000 of our members and is now an essential part of our daily PPE kit. Thank you for your time. (*Applause*) I shall now be handing over to my colleague, John Cahoon, who will be speaking to you all about driver safety.

BRO. J. CAHOON: I am going to be talking to you today about driver safety within British Gas. Since I have been a rep, one of the things that has greatly concerned me in British Gas is the frequency of the road accidents that we see. These vary from the very minor to the bumps and scrapes to the very serious accidents. Earlier this year, we had three where the engineers were very lucky to walk away with their lives. As someone who lost a family member some years ago to a road accident, road safety is something that I feel very strongly about. I am all too aware of the devastation that can be left behind following a fatal collision. As reps we have taken some steps to increase awareness around road safety within the business. Each month we get a report which tells us which driver has had points deducted for behaviour such as speeding. We are taking the time to go out and speak to our members on a one-to-one basis to let them know where they can improve their driving behaviour and improve their safety on the roads. We have seen some really good results in this, where

people's scores have improved. In the following month they have generally fallen off the reports, which is a great thing.

With help from the GMB, an apprenticeship for the under-25s has been introduced, which is the highest-risk group. In conjunction with this, as reps, we have been going into the academies and speaking to the new guys, letting them know how important it is to drive safely out there. One of the things we are focusing on at the moment, as well as the use of technology while they are driving, in the modern age that we live in, it is all too tempting for an engineer to sit there with their tablet next to them, updating and speaking on the hands-free kit, so we are just letting them know exactly how important it is to drive safely so we are trying to focus on that. It has really helped to have reps go in and talk to the guys on an equal level, rather than to be dictated to by the business. We have seen some really great results, and the improvements we have seen have made me proud to be part of the GMB and the great team that is standing behind me today. I am now going to pass you over to Jason Walker who is going to talk to you about MSD. *(Applause)*

BRO. J. WALKER: Good afternoon, Congress. I am a first-time speaker *(Applause)* and I am district rep for the Yorkshire and North Derbyshire region. I would like to talk to you today about MSDs — musculoskeletal disorders. This affects the lower limbs and upper limbs of the body. I would like to tell you my story which happened to me three years ago. I had been on the sick with a bacterial infection for two weeks. I started back to work on the Monday, where I was given a new electrical meter install to carry out on a site for a whole week. By Wednesday, I started feeling pains in both of my forearms. This was due to the over-use of the screwdriver. It involved 16 screws per fit, plus having to cut cable. I reported this to my line manager, asking him to reduce my workload. In return he rang the district manager. Ten minutes later he decided to ring me back. He then informed me that if I could not carry out my workload I was to go back on the sick. At this point, I informed my district rep, where she advised me to ring the MS Line, with my suspected tendinitis. Within the hour, I was receiving full support, with a reduced workload, occupation health referral and physiotherapy. My tendinitis carried on for a further seven days. Due to this it came to light that there were a lot more people than myself with tendinitis and wrist injuries. We had been fighting for a battery screwdriver for the past five years. I was involved in the trials due to my injury. I also received a battery-operated screwdriver myself. The GMB then jumped on the back of this to see how many people actually had upper-limb problems. The company then decided to try another battery screwdriver. I was also involved in the trials of the battery screwdriver. It was to be cascaded out to the whole of the workforce nationally. Today we have the battery screwdriver nationally.

I would like to say a big thank you to my GMB colleagues for making this happen. Without their support, I probably would have gone down the sickness route and been dismissed from the company for capabilities. There has now been a reduction of MSDs by 28% in the past year alone because of the battery-operated screwdriver. *(Applause)* In this case, the business did not know best. I would like to hand over to my colleague, George Walsh, who will be talking to you about the floods. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

BRO. G. WALSH: Good afternoon, Congress, I am a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I want to say a bit about British Gas Smart Metering and the floods in Lancashire and Cumbria last Christmas. When those floods hit it was all hands-to-the-pumps for our engineers. Although some of them have been personally affected by this disaster, they unconditionally gave their skills and labour to the task in hand, which was to return heating and power to the people.

As GMB reps we worked shoulder-to-shoulder with them on this filthy and arduous task, often ankle-deep in water and sewage in people's cellars. We identified 10 engineers who had lost a lot of their Christmas food due to a three-day power outage. So, after discussions with senior reps, we decided to give them vouchers, albeit a small token, to buy replacement Christmas food and, maybe, a turkey for the Christmas meal. (*Applause*) In February after various complaints from engineers, management responded and set up a meal for the engineers as a thank you for their efforts. This was a nice gesture, albeit a little late. Two thoughts sprung to my mind. One was that the managers seemed like the emperors who fiddled whilst Rome burnt, except for one manager who did help and worked tirelessly through it all. Secondly, this band of engineers, some of them so-called "misfits" on various stages of warnings and sickness reviews, proved without a doubt that when you remove the chains all men are equal. So well done to all GMB engineers, and I will pass you over now to Steven Whittle. (*Applause*)

BRO. S. WHITTLE: This has been our story, and thanks for listening to it. Each rep has spoken to their subject, not just randomly. It's because they have led the challenge on each of their subjects, so every single one of them has spoken passionately, because they have led the charge on it. They have fought that fight and they have won it themselves. In five years we have raised pay by 28%. We have reduced attrition down to 2%. We have brought sickness down to 4%, and we have brought our percentage density up to 97%. We have now got 36 reps nationally. We've got facility time. We've recruited 1,200 people. We have got engagement up. We now have 100% direct labour. There are no sub-contractors within British Gas Smart Metering. (*Applause and cheers*) Safety has been vastly improved. Every single rep behind me can say that our members are a hell of a lot more likely to get home safely because of the work that we have done. This has been our story. We agree that the business does know best, but the business does know best but only when it is listening to its workforce. Thank you very much for listening. (*A standing ovation*)

THE PRESIDENT: Steve and the rest of your colleagues, aren't we proud of the team and the health and safety reps that not only make themselves safe but our members safe and us safe in our homes. Thank you. (*Applause*) Well done.

I was 45 minutes ahead. I'm now 45 minutes behind. Well done to all of them. Over to the General Secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you very much, Mary. Hopefully, you understood why it was so important for us to showcase what our Smart Metering reps had done, building the membership up from absolutely nothing to 1,200, to 97% and all of those significant victories. Just imagine how eloquently they spoke about the pressure people were under on these green, amber and red schemes, and the protected personal equipment. Yes, it is exactly as Kyle said, it is not just that they are now

running the business as reps, but the business understands that they run the business because they understand what the threats and challenges of the workforce are. That is exactly what I talked to you about when I am talking about building this 21st century union. You know best in terms of your workplaces, the issues of your members, and that is what we want to listen to.

I want to follow on from that, Mary, if I may, please, with some regional success. This will be fairly bouncing around. It will be fairly short and succinct. We are going to start with Yorkshire, and then Midland. From Yorkshire, we've got Jim Rodgers and Gordon Parks. We are going to have a bit of a visual first, so if Jim and Gordon could come to the front ready to speak. Then we will go to Midland. Andy Worth is going to come and speak for a couple of minutes, and then from GMB Scotland we have Rhea Wolfson to speak. If we could play the Yorkshire Powerpoint, that would be very good. (*Powerpoint presentation*) (*Applause*)

Jim and Gordon, please come up and speak to us.

BRO. J. RODGERS (Yorkshire & North Derbyshire): Congress, I'm Jim Rodgers, this is Gordon Parkes. We are the sacked GMB reps from Green Co, Sheffield, Yorkshire, and we are first-time speakers. (*Applause and cheers*) Myself and Gordon were sacked for leading a walkout approximately two years ago about, mainly, terms and conditions. A bit part of it was bullying. Because we work on a dump-it site, so don't expect too much, you don't need any qualifications to work on it. Consequently, we have a few lads with physical disabilities and mental disabilities, but they cope. They were part of the team. Everybody was pulling together, until we got a new management system in about two years ago, which was a charity. We thought "A charity. That will be fine", but what a set of bastards! (*Laughter*) All the good work that the GMB, and specifically what Pete Davis and Tim, had done, such as doubling our wages in a matter of four years, we were having stripped off us. It got to the point where most of our terms and conditions were taken away from us. They got one disabled lad that bad that he had to go off work with a nervous breakdown. We walked out. I wouldn't say it was a legal walkout, but it was morally correct what we did. We had a dispute and we walked out. The upshot of that was that we got sacked. That was two years ago, or nearly enough. Through the GMB's efforts, we have finally, as you saw on the screen just now, got to the stage whereby we look like we are going to set a new business up. It's another charity, but this one — we've had it confirmed by Pete Davis and the GMB — is a totally not-for-profit charity, which is half of the problem. We were first taken over by a contractor, and all they were interested in was money. We got rid of them, and, like I said, we fell into the hands of a charity, and all they were interested in was money.

When they got found out by the financial director of how much money they were actually stealing off the workforce, which was approximately 9 grand a month for consultation fees, the financial director – Sharon Lightly — who found this out, she and all the management team were sacked. Over a period of about two months they were all sacked, and then they started on the workforce. It got to the stage that we were the first ones to be sacked. Up to now they have sacked four more foremen. They haven't sacked any of the lads, just the foremen. "Hit them where it hurts and they will capitulate". That's what they thought. But we've got a good set of lads. Initially there were 34 of them, but now there are 24. So we are still in it and we are

in for the long haul. I have to say that the picture of Tim on the picket line with us is true. We have been pissed off with the police, haven't we?

BRO. PARKES: Yep.

BRO. RODGERS: The police told us to move off, get out of the way, and they told us, "This is where you're going". Pete Davis has been with us all the way through it. We've got to the stage of where we are now. When we were sacked, they set scab labour on, zero-hours contractors are on. In fact, they have done everything that they can to break us, but with the loyal support — it shocked me, really — and undying support from the GMB, you don't realise how good you are really until you start looking at it from our perspective. *(Applause)* As I said, you don't realise how good you are. It is the set of people in a team like your lot who are working behind the scenes who are actually helping us, and we don't half appreciate it. We have fought and lobbied. We have actually been to Sheffield City Council. We thought that, because the GMB donates money to councillors and politicians, the political part of this would be sound, but apparently not. It got to the stage where we had to fetch the big guns down, which were Tim and part of his team, to have a go at the Sheffield City Council Labour Leader twice, until we have got to the stage where we are today. It looks like we are going to be set up with a new company. *(Applause)* I haven't done yet.

The people who I have to thank are Neil Derrick, the Yorkshire & North Derbyshire Regional Secretary, and Kalvinder Degun, Colin Kirkham and his team and Pete Davis. I also have to thank Tim Roache, because without Tim's help none of this would have happened. Once again, I would like to thank you. However, the money is not quite coming in yet. We've got jobs lined up but we haven't actually been signed up yet, and we'd still like something to eat. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thanks very much, Gordon and Jim. That was fantastic stuff. I now call Midland Region. Can we play the video on the Dying To Work campaign. Then I will ask Andy to address us. *(The video on the Dying to Work campaign was shown)*

"I'm Jacqui. In 2012 I was given a diagnosis of terminal secondary breast cancer. It actually came as quite a shock to me because I have always been an exceptionally healthy person. It is very difficult to describe how devastating and frightening it is. It is actually quite remarkable who isn't there to support you. I wanted to carry on working as work was a bit part of my life for various reasons: dignity, stimulation and also money. So I was pretty shocked at the time when my company did not really take any great care and attention to me. They didn't give me any support emotionally, and we then started to have problems. They said to me: "I need to talk to you about how your illness will affect the company", and not "How can we help you?"

At this point, I then went to my union, the GMB in Nottingham, and we then got my company back on track. I have met an awful lot of people who are coming to terms with their terminal diagnosis, and they also had problems at work. Some employers have actually dismissed them and treated them very badly. This is what actually started me thinking that the law is not working properly and we need to change things.

So with the help of the trade unions, various charities and other organisations, we are now launching the *Dying to Work* campaign.

The *Dying to Work* campaign is about people who wish to carry on working after a terminal diagnosis. It is about giving them choices. Do they want to work or do they not want to work? It is about giving them the additional protection that actually is not there at the moment. It is about making their experience stress free and giving them security. When I was at my most vulnerable time, I was very stressed and I felt very isolated, and my union was there with me all the way. What I want to do now is to make sure that no one else goes through what I have been through. Changing the law is not going to help me now, but I want it to help everyone who comes after me.”
(Applause)

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Andy, please.

BRO. A. WORTH (Regional Secretary, Midland & East Coast): Congress, the video was played first because I think it says everything about why we launched the campaign. Jacqui came to the regional office to seek support from her officer. It soon became obvious that we were going to deal with this company. Anybody who knows me knows that we were going to deal with this company, so we got involved in that. She then expressed a wish to get into a campaign. So we launched the *Dying to Work* campaign. That was as a result of Jacqui, which is why the video went up first. Without her coming to her union and asking for this to happen, we wouldn't have launched this campaign. So we have moved it on now to a point where we have now got cross-party support, believe it or not, on this issue. We have been into Parliament three times trying to get the law changed to make it a protected characteristic and get it all sorted out, so there is protection where you can't be dismissed from work. We've got Tories on board, we've got SNP on board and we've got the Labour Party on board. We have been to Europe with the campaign and we've got MEPs on board with Kathleen's help, and with Glenys Willmott, who will be here on Thursday. So the political side is going very well. As she says, it will take a long time to achieve. Within the region, we have talked to the regional TUC. They have now adopted the campaign. Other unions are starting to take it on board and, hopefully, with Tim's support, we will get the national TUC on board with this campaign.

There is a stand in the hall today. I would just ask colleagues to go to the stand. I would also ask you to go to the fringe meeting and get more information on this. We can send you information with packs. Last of all, I ask you to take it back to your employer and start having the debate with them, because we are already getting success in employers signing up. EON has signed up to the charter. Notts County Council has signed up to the charter. Rolls Royce is on the brink of signing up to the charter. CWU are talking to the Royal Mail and BT. So it is starting to roll out, but it won't go on its own. It will require all the people in this hall and all of our activists to drive this campaign on and to make a success in Jacqui's memory.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Excellent stuff. Thanks very much, Andy. That fringe event is tomorrow lunch time at 12.45 and Jacqui Woodcock, amongst others, will actually be there. So, please, do make every effort to go along.

GMB Scotland is next, please. We've got a short slide presentation, and then Rhea Wolfson will come up and speak. Please start playing the slides. That will be great. Then we are going to call Birmingham. I will be introducing Steve Carter and Andy Pyke. Then it will be Wales & South West with Mike Wilson, followed by London and Perry Phillips. Lastly we have got North West & Irish, with Graham Smith, and Southern, with Alice Reynolds. So, Rhea.

SIS. R. WOLFSON (GMB Scotland): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and a first-time speaker. *(Applause)* I am the branch secretary for Glasgow Cordia. GMB Scotland is changing for the better. We have always been a proud old union, but in years to come we will talk about how 2016 was the year that our union kick-started its recovery. Through the actions of our members and our organisation, we have a great cause to be so optimistic. Over the last few months, we have secured equal pay justice for hundreds of low-paid women in North Lanarkshire Council. We faced down Glasgow City Council with our strike ballot against their attempted imposition of a £500 cut to our members' wages. We are squaring up to the Tory Government in their attempts to strip away skilled manufacturing jobs at BA Systems on the Upper Clyde.

GMB Scotland is being seen and heard like never before, and GMB Scotland is winning for working people, but does have its challenges. Unemployment is at 6.2%, a tanking economy exacerbated by the crisis in our oil and gas sector. Forty thousand local government jobs have been lost since 2009, and there has been a similar decline in our skilled manufacturing sector. Congress, Scotland needs a credible and consistent campaigning trade union like never before. GMB Scotland will be that trade union, and we are already leading the way.

Our purpose is clear. We serve to advance and protect the interests of our growing membership across Scotland to the very best of our abilities. We will be uncompromising in our pursuit of this objective: members and industry first, always. We want to be a credible, consistent, growing and winning trade union that you will all be able to be proud of. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, very much, Rhea. Our next speaker is Warinder Juss from Birmingham, to be followed by Steve and Andy.

BRO. W. JUSS (Birmingham & West Midlands): Comrades, in January and February 2015 the Labour-controlled Birmingham City Council issued redundancy notices to 180 lollipop men and women. These are school crossing-patrol wardens. With the assistance of two local Labour Party MPs we started a public campaign with an on-line petition. We worked with the press, the *Birmingham Mail*, we carried out Parliamentary research and we obtained statistics about the risks of accident occurring on roads where there were no wardens. We also worked with a mother whose child, very sadly, was killed in a road traffic accident. On the eve of the Budget we handed the petition to the Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, who agreed to an emergency meeting, and we were able to ensure that those 180 lollipop men and women were not sacked. *(Applause)*

However, the fight was still to occur, because in October George Osborne issued another announcement making cuts in local government funding, and Birmingham

City Council then decided to renege on their position and issued those redundancy notices again. We re-launched the campaign. This time we did not have the assistance of the two Labour Party MPs, but we are a strong union and we carried on on our own. We launched the online petition again. We involved television. We had TV coverage with *Central News*, the *BBC News* and press coverage with *Birmingham Mail*. Finally, we were able to save those 180 jobs.

Not only that, comrades, we, surely, must have saved the lives of children. We increased union membership as a result of all of this, and established with Birmingham City Council that we are not only a campaigning union but we are a fighting union. We are a powerful union. As Tim, our General Secretary, mentioned this afternoon, we are a union that produces tangible results. Moreover, Comrades, Birmingham City Council — a very large local authority, as you well know — now knows that the GMB is a union that you simply do not mess around with. Thank you. (*Applause*)

BRO. S. CARTER: The Early Years' Review began in Birmingham in 2014, with the trade unions informed that this was not a cost-cutting exercise. In June 2015 it became clear that this was untrue — I could have used the word “lie”, but I'm being kind — and that from December 2014 private reports had been provided to the council about privatising the Early Years' Service. GMB demanded an immediate meeting where we were given four options, all of which were for privatisation. My colleague, Christine Mooney wrote to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services setting out our concerns and to oppose another report. Despite this, formal consultation began in September with a proposal to close up to 60 children's centres and day-care provision across the city. With the help of our regional officer, Gillian Whittaker, the GMB immediately went into dispute, citing failure to consult over the previous 18 months. Our dispute was upheld and the GMB received an apology with the promise of full consultation, including with parents, carers and comprehensive staff engagement. The GMB has gained many members through this campaign and the respect of key professionals. The consultation was expected by Birmingham City Council to run till January 2016, but through the GMB's intervention it will now run through to September 2017. The fight is not over but the GMB stance is clear. The welfare of Birmingham's children is paramount and should not be used for profit. Thank you. (*Applause*)

BRO. A. PYKE (Birmingham & West Midlands, Education Facility Rep): Congress, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Back in 2012 Bolton Primary School in Birmingham was academised and staff were TUPE's across to a sponsored academy. The TUPE took place in April, and at the same time staff were due to receive their performance increments as part of their previous performance management system that Birmingham City Council had implemented. Guess what? The payments were not made. GMB became aware in September that staff had not received their increments. This began a long battle of legal arguments between Birmingham City Council and the academy chain. GMB attempted several methods of trying to get answers from both sides, and as to who was going to pay. In the meantime, GMB started to gain members based on our pressing the issue and launching a collective grievance. Due to the timescales involved, we knew that we would be out of time for a legal claim at a tribunal, but a possible case for a county court claim would be pursued. In addition, GMB upped the campaign and lodged a

dispute threatening action. This forced Oasis to negotiate with us rather than pass the buck. Finally, GMB pressed on with no evidence of what scores our members had achieved, but we got them to pay every one of the support staff, regardless of whether they were due an increment for three years' back pay or not, which totalled just short of £30,000 for those people. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: That is brilliant work. Thank you so much. We will see the video on the Wales Union Learning Fund. Then I will ask Mike Wilson to come up and say a few words. (*Wales Union Learning Fund video shown*)

BRO. M. WILSON (GMB Wales and South West): Before I say a few words, I would like to say a huge thank you to the regional secretary, John Phillips, and his team. Their continued support with the Wales Union Learning Fund has been absolutely fantastic with all the effort they have put into it. Thanks everyone, for that. Also I want to thank all the GMB Union Learning reps who have given up all their time. A lot of the work they do is in addition to all their duties that they have to do at work. It has been absolutely fantastic, to be fair. Some of the new reps who have taken on the role have been recruited into the programme from the Wales Union Learning Fund. We have found that they have gone on, then, to recruit many more new members themselves. They have had the experience of the education and the training, and they have gone forward as ambassadors to recruit other members on to the programme and also new members themselves. This continuation makes one hell of a difference.

One new rep who I would like to mention is a guy called Mark Church. He has been on the Wales Union Learning Fund for some time now, and it has made such a dramatic difference not only to his life but to the lives of his family. He has told me about helping his girls with their homework. His wife has gone back into education now. The different learning can make to our members' lives. A lot of us haven't had the opportunity of a good education, and with the Union Learning Fund we can turn that situation around for our members, and so much so with Mark Church that he has the honour now of being GMB Learner of the Year 2016 in the Commercial Services Sector. He is picking up that award tomorrow. (*Applause*)

Also the strategy that Colin Kirkham has introduced with bringing all the regions together to share best practice has been absolutely fantastic, to be fair. I know that I have learnt a lot personally, and many more of our members and their families have learnt from that as well. It just shows that, with a fantastic team of Union Learning reps in one company alone, we have achieved over one thousand City & Guilds' qualifications, and over 500 of our members have actually turned their lives around. We are all very proud of them. Do you want to say a couple of words, Nigel?

BRO. N. EVANS (GMB Wales & South West): Congress, I am a proud ULR rep. I would like to share a little story with you, which may make you chuckle, and it is true, actually. I got involved with this programme — it is really close to my heart — when I went through the Essential Skills Programme starting at the lower end and working right up to Level 2. Why it is close to my heart is that I wasted a lot of time in school. Education wasn't really at the top of my list. I will just share a little story with you. After doing the programme, I realised how much it had benefited not only by helping my family and children with the homework and giving me a lot more confidence.

Three years ago I wouldn't have dreamt of speaking before you, like I am now. However, Mike asked me to speak in a celebration and success event. We had quite a few learners who had got qualified, so I said "Yes, okay". How foolish of me! I thought I would be in a little room. As I said, I wasted a lot of my time in school. Mike said, "It's in the Senate in Cardiff". So I thought it was a little pub or a little town hall in Cardiff Bay. How foolish I was. Up I went with my other ULR rep. When we were going in we had to go through a lot of security, like we were gone on an aeroplane. I thought, "God alive, there must be somebody else coming up here as well". There were a lot of security checks, etc. When we walked in, all of a sudden I saw a few names and myself up in lights on a big screen. I can't tell you exactly what I said because Mary won't allow me to swear, but it was just a real shock. I didn't realise that it was where the Welsh Assembly does all its business. What I am trying to say is how much of a difference it has made in my life, and there must be thousands of other people out *there* who would like this opportunity. I would like to thank the GMB because I think it is a brilliant scheme. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE REGIONAL SECRETARY: Fantastic. Well done, everybody. Thank you very much. London Region, Perry Phillips. Perry is going to introduce the campaign on London Linen.

BRO. P. PHILLIPS (London): Congress and President, I am proud to announce that the London Region has successfully secured a voluntary recognition agreement with London Linen Supply in Southall, west London, after long and hard-fought negotiations with the company. We initially started with around three to four members back towards the end of 2014 at London Linen, and we gradually built up the membership through successful representations in disciplinarys and health and safety concerns that our members had sought help from the GMB. I was involved in the disciplinarys. They were not disciplinarys but dismissals. Two elder Asian ladies were dismissed by the company because the company told them that they were not working hard enough. As I said, they were dismissed. Their families came to see me at the Hayes office in the London Region. They were devastated. They were all in tears. I will never forget the day that they came to the office. To cut a long story short, I got them their jobs back and they are still working at London Linen. (*Applause*) I describe the actions of the company as despicable! They are back working today, they are happy and they are providing an income for their family.

Workers at London Linen were inspired to join the GMB by excellent GMB-led campaigns at Ealing Hospital, with the closure of the A&E Department, and disputes over pay and conditions involving members at the hospital.

To build up the membership base at London Linen we had organised mass meetings at local schools in Southall on Saturday mornings with GMB members and non-members, who were keen and interested in becoming part of the GMB London Region. GMB membership at London Linen has grown to around 170 as a result of continuous campaigning and protecting our members' interests and rights within their workplace at London Linen. After many meetings and discussions throughout 2015 and 2016 involving GMB, London Linen and ACAS, GMB members now have full negotiating rights at London Linen Supply in Southall, Middlesex. Four new GMB shop stewards have been elected at the London Linen site and have completed their ISTs and are looking forward to the GMB training courses.

GMB workplace organisers are also looking forward to working with the GMB members and with the London Linen management to create a good working partnership. They are ready to help out on all the issues that may transpire from the workplace to help our members through their day-to-day shift patterns and other issues that may come up.

Let me tell you a little bit more about the company. With their 76,000 sq.ft. premises in Southall, the company process around 1.6 million pieces of linen every week. It is a financial success as well, with an annual turnover of around £29 million and an operating profit of £2.5 million. London Linen has 900 clients at over 3,400 locations within the London Region. GMB will be working to ensure that some of that success filters through to our members working for the company. (*Applause*) It also aims to discuss levels of pay, shifts, working conditions, sick pay, bonuses and health and safety improvements with the employer. It will be a long road but we will get there. GMB members working at London Linen Supply provide high standards of customer service and deliver a broad range of linen and laundry to the industry, including napkins, table cloths, chef wear and work wear. Some of the company's catering clients are high-end restaurants, and they range from Jason Atherton to Jamie's Italian restaurants. There are many more. The once family-run business is now owned by the Johnson Group has retained its core values throughout its 80-year history. It is the founding division of the London Living Group. Throughout its long history, the business has grown and adapted as restaurants have evolved in order to provide them with a cost-effective, flexible and reliable service. Our members there work bloody hard. Pictures that have been shown behind me were of a mass meeting that we held in one of the schools one day last year, and there are pictures of our newly-elected reps as well. This is a great achievement for the GMB London Region and GMB members at London Linen under the principles of *GMB@Work*. This was brought together by the persistence and hard work of colleagues not just from the south but work colleagues and other reps who helped out through the two years that we processed this hard-fought victory.

I would like to thank you, comrades, brothers and sisters, for listening to this brief presentation on this very good victory for the London Region. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Well done, Perry. Thank you very much. It is now for Graham Smith to talk about taking back of the street cleansing contract into Liverpool City Council. Graham.

BRO. G. SMITH (North West & Irish): President and Congress, I haven't got any fancy videos for you or any of my work colleagues here. I think the budget must have run out, a Paul? But what I do have is a success story, or the start of a success story that I would like to share with you on the LATco and grounds maintenance and the street cleansing staff in Liverpool.

Back in November 2014 we were entering into the last year of our contract with Amy. It had been made quite clear at this point that the city was, as usual, going to the market for a new private contractor to run our services. However, for the first time ever, the GMB was invited to be part of this process to ensure a smooth as possible

transition instead of the usual bully-boy tactics that come in with them. We started to notice early on in this process the same old trends; private contractors promising Champagne services on lemonade budgets. We knew that whilst efficiencies would have to be made due to budget cuts, these would not be coming out of the fat-cat shareholder profits but, quite likely, from the job cuts and attacks on our terms and conditions. This is when we started to convince the Mayor that instead of paying these leeches the 10% or 12% management fees — let's face it, these contractors have no interest in driving down budget costs, because 12% of £20 million is a lot more than 12% of £10 million — by working together, that is the City, the trade unions and the workforce, we should be able to meet the efficiencies and deliver a better service to our city. I have now got the great honour to report that as of March 1st this year Liverpool Streetscene Services Limited was born, a company wholly owned by Liverpool City Council which took over the running of the street cleansing grounds and refuse services, services that had been in the hands of the private contractors for the past 25 years. *(Applause)*

Up to date, by working a bit smarter, we together have managed to take out £1.5 million from the refuse service, £600,000 out of the ground maintenance service and made profits of £400 grand on the street cleansing service. This has not been to the detriment in any way to our members or workforce. There have been no compulsory redundancies and no cuts to our Ts and Cs. In fact, if anything, we are increasing jobs and have already improved some of our Ts and Cs. This could not have been done, and it would not have been possible, without the vision, drive and support of the Labour Mayor, Joe Anderson; the Deputy Mayor, Ann O'Byrne; Labour councillor, Steve Mumby and Joe Hanson; our Regional Secretary, Paul McCarthy — thank you, Paul *(Applause)* — and our officer, who I would personally like to thank, Ian Lowes. For the first time the union and its members will have a say in how the company is run. We have two representatives on the board of directors, representation on the job-interview panels and we are working together with the council to develop new initiatives as part of a genuine partnership. This is the future of public sector workers. Other Labour councillors should take a look at what has been achieved in Liverpool and follow suit. An end to privatisation of council services will benefit the councils, our members and the people we deliver the services to. Congress, I guess what I am saying to all of you is if a scallywag bin man from Liverpool can convince one of the most powerful politicians outside of London to take a chance, then any of you can. I commend this new initiative. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: That sounds pretty good for a scallywag to me, Graham. That was absolutely superb. Last but by no means least, it is Southern Region. We've got a three minute video and we will be hearing from Alice Reynolds. Thank you. *(Video played)*

SIS. A. REYNOLDS (Southern): President and Congress, as you have seen from our video the Southern Region has been continually pro-active in supporting our membership in the workplace. Our in-your-face approach to unscrupulous employers breeds confidence in people to join our union, the GMB. From our video clip, you can see that we succeeded in many arenas. Something we should all be very proud of is that we saw off the blacklists, and we secured a pay rise of 50p per hour for Aramart workers in south London hospitals, recognition for our members at St. George's Hospital, Tooting with Mitie, as well as collective bargaining rights. At

Woolwich Hospital we got 60p an hour for our members. In the AA — yes, the AA — the company which set up and formed a scab union, the GMB still has a live and well branch, as well as a delegate here today who I met yesterday. (*Applause*) They are still growing and there is more and more staff joining on a daily basis. Congress, we in the Southern Region cause aggro. Yes, we agitate, we grow, we recruit and, by God, we organise! Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

THE GENERAL SECRETARY: Okay. Thanks very much, Alice. Well done. That's it in terms of our successes, comrades. I apologise for the late running of Congress, but I don't apologise one bit for celebrating our successes. They are fantastic successes, starting with Smart Metering and then everyone of you. So well done and thank you very much. Mary.

THE PRESIDENT: I fully endorse all of that. Please clear the tables as this hall will be used for the Public Services Section Conference tomorrow. The Manufacturing Section Conference is in the Purbeck Lounge. The Commercial Services Section Conference is in the Tregonwell Hall.

As reported by the SOC, there will be a bucket collection as you leave the hall in aid of Rainbow International, organised by Southern Region. Please give generously. Could the regional organisers please inform the SOC of the total amount raised.

Our union's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender network, GMB Shout!, are holding a social tonight from 8 p.m. in the DYMK bar in Poole Street. It's open to everyone. For more information, see Carl on the National Equality stall or visit Shout's Facebook group. Thank you, Congress. Enjoy your evening. That concludes the business until 9.30 on Wednesday morning. Thank you.

(Congress adjourned till 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 8th June 2016)