

**THE 155<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL TRADES UNION CONGRESS**

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**Held at:**

**The ACC Arena  
Kings Dock  
Liverpool Waterfront,  
Liverpool L3 4FP**

**on:**

**Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2023,**

**Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2003,**

**Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2003**

**-and-**

**Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2003.**

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***Congress President:***

**Maria Exall**

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**PROCEEDINGS – DAY THREE**

**(Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023)**

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THIRD DAY: TUESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023

*(Congress Assembled at 9.30 a.m.)*

**The President:** I call Congress to order. Happy Tuesday morning, Congress. We are going to start today with an industrial action case study as we did yesterday and I would like to invite PCS members, Mike Pullen, James Ward, and Robert Smith to join me on the stage. Come up. Mick, James, and Robert, were involved in a six-month industrial dispute with Hinduja Global Solutions, at the DBS office in Liverpool. This group of 100 outsourced contact centre workers took 30 days strike action last year over a derisory pay offer from their billionaire owner employer. We have Mick Pullen, Branch Secretary for PCS's HGS Branch during the dispute. Please show your solidarity by giving Mick a warm welcome to Congress. *(Applause)*

**Michael Pullen (PCS):** The first thing is I would like to thank you for inviting us to Congress today. My name is Michael Pullen and I was the PCS Branch Secretary for the HGS Branch until January of this year. The HGS Branch have kindly invited me to talk to you about our dispute. It was with HGS last year and 30 days of strike action that our members took against our employer between August and December.

Our dispute like so many other disputes within the last 12 months was triggered by the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades and HGS's blatant refusal to enter into any meaningful negotiations with PCS and present a credible pay award that would help support our members for that 12-month period.. As a branch we tried every possible option to avoid having to serve notice of strike action. We actively arranged

numerous meetings with HGS that were either deliberately ignored or stalled.

Conciliation arranged by ACAS was always going to fail if HGS had no intention of negotiating. We were fighting on from August through to December and it felt like it was a war of attrition and that the dispute would never end, but our members stayed strong and gave all the time and effort to continue fighting.

During the dispute we utilised the local press and media and we also arranged a meeting with *The Guardian* to raise the profile of our dispute at a national level. Our branch attended numerous rallies to bring our cause to the public awareness and a number of MPs, councillors, and countless trade union branches stood alongside us on our picket line to show solidarity. Also, there was the threat of a re-ballot and a further six months of strike action, with indefinite strike action attached. That forced PCS to reconsider their position and agree to a further award that we could present to our members.

If there is one piece of advice that I would offer anyone it is always be open and honest with members and be prepared to manage expectations. It is easy for people to get distracted when they see other work forces being awarded 12 and 14% pay awards and that is amazing and credit to those branches for being able to agree that but you have to make people understand that what they are getting is not always what you can deliver. People can lose sight of what you are trying to achieve so you have to keep speaking to your members to keep them informed and help them make those informed decisions. What is submitted in a pay claim and what you get back in return are often two completely different things.

As a branch we always had the best intentions for our members, and will continue to do so. As long as you are open and honest with your members then they will stay strong with you and will support us in the way that they did for us last year. Thank you. Thank you for the time. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, Mick. I now call Linda McCullough to give the GPC Report. Linda.

**Linda McCullough (GPC):** Good morning, Congress. The General Council has agreed a statement on Reinforced Autotrade Areated Concrete (RAAC) try saying that all together, it is quite a mouthful, and the President will advise on when this statement will be taken. Congress, the GPC has agreed formally an Emergency Motion. Emergency Motion 2 on the Collapse of Wilko, Save the High Street, brought by the GMB and seconded by USDAW. Once again the President will advise when it is hoped to take this Emergency Motion. I will report further to you on the progress of business and other GP decisions throughout Congress. Thank you.  
(*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, Linda. As Linda has reported, the GPC have agreed Emergency Motion 2 on the Collapse of Wilko, Save the High Street. I intend to take this after published business and Linda also reported that the General Council has agreed a statement on RAAC. That statement has been emailed to delegates and there are some copies in the GC information stand.

I am only able to take a few additional speakers this morning because we need to make up some time from lost business from the previous days so apologies for anybody who misses out. We will notify delegates when we can take the motions that have not been taken from the other sessions. Thank you.

So, without further ado we start with section 4 of the General Council Report, from page 46, and I call paragraph 4.7 and Motion 62 on Education, ensuring that all political parties put students and staff first in the 2024 General Election. The General Council supports the motion to be moved by UCU, and seconded by NAHT. Okay, UCU.

### **62 Education: ensuring all political parties put students and staff first for the 2024 general election**

Congress notes the vital importance of post-16 education in creating a fairer society in the UK, and developing the skilled workforce we need to build a greener future. Congress condemns the devastating funding cuts in post-16 education since 2010, including the scrapping of the Union Learning Fund, and the tuition fee model in higher and further education which ladders students with exorbitant debts and requires providers to compete for students.

Congress further condemns the government's attacks on arts and humanities education; subjects which enrich our cultural life as well as contributing significantly to the UK economy.

Congress notes with concern the falling value of staff pay across post-16 education which, along with rampant casualisation and unsustainable workloads, has caused acute problems with recruitment and retention.

Congress believes that staff working conditions are student learning conditions, and that the market-driven system focussed narrowly on employability and built on debilitating student debt is fundamentally broken.

Congress calls on the TUC to campaign, ahead of the 2024 general election and beyond, for funding and regulatory reform in post-16 education which would:

- i. scrap tuition fees and introduce a sustainable funding model which values all students, staff, subjects, and provider types
- ii. address problems caused by marketisation and uneven student distribution across providers
- iii. tackle education cold spots and widen access to ensure that all students can get the education that best meets their needs and aspirations
- iv. improve pay and conditions to ensure that the sectors are able to recruit and retain the skilled staff they need.

University & College Union

**Justine Mercer (UCU):** Thank you, President. Last year I talked about the transformative power of education, how UCU members changed lives every day in colleges, prisons, and universities. This year I want to focus on the power of education to transform our society because it is education that provides the skills and knowledge that workers need to do the jobs that power our economy and support a just transition. It is education that allows people to participate in cultural life and in civic society. It is education that allows people to hold those in power to account for their actions. That is why the failure of successive Tory governments to invest properly in education is not just an attack on students and education staff, it is an attack on working people. Our message to all political parties in the run-up to the general election is clear, you must invest in education. Since 2010 we have seen our further education sectors decimated by underinvestment and marketisation, the scrapping of the Union Learning Fund, dramatic cuts to further and adult education which have seen the loss of over a million adult learners. My father, Eric, was a proud adult education lecturer giving art and pottery classes that his students, some in their 90s, attended out of sheer joy. He would be appalled by the state of adult education funding today.

Since 2010, the pay of further education staff has fallen by 35% and the pay gap between FE staff and school teachers is now more than £9,000. A quarter of college staff leave the profession after one year, half leave after three. That is why we are currently balloting in 89 colleges of further education over pay and conditions, three times as many as last year. In higher education the picture is similarly bleak, the

raising of tuition fees in higher education in 2012 was a potent symbol of the marketisation and how it has ravaged our sectors. That tuition fee has placed an exorbitant milestone of debt around the necks of our young people. It has heightened competition between universities, deepening inequality across the sector as a whole, and increasing the precarity of staff. That is why UCU will be campaigning to bring back student number controls, not because we want to limit access but to regulate it.

Workloads in FE and HE are also higher than ever, that is not just bad news for staff, it is bad news for students because staff working conditions are their learning conditions. That is why we put workload and casualisation at the centre of our bargaining agenda because students deserve better than burnt out demoralised staff.

As well as change from the ground up we need radical reform from the top down and as we approach the next general election parties must put the interests of students and education staff at the heart of their agendas. For Labour that means going beyond lukewarm nods to the importance of post-16 education and matching the level of ambition shown by their predecessors. It was Harold Wilson's government that created the Open University, a truly transformative initiative that showed what can be achieved by a Labour government with a bold vision.

Congress, this government is failing students and it is failing staff. The next government must scrap tuition fees and ensure that all types of education, whether in colleges, universities, trade unions, prisons, or communities settings are properly supported. It must reverse damaging cuts to arts funding and ensure that everybody, regardless of background or geography, can access the education they need to meet

their potential and to thrive. Congress, we need radical change and we need it now.

Please support the motion. Now is our time. (*Applause*)

**The President:** NEHT?

**Paul Gosling** (*NEHT*): Good morning, President, Congress. I am the immediate past president of NEHT, the school leaders union. I have been a teacher since 1992 and a school leader in the South West for the last 20 years. I am an occasional body dabbler for Paul Whiteman and before you ask this was not caused by a crumbling school building, it is a head injury but no one wants to see a nasty scab at this Congress.

(*Applause*) Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. That quote from Nelson Mandela is one of the most famous sayings on the value of education. It is no wonder that the state's provision of education has not been a priority for the government for the last 13 years. They are too full of challenging and changing the status quo which allows which allows rich people to become more wealthy and keep working people in a perpetual state of struggle. The last 13 years of government have demonstrated a lack of ambition and investment in education leading to multiple crises, a crisis in the shocking state of too many school and college buildings, a crisis in the provision of education for children identified with special education needs and disabilities, a crisis in the retention of education sector staff at all levels caused by eroded pay and excessive workload.

At the moment, education is polling about 9% of the electorate in terms of priorities for politicians compared to 52% for the cost-of-living crisis. I believe that is because despite these crises caused by 13 years of government cuts staff who work in schools



and colleges keep the show on the road because of their deep commitment to the children and young people that they have daily contact with. People who work in education work incredibly hard to ameliorate the effects of over a decade of cuts and neglect. I believe this has left the public believing that education is not a priority compared to other responsibilities of the state where the crises are more visible. Those of us who work in the sector know that like some of our school buildings the whole education system could be on the verge of collapse and Labour must up its game in the finalisation of their education manifesto for the next general election.

*(Applause)*

We need to see ambitious and well funded plans to make education a priority for the children of working people because education is the foundation of a prosperous and equitable society. Education shapes our workforce, our leaders, and our citizens and quality education ensures economic growth, innovation, and social cohesion. In conclusion, let's all unite today and demand that education takes centre stage at the 2024 general election. Please support Motion 62. Thank you. *(Applause)*

**The President:** Congress, Motion 62 is before you. Will all those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 62 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Moving on, I call paragraph 4.5 of the General Council's Report and Motion 63, Childcare: Delivering a Just and Prosperous Society. The General

Council supports the motion which is to be moved by Usdaw, and seconded by Unison. Paddy.

### **University and College Union**

#### **63 Childcare: delivering a just and prosperous society**

Congress recognises that high quality, accessible, affordable early years childcare is an investment in essential social infrastructure with long-term benefits for the economy and society.

High-quality childcare helps tackle child poverty, support children's development, removes barriers to employment and creates more well-paid jobs in the sector.

Lack of childcare is a barrier to women's labour market participation and progression and contributes to the gender pay gap.

Save the Children estimate that over half of mothers with children under the age of 11 have had to cut their working hours due to childcare costs and 40 per cent say they or their partner would work more hours if childcare was more available.

Children from low-income families, single parents, LGBT+ families, parents with disabled children and Black families face additional barriers in accessing and affording formal childcare because of the discrimination they face.

Over half of all families rely on grandparents for childcare and Congress recognises the critical role grandparents play in enabling parents to work.

Government must deliver a fully funded, comprehensive childcare system which is easily understood by and supports working parents including:

- i. significant increases to maternity and paternity leave and pay
- ii. 30 hours of funded childcare per week from the end of parental leave
- iii. free breakfast club and after-school provision in every primary school
- iv. funded school holiday provisions
- v. funding for the free hours hourly rate that reflects the true cost of childcare provision
- vi. a legal right to flexible working from day one of the job
- vii. restoration of Sure Start.

Udaw

**Paddy Lillis** (*Udaw*): President, Congress, moving Usdaw's motion on Childcare:

Delivering a Just and Prosperous Society. Congress, childcare is a trade union issue.

It is an economics issue and it is an equalities issue. However, like so many other

things in this country after 13 years of Tory mismanagement childcare in this country

is broken. As a result of Conservative failures we are now struggling under an

overpriced system that is failing, it is failing parents who need good quality affordable

childcare, it is failing childcare workers who are often underpaid, overworked, and underappreciated, and, Congress, it is failing children who are missing out on opportunities and access to early education. A successful childcare system should support children to thrive. It should enable parents to work the jobs and the hours that they choose to and childcare should break down barriers, instead the UK's current system is a barrier to work for those in lower paid jobs, it prevents parents from progressing, trapping families in poverty and ingrained inequality. In Usdaw we have 360,000 members who work in the private sector, many are lower paid sectors, such as retail and warehousing, and the majority are women.

Childcare, and in particular the cost of childcare, is a huge issue for our members. The cost of childcare, particularly for younger children, is simply unaffordable for many parents in lower paid jobs and even where there are free hours available the system is complicated and difficult to navigate. We know that many families do not know what they are entitled to and many more are left with huge gaps in provision forcing them to rely on informal childcare, often from grandparents, and older siblings, forcing parents to work opposite shifts barely able to spend a minute together as a family.

Congress, in a prosperous nation like ours it is simply not right that so many people are held back by an overpriced under-resourced childcare system and it is simply not right that so many childcare workers are in contracts providing minimum wage and minimum terms and conditions, a terrible reflection of the values placed on the dedicated workforce which cares for and nurtures our young people. Our society needs a better childcare system, a system that works for parents, a system that allows

women to achieve their potential at work, a system that supports our children, and our grandchildren to thrive and a system that values the dedicated workers within it.

Congress, every family is different, every family's childcare needs will be different, and there will not be "one size fits all" answer to this problem. There is already a range of childcare options for families and we must make sure they all deliver for working parents, whether it is nurseries, childminders, breakfast clubs, after school clubs, holiday clubs; these providers are a vital part of our social and economic infrastructure and they should be treated as such by the Government. Congress, accessibility, affordability, and availability of childcare, this would have a huge impact for low income families, it would empower parents to work the jobs and the hours they choose, it would support children and for many it would transform their life chances. I urge the TUC to campaign for a childcare system that works for the working people. Congress, I move the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Unison to second.

**Antoinette Solera** (*Unison*): Good morning, President, Congress, a first-time delegate at Congress. (*Applause*) Proud to be seconding this important motion, not just because almost 80% of Unison's members are women but because more than 50,000 of our members work in Early Years. They know and we all know the difference that a high quality, well resourced childcare sector can bring to families and to children.

Right now families are really struggling to meet the spiralling costs of childcare eating into already well squeezed household budgets. The failure to address this

expensive and broken system means that many families face a constant struggle to keep a job that may not even cover the cost of childcare, and where they are having to organise an informal patchwork of care to try and make it all work. Even then many workers are having to take second or even third jobs to pay for it all so no wonder they are feeling forced to leave their careers altogether because they simply cannot find a way through and it all becomes too complicated and stressful to manage.

Congress, we know that Early Years providers are in crisis, facing rising costs, inadequate funding rates and severe challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled staff. As an example, registered childminders are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. We need to tackle this crisis head-on. Our children have the right to high quality care delivered by properly paid and valued professionals and we know from countries that value and invest in high quality year round childcare that those countries see huge economic benefits as well. Sadly, our broken system of childcare provision only serves to entrench the persistent gender pay gap, which has to be of concern to us all.

Congress, this motion sets out we can repair this broken system and take steps to create childcare support that values children of families, that values childcare professionals, and that helps to remove the barriers that discriminate against a huge number of workers in this country. Please support this motion. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** Congress, Motion 63 is before you. Will all those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 63 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Congress, I will call Motion 64, Standards in Public Life – good idea, that, standards in public life. The General Council support the motion and it is to be moved by FDA and seconded by Prospect. FDA.

#### **64 Standards in public life**

Congress recognises that maintaining the highest standards in public life is the bedrock of our democracy, our economic success, our foreign policy, and is crucial to maintaining confidence in our public institutions. Businesses want to invest in a country where governance is stable, predictable and fair.

The seven principles of public life, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership, apply equally to parish councillors and Prime ministers. Those who seek to lead and deliver public services should do so for the public good, not private gain.

Congress recognises that those principles are facing their greatest challenge since they were first developed over 25 years ago. As the country's most senior public servant, Boris Johnson resigned as prime minister and MP over his failure to maintain standards. Our current prime minister appointed his deputy, Dominic Raab, despite knowing of complaints of bullying, and allowed him to resign rather than be sacked when found guilty of breaching the ministerial code.

Congress welcomes the Labour Party's commitment to establish a new ethics and integrity commission which will assume responsibilities over the Ministerial Code and Advisory Committee on Business Appointments.

Congress calls on the general council to engage with the Labour party on their proposals to ensure that:

- i. there is a consistent approach to the enforcement of standards across the public sector
- ii. independence of regulatory bodies is enhanced, and appointments are made without political interference
- iii. investigations, determinations, and punishments are determined, and seen to be determined, independently.

#### **FDA**

**Margaret Haig (FDA):** Congress, I would like to start with a bit of interaction if you can bear it on a Tuesday morning. Who here is a school governor or academy trustee? Raise your hand, if you can. (*Show of hands*) Okay, a few; good. Add your

hand if you volunteered for the Scouting Movement, Cadets, coaches, sports team, or an other youth organisation? (*Show of hands*). Great. Add your hand if you are a reservist, a volunteer steward, or a first aider? (*Show of hands*) Yes, we have some more. Add your hand if you are a trustee for a charity, help run a food bank, volunteer in the NHS, or social care setting? (*Show of hands*)

That is amazing. We have so many people volunteering in public life and that is without mentioning lots of other roles you may be doing in your life, and even not mentioning our union activities. I do not think it is farfetched to say that we all take those responsibilities where we have them really seriously. We follow the rules which are set out for the role, whether that be safeguarding, charity law, or codes of conduct, we try to live by the Nolan principles, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

I am a governor of a wonderful junior school in Barking and a trustee of a small charity as well. I think about these principles at every meeting of the governors or the trustees. They help me think of questions and check my own biases. They help me forget my own personal worries and focus on the needs of the pupils, the school staff, the parents, or the charity beneficiaries. They remind me that my role is about public good, not private gain. The Nolan principles form a good list, a great list, that list has stood for almost 30 years as a benchmark in public life. In our public service roles we may not always meet them to the full degree but we strive towards them. Is it too much to ask others in public life to do the same?

We have seen some pretty astonishing behaviour from people who have control in the highest echelons of our country, who seem to have forgotten or even consciously set aside these principles. If their first response is to blame someone else, they have forgotten accountability. If they lie about what they knew, and when, they have forgotten integrity and honesty. If they fall back on the excuse of “pressurised workplaces lead to bullying behaviour”, they have forgotten the need for leadership. Congress, this is why we need a standards reset for everyone in public life, whether for ministers in government, local councillors, or anyone in between.

FDA has consistently called for better consideration of ethics and standards with previous and current prime ministers but it has fallen on deaf ears because “they know best”. This is why it is so welcome to hear the commitment by the Labour Party to establish an ethics and integrity commission with responsibility over the ministerial code and the advisory committee on business appointments. This motion calls on the General Council to engage with this work to ensure that the enforcement of standards is consistent across the public sector, not one rule for me and another for everyone else. Any regulatory bodies in this field should be independent to provide public confidence and there should be no political interference in appointments, and if someone falls short of the relevant expectations, investigations should be independent from start to finish.

Putting yourself forward for a role in the public eye is not easy. We all know this from our union work. You may be criticised, and sometimes unfairly, you may feel that others are working against you, but you must understand that high standards are critical if you are to maintain the trust of those who have helped you into that



position, whether elected or appointed. Let's remind people that we still care about the Nolan principles, we will hold people to them and find ways to ensure that they persist into the future. Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you.

**Eamon Guilfoyle** (*Prospect*): This is my first time speaking at Congress. (*Applause*)

Thank you. President, Congress, this is one of those dispiriting but necessary motions. It is dispiriting because it calls for something that we used to take for granted, which is the existence that there may be standards in public life. It is necessary because the erosion of those standards grows evermore rapid. This is a story you will all know but I will tell it, anyway. There was a prime minister all too recently and that prime minister was found to have deliberately misled Parliament, to have knowingly misled the very committee charged with investigating whether he had deliberately misled Parliament, and to have breached common rules by partially leaking the findings of the committee charged with investigating whether he deliberately misled Parliament, the committee that he had knowingly misled. But that was not what forced him, and I emphasised forced, from office. It was not those findings. It was because he had appointed a whip despite knowing there were sexual misconduct allegations against them: a busy weekend.

The rot has spread beyond Downing Street. Culture is set from the top. Standards have been eroded throughout our public institutions. There is a steady drum beat of by-elections resulting from misconduct scandals. There are endless attacks in the press on hard working civil servants, 30,000 of whom are members of my union, by

ministers seeking to blame officials for their own failings. There are institutions that should be apolitical but are being politicised.

Nowhere is this cultural contamination more apparent than that of our national broadcaster, the BBC. Prospect is proud to be one of the largest unions at our world leading public service broadcaster, but our members and the public were failed by the appointment of a chairman who failed to declare that he had been involved in discussions on securing an £800,000 loan for the then Prime Minister. (*Applause*) In case you did not know that is the same prime minister I mentioned before.

Public trust in government and institutions take generations to build but can be destroyed in a single news cycle. That is why the Labour Party's commitment to establish a new ethics and integrity commission is so important, one that allows investigations into the ministerial code to be open without the approval of a prime minister. This is not a party political point. Every party can and should adopt this policy. It is work essential to restore the public's faith in our institutions because an erosion of standards results in an erosion of service and government without integrity is bad government. Congress, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Congress, I will take the vote on Motion 64. All those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 64 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** I call Motion 65, Renewing our Fire & Rescue Service. The General Council support the motion, to be moved by FBU, seconded by Unison. FBU.

### **65 Renewing our fire and rescue service**

Congress condemns the Tory-led Westminster governments since 2010, which caused terrible damage to our fire and rescue service.

Congress believes that deregulation and austerity over decades contributed to the causes of the Grenfell Tower fire, and that ministers should be held to account.

Congress notes the impacts of 13 years of Tory rule:

- i. savage cuts to the fire and rescue service, resulting in the loss of 12,000 firefighters' jobs
- ii. fragmentation of local services and a postcode lottery of response standards
- iii. attempts to privatise fire and rescue
- iv. exclusion of the FBU from major channels of fire service policymaking
- v. real terms pay cuts for firefighters
- vi. attacks on collective bargaining and the national joint council.

Congress supports the FBU's demands:

- a. long-term and viable investment in the fire and rescue service
- b. national standards of fire and rescue service emergency response
- c. a new national statutory structure for fire policy and standards, to include the FBU
- d. apply the lessons from the Grenfell Tower disaster
- e. ensure dedicated emergency fire controls under fire and rescue service governance
- f. a public fire and rescue college to ensure necessary training, research and planning
- g. separate governance arrangements for fire and rescue and police services
- h. a statutory duty on fire and rescue services to respond to major floods in England, as elsewhere in the UK.

Congress supports the FBU's autumn campaign of lobbies, rallies and UK-wide action.

### **Fire Brigades Union**

**Adam Taylor (FBU):** President, Congress, we are here today to bring this motion to Congress to sound the alarm about the state of our Fire & Rescue Service, to seek your support for the FBU's campaign to defend it. When disaster strikes, be it floods, fire, terrorist incidents, animal rescues, or road traffic incidents, it is the firefighters who stand as the guardians of our safety. They are here to prevent, protect, and intervene, often putting themselves at risk to protect others.

Picture this, 10,000 firefighters, ready to respond in moments across Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and England, and the Fire Brigade's Union is proud to be the only union to defend the rights and safety of firefighters. Heed our warning, the communities and the very industry our members serves are under attack, on the edge of destruction. For decades we have endured unrelenting devastation, deregulation and austerity have ravished our Fire & Rescue Service, tearing apart the very fabric that holds it together.

Westminster governments one after another have destroyed UK-wide standards, torn our industry apart, all in the name of private profit. Central funding has been gutted resulting in the loss of one-in-five frontline firefighter jobs. Our response times have slowed from six minutes to over nine and depending on your postcode some firefighters now arrive with only three on a fire engine, firefighters facing the public under pressure to act without safe numbers of firefighters in attendance. It is a recipe for disaster, endangering the public and our members alike.

Since 2010, Tory-led governments have worsened our plight, they have attempted privatisation, sold off 20 centres, control rooms, and more. They have entrusted the inexperienced with our Service's fate, introducing Police and Fire & Rescue Commissioners, with no democratic accountability for the governance of our service, as we have just heard about. In 2013, in England they tried to sneak in legislation to contract out the whole of the Fire & Rescue Service through a shadowy committee at Westminster.

Congress, their deregulation paved the path to the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017. Building regulations were slashed and voluntary guidance replaced them. Safety measures were ignored and the future of Grenfell remains elusive. They part-privatised local authority building control and introduced a race to the bottom amongst surveyors. They privatised the building research establishment, governing its own research and testing facility, so they missed our warnings about the dangers of cladding.

They have slashed the number of fire inspectors leaving us with only 1,000 for the whole of the UK. They gave manufacturers and contractors a free hand to ignore fire safety rules for windows, fire doors, fire lifts, stairs, and a range of other fire safety measures. We fought tooth and nail to defend our service and public safety. We have warned, investigated, and shouted from the rooftops yet we have been excluded from the advisory bodies while those who helped create this mess are in charge.

It is more than six years since the Grenfell Tower fire. We have had six years of the public inquiry. There is still no justice for Grenfell. We have to hold private firms and top ministers to account for their failures. Now they want to cut our pay, attack our pensions, and dismantle our collective bargaining structures. Congress, let me be clear, we are in a war, this is a class war, this is a war of workers versus greed. They start the attacks so we must finish them. Our fight is more important. They are fighting to line their pockets with return of profits for their vanity projects. We are fighting to survive. We are fighting to protect our very lives. We will not back down.

Firefighters are in a battle for our public service and we will also campaign for sustainable investment, UK-wide standards, and a revamped fire safety regime. We demand a statutory advisory body with the power to oversee every facet of the Fire & Rescue Service. We ask for your support, your solidarity, for we believe in defending a service worth defending, a service that will save our lives and communities, stand with us and together and we will ensure the UK Fire & Rescue Service is not just fit for purpose but a beacon of safety in a world of uncertainty. Congress, I move.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** I have been informed it is RMT to second, not Unison.

**Eddie Dempsey (RMT):** Congress, we are asking you to support the motion. Sadly, in the RMT and in the other railway unions we know our brothers and sisters in the FBU far more well than we would like because when we do not see them on the picket line we often see them at the scene of rail incidents and disasters looking after people. They were with us side-by-side in 7/7 rescuing people from the terrorist attack on our transport system. There are people in this room in both of our unions, and others, who were there involved and affected by that. We have just seen the judgment passed on Network Rail after they pled guilty for their safety failings in the Stonehaven disaster in Carmen, once again, sadly, it was our members and the FBU having to deal with that. Our members have walked out on strike to support the FBU and our Victoria Line when there were no fire service because they were on strike. We knew it was not safe to operate that part of the transport network without those people ready to come in and look after us.

So, we are very pleased to ask you to support this motion but it is a sad thing that we have to, to be fair. This is another incident in what I regard as the managed decline of Britain. You can see our Fire Service being rowed back. Even where I live one of the first stations in London is now closed, going to be turned into “yuppie” flats. You can see the problems everywhere, closure of the ticket offices, you cannot get doctors’ appointments, you cannot see a GP, it is all part of the same picture. All of our public services, all of the people we rely on, are seeing their wages cut back, their terms and conditions attacked, the services they serve being depleted at the same time as the rich just keep getting richer, and the profiteers keep getting their profits.

There have been 12,000 firefighters cut since 2010. This has to stop. These people have to be looked after. We have to have more people in the Fire Service and they have to have their institution restored to where it needs to be to look after us. They are there for us. We have to be there for them. Please support. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Motion 65 is before you. Will all those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 65 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** I call paragraph 4.6 of the General Council Report and Composite 19, a Royal Commission into Government Failures on the Probation Service and the Criminal Justice System. The General Council supports the Composite Motion, to be moved by POA, seconded by NAPO, and supported by Community.

**C19 A royal commission into the government failures on the probation service and criminal justice system**

**Motion 66 with amendment and 67**

Congress recognises that in society there needs to be a criminal justice system that is fair, accessible and decent for all the public. Since 2010 the whole criminal justice system has fallen into disrepute whether it be access to legal aid, or a right to a fair trial. Congress also notes that for 13 years there has been major cuts to the prison service, policing, and courts system

Congress is seriously alarmed at the continuing lack of effective investment in the probation service since its reunification into state control in 2021.

There is increasing evidence to demonstrate the disastrous impact of this scandalous situation by way of:

- i. unsustainable workloads and unfilled vacancy rates, meaning that it is not uncommon for practitioners to be holding case allocations of anywhere between 101–200 per cent against recognised capacity.
- ii. service delivery, as evidenced by the cancellation of specialised programmes for those convicted of sexual offences and a huge backlog of clients awaiting placement on community service projects.
- iii. public safety, where numerous reports from His Majesty’s Inspectorate of probation have been critical of probation senior management for not implementing past lessons and failing to develop systems that will create safe workloads and assist practitioners in protecting our communities to the standards expected.



This threatens the integrity and professionalism of probation, before the service has been given time to recover from the egregious damage that has been visited upon it by incompetent politicians.

Closures of courts throughout England and Wales has seen a major backlog of trials; Wales has seen a major backlog of trials; cuts to the prison service has seen a demise in rehabilitation with overcrowding now the norm and we are still seeing unacceptably high levels of assaults on prison officers and staff across the justice, immigration and custodial sector - with well over seven thousand incidents in the last twelve months.

The above issues, which are the subject of a joint probation unions campaign known as 'Operation Protect', are compounded by the proposed One HMPPS' restructuring programme and its threats to jobs.

Congress seeks public support from the General Council for 'Operation Protect', and for the GC to lobby the official HM opposition to clearly map out their future plans to restore probation into a gold standard service within the wider criminal justice system. Congress recognises that there is an urgent need for a root and branch review of the whole criminal justice system from policing to prisons our court system and probation service with emphasis on creating a justice system that is fully funded with improved terms and conditions so that we have a system that is fair, accessible and decent for all.

Conference therefore instructs the general council to campaign for a royal commission with all political parties so that these aims and objectives can be met.

**Mover: POA Seconder: Napo Supporter: Community**

**Mark Fairhurst** (*POA National Chair*): I am proud to be moving this motion calling for a royal commission into the entire criminal justice system. Why are we asking for a royal commission? What will a royal commission find? I will tell you what they will find in our prisons. They will find in our prisons that when a prison officer is recruited to the job they do all the assessments online. There is no face-to-face interview. People in charge of our prisons do not even know who is going to be working for them on the landings because they do not get to meet them or grill them over an interview face-to-face. They will find once they get a starting date they are sent away to a training college for six weeks. It was certainly reduced from nine because the employer is that desperate to get boots on the landings that they have squashed it into six weeks, six weeks of training which is not fit for purpose and does

not prepare anyone for life on the landings, life in the most hostile and violent workplace of anywhere in the world.

The royal commission will find that if I joined the service as an 18-year old recruit tomorrow and because my retirement age is now 68 I will have to work for 50 years on the front line dealing with violence, threats, and abuse before I can draw a full pension or enjoy a full career. It is unrealistic. It is not workable. They will find that work understaffed. People working in jails locking up 1,600 prisoners only have 69 prison officers on duty, is it any wonder when things go wrong. They will find that our prisons are creaking at the seams. *(Applause)*

Under-resourced and underfunded this Government have removed over £900m from our budget and reduced the staffing levels by over 7,000 and do not believe the spin they have recruited 4,000 prison officers, we have only kept 700, and of every four we recruit we keep just one because nobody wants to work in a violent workplace with no support for anyone. Prisoners live in squalor.

I will tell you something, Congress, we have had enough. Rishi Sunak, you best start listening to us. *(Applause)* The royal commission will find out that prison officers do not have the right to strike, removed from us in 1994 and shamelessly betrayed by a former Labour government who refused to give us that right back. *(Applause)* I will tell you something, Sir Keir, when you get in power you better put it right. So, Rishi, you best start listening to us, the general public, the public sector workers, the key workers, the trade unions, because we are the people who can kick you out and,

by damn it, we will kick you out. (*Applause*) I say this, Congress, out with the Tories, in with the royal commission, please support. Solidarity to you all. (*Applause*)

**The President:** NAPO to second.

**Ben Cockburn** (*NAPO*): Thank you, President. Good morning, Congress. I am seconding Composite 19 on behalf of NAPO our trade union and professional association for probation and family court staff, and first-time delegate at Congress. (*Applause*) It is testament to the dire state of the criminal justice system in England and Wales that Liz Truss is probably only the third worst of eleven Tory Justice Secretary appointments we have suffered since 2010. In that time, we have seen a massive rise in poverty and deprivation alongside an explosion of corporate greed, bullying, and unpunished corruption. Crime impacts to the greatest degree on the most marginalised and vulnerable in society, who have always been the most likely to be demonised by those in power. The dismantling of an already deeply flawed criminal justice system over the past 13 years has been a reprehensible act of political violence perpetrated by the Tories, earlier by their LibDem accomplices in coalition, against our communities and especially the working class. This has been achieved by a brutal combination of austerity, cronyism, privatisation, and managerialism alongside the scapegoat of groups and individual workers.

Congress, you have heard from Mark of the POA, of the state of the prisons, the staff, experienced staff, 100,000 so far gone in years, the buildings are in a dangerous state of disrepair and a surge in violence including that of self-harm and suicide. The situation is so dire that last week not for the first time a court in a fellow European

country refused to extradite someone to the UK because of concerns about conditions in our prisons. Probation has seen the destruction of gold standard local trusts in favour of part-privatisation in 2014, seven years later the Government badly botched the move of all probation providers back into public control, though within HM Prison & Probation Service, HMPPS, rather than rooted in our local communities that had been the case for most of our history.

Many of the same leaders behind these recent failures, and they are failures, are currently attempting to drive through the one HMPPS programme which we know and believe will erode our collective bargaining agreements, eliminate our members' terms and conditions, and eradicate probation's distinct independent identity achieved over 100 years. Probation workers in common with others across the criminal justice system and beyond are broken by excessive workload, burned out by our employer's behaviour and demands, as well as sick and tired of seeing our skills and knowledge diminished or ignored by the employer and the Government. We are too often unfairly blamed after instances of tragic loss or harm when the responsibility lies with the disastrous political decisions made by successive administrations of systemic failings and discrimination in our agency.

Only a royal commission can begin the long and difficult process over a generation of building a better justice system that is fair, decent, and accessible to all, serving our communities, not of the powerful. Congress, I second this composite. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** Thank you, delegate. While Community is coming up to support, I will call PCS and Unison, who have also indicated to speak on this composite, if you would come down here.

**Lorraine Jakeman** (*Community Union Branch Sec HMP Peterborough*): Congress, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Our criminal justice system is unfortunately on its backside and broken, Congress. The constant carousel of Tory justice ministers have meant we have had no vision for our sector, no one addressing the challenges we face and no one listening. We have all seen the news this week about the escape of Daniel Khalife from Wandsworth Prison and on Monday a terrible stabbing of another prisoner.

Congress, anyone within the UK's justice system could have told you that something like this would happen. The media may have turned their focus on our broken justice system for a few days but those of us who work in it have been facing these challenges every single day. Our prisons are overcrowded, underfunded, and understaffed, and this is why Daniel Khalife exploited this with the knowledge and escaped. The Ministry of Justice's own figures show that in the last year there were over 7,000 assaults on prison staff in England and Wales. That is unacceptable. Over 700 of those were serious assaults.

In my prison, HMP Peterborough, five weeks ago I saw the worst assault ever I have seen in the 19 years that I have worked there. I cried my eyes out hearing of such a sad act committed on such a helpful, kind hearted, and great supporter that helped staff and prisoners and helped by assisting them to be better people and changing lives

for the better. Because of the safety failures of our justice system, she was allowed to have a bucket of boiling water that was 92 degrees mixed with sugar so the molten liquid would stick to her body, thrown across her chest and her legs, she had four skin grafts, and the pain she has been in is unimaginable. She has been in hospital for nearly two weeks and is not expected back to work until January 2024. Her life has been changed for ever by doing just her job.

My friends and colleagues, yes, she is strong but she should not have to be. She better get the justice she deserves or I will be calling on the clown at 10 Downing Street and be sending our Community members there to knock on his door and ask him why. Anyone who assaults an emergency worker should get the long arm of the law and it cannot – cannot – be accepted as a norm in any job. Congress, we need change. We are proud to support this composite. I hope you will too. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Well done, delegates.

**Neil Richardson** (*Unison*): Congress, I do not know how many times we have heard this, this week but, Congress, the probation service in England and Wales is in crisis. Action is urgently required to restore and maintain public safety, to restore a high quality service, to restore a probation service that our communities deserve. The underlying factors behind this, and we have heard it all before, is underfunding and mismanagement. Our service has not recovered from the catastrophic ideologically driven railing privatisation folly. Our hard work, though, our members' persistence, our insistence, did however prevail and the Government did see sense and brought probation back as a publicly run service. They have, however, created a highly

centralised service run from Whitehall, and civil servants far from the communities that probation serves, and with negligible local transparency or accountability, Whitehall doing its usual trick, its time honoured response to difficult times, they are having a major reorganisation, we have heard about it, one HMPPS, which I am not going to go into amended that; just suffice to say we and our sister probation unions oppose.

Congress, underfunding and poor pay in probation is damaging. It is damaging the service most of all. We all know this story, we have heard it many times, 13 years of pay freezes, occasional below inflation pay award if you are lucky, and this has led to massive erosion in the value of real terms pay for probation staff. Cost-of-living pay rises over the last 13 years for us have totalled 7.6%. Unfortunately, the cost of the real world has risen by 81%. The size of a pay award needed just to put the basic staff back to the levels of real term pay they enjoyed in 2010 would be a whopping great 68%. It is therefore no surprise that the overall vacancy rate amongst probation officers in March this year was a startling 29%, this at a time when demands placed on the probation service are at an all time high. There is not really enough staff to cope with an intolerable and unsafe workload placed on probation staff, and this crisis in probation affects us all.

HM Inspectorate of Probation has recently released an important report, which shows that high quality probation services reduce reoffending. Well, who would have thought that! A good probation service reduces the level of crime in our community. Please support. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Delegate from PCS.

**Sharon McLean** (PCS): speaking in full support of Motion 66 and Composite Motion 19. First-time delegate at the TUC. (*Applause*) PCS represents members across the justice sector, including in courts and in prisons. We fully endorse the picture set out in this motion, the reckless cost-cutting and significant reduction in resource to the sector that impacts our ability to be able effectively deliver services to the justice, a cornerstone tenet of a just society. Further to the significant reduction of legal aid, legal advisors, and court associates, are now having their workloads increased and cannot provide advice to defendants who cannot afford or supply their own legal counsel. This compounds the cost-of-living issues faced by people who are struggling financially, leaving true justice as the preserve of those who can pay for it. The impact of over a decade of cuts to the sector are not only negative for staff that work within the justice, frozen pay and the widening unsustainable workloads, but they are impacting their ability to deliver quality justice for the British people. The decimation of the justice sector is a hollowing of our ability for our members to do their jobs and deliver the key services ensuring that everyone who comes before our courts are treated fairly. The impact this is having on staff employed across the justice sector is self-evident.

PCS represents a large number of members in HMPTS and HMPPS and are seeing firsthand the issues of recruitment and their pensions being faced. The attempt to mask the problems by introducing new technologies to digitalise key processes is further exacerbating the issues highlighted in the motion. PCS does not oppose the introduction of digital technologies or measures that would improve the technology



that our members and court users use. Indeed, we would welcome a modern IT that is fit for purpose and supports the access to justice and quality of justice delivery rather than replace or diminish it. Fundamentally flawed IT, particularly in the magistrates' courts, has caused increased pressure to our members. Cases take longer and members have reported overwhelming numbers that is having a negative impact on the quality of justice delivered.

At TUC Congress we must be equally concerned about the plight of our members in their sectors, as well as the impact that their treatment is having on the fundamental functioning of the British justice system. Justice cannot be done while our systems are floundering. The primary principle of British society is at risk and that is why PCS fully support the motion and the resolution to campaign for a royal commission to conduct a root and branch review and to take a long-term and in depth approach to resolving the huge issue in the UK. Congress, I encourage you wholeheartedly to vote for this motion. Vote yes for those who work in the justice system, vote yes for the public who rely on that justice system, and vote yes for this crucial starting point of reform. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Congress, Composite 19, I will take the vote. Will all those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Composite Motion 19 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Congress, I call Motion 68, Remove CAF/CASS from the Civil Service Pay Remit. The General Council support the motion, to be moved by NAPO,

seconded by POA, and Usdaw has indicated they wish to speak, if they want to come down.

### **68 Remove CAFCASS from the Civil Service Pay Remit**

Workers in the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) carry out essential work assisting parties involved in traumatic family breakdowns. Their efforts in public and private law proceedings make a critical difference to parental relationships and the lives of children who are caught in the crossfire of these conflicts.

As an arms-length body within the auspices of the Ministry of Justice, members of Napo and UNISON have seen their real terms pay massively reduced over the tenure of this government. CAFCASS recruits from local authority social work teams whose pay increases have outstripped those of Cafcass staff in recent years. The result has been more staff leaving CAFCASS for other social work roles, which undermines the stability and effectiveness of the organisation.

The fact that CAFCASS can maintain its operations at all in the face of the demands placed upon it, is acknowledged by senior management and is solely down to the fact that most staff members work unrewarded, above and beyond their contracted hours, to support children who face huge upheavals in their experience of family life.

Congress supports the joint union campaign to see CAFCASS removed from the centralised control of the MoJ. The General Council are asked to lobby the Labour Party to clearly commit a future Labour government to remove CAFCASS from the strictures of the Civil Service Pay Remit which is effectively a restraint on our member's trade.

### **Napo**

**Ian Lawrence** (*NAPO, General Secretary*): Good morning, Congress, President. I do not know if any of you have ever been to a safari park but there you will have seen all sorts of wondrous creatures revelling in their environment. One thing you will not see is a pride of lions being led by donkeys, which is really akin to the position being faced by NAPO and Unison members working in CAFCASS. We have seen successive group of ministers over the years fail that vital department and fail to support their staff and, as the motion says, we have a dedicated workforce who day in, day out, help to protect and support the welfare of children and families in their time of crisis, but they do so under increasing strain due to insulting pay rises, and higher workloads as a direct result of underinvestment by this wretched government. Just

recently you will know about the 1,500 performance award paid to those under the Civil Service pay remit, from a government that did not even bother to consult the trade unions first, meaning that many staff, not only in CAFCASS but across the Civil Service, were put under immense financial strain if they were in receipt of Universal Credit or other benefits, and many of you probably will have had to deal with that. This is another example of government miscalculation and disrespect for its staff, many of whom not in receipt of additional support can barely make ends meet as it is, many staff in CAFCASS doing a second job and undertaking independent social work on top of their full time role. These are family court advisers, children's guardians, service managers, and business support staff, the very people who keep CAFCASS and the family court system going.

The more and more experienced practitioners are now leaving the service lured to local authority social work teams understandably who offer much better rates of remuneration. Then there is the scandal of staff working for free, yes, you could not really fathom it, could you. A survey undertaken by NAPO in 2021 showed 88% of staff having to work extra hours essentially for nothing because of the pressure they faced in terms of workloads. This amounted in some cases to a jaw dropping 20 hours a week where overtime was not available and because there is little opportunity to take time off in lieu it has become a matter of course. The first thing we have to start doing is to wipe the smugness of the face of senior CAFCASS managers who know this is going on and they are getting this work done for nothing.

So, that is the picture. I do not need to rehearse everything that is written in the motion but we know that the Civil Service pay remit is an insurmountable barrier to

bargaining and when we go to the negotiating table, whenever that is, we are met by senior management continually wringing their hands and essentially saying there is nothing they can do because they are tied by the remit. Staff in CAF/CASS expect better of their leaders. It is time the leadership in CAF/CASS started roaring like lions on behalf of their staff, actually putting pressure on ministers at least to meet with us as Lord Bellamy refuses. The motion is essentially about stepping up our campaign in the hope that a Labour government in the future will look afresh at the position on pay in CAF/CASS. We need to be able to bargain effectively for decent pay rises for CAF/CASS staff. We need to be able to help CAF/CASS retain its dedicated and skilled practitioners and we need your help, Congress, to help this vital public service to recover from years of damage and disgraceful neglect. I urge your support and move Motion 68. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, Ian. To be seconded by POA, please.

**Steve Gillan (POA):** Thank you, President. Congress, to save a bit of time Ian has made all the relevant points in respect of this motion so we formally second the motion to save a bit of time. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** A delegate from Usdaw?

**Jon McEwan (USD/AW):** President, Congress, I am here on behalf of Usdaw. I am not an official, I actually work in a factory and I am here because I actually had CAF/CASS involved in a court case that I took to court. This is my personal perspective and visibly why. In 2021, I started a prohibited steps application at the

local county court and part of that temporary judgment by the judge was that we needed a section 7 report which CAFCASS was involved in. Throughout the whole thing I got the information I needed, they guided me, they spoke to my son, spoke to me, and led the way. Throughout it the representative from CAFCASS was very kind and helpful, explained anything I was not sure of, and very, very professional. I cannot ever thank them enough for what that team did for me to stop my son being moved away. So, they deserve every penny they get, and more. Please support.  
*(Applause)*

**The President:** Thank you, delegate. Motion 68 is in front of you. Will all those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 68 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Congress, as I indicated earlier we are going to have a General Council Statement on RAAC and we are going to take that now. I call on Christina McAnea to move the statement on behalf of the General Council. There is a slight blip here. Hold on, bear with me. There is a slight distraction. As you can see, we have been joined on the platform by Angela Rayner who I will give a proper introduction to later, but you are very welcome, Angela. *(Applause)* Paul has stepped into the breach. The General Council Statement is to be moved by the General Secretary, Paul.

**The General Secretary:** Congress, Paul Nowak, General Secretary, moving the General Council Statement on RAAC. Congress, indulge me. We are travelling in a

time machine today. We are going back to summer 2018 when a ceiling fell in at Singlewell Primary School in Kent. The staff room is covered in rubble, the toilets are damaged, as is IT equipment, and just 24 hours before there had been no sign of structural stress. It is a weekend so thankfully no one is in the building but the extent of the damage makes it clear that had this happened during the week it could have resulted in a serious loss of life.

We are in December 2018 now, a few months later, the Department for Education is sufficiently alarmed about RAAC that they contacted every school building owner about the collapse in Kent.

Fast forward again to 2019, and respective building safety bodies issued an alert to all government departments highlighting the significant risk of RAAC. Keep up with me, delegates, we are travelling fast now.

It is 2021, and the Cabinet Office has just issued a formal warning notice stressing that RAAC is now life expired and liable to collapse. The Chancellor at the time is Rishi Sunak and presented with a request from civil servants to invest in school buildings he used his spending review to halve the number of school rebuilds, a rebuilding programme of just 15 schools per year is announced.

March 2022, Rishi Sunak is still Chancellor lasting well considering the record of this Government. The Government is still busy slashing schools funding; in fact, schools capital spending is at its lowest level recorded since 2009.

Now let's get right back up to date in 2023, knowing that this was a present and growing danger our education unions have been banging the drum for school building safety. Requests for information on which schools have RAAC were ignored. Freedom of information requests refused. Unions had to complain about the Department of Education to the Information Commissioner's Office. Last week we saw our fifth Education Secretary in just a year claim she had new information just a week before term was due to start. The known risks of RAAC collapsing are not new. This Government has wilfully put children and staff at risk every single day, disregarding the evidence, ignoring the warnings and pursuing their ideological crusade to cut spending, cutting spending at the expense of the safety of our children and at the expense of school staff.

We deserve – no, we need – that this Government listens. This General Council Statement calls on the Government to commit to higher standards of transparency because we may have the list of buildings that are closed now but it was like pulling teeth to get the Secretary of State to make it public. We need a government that takes action on safety, that invests in our public services so, Congress, please support this Statement, please bolster our movement's campaign for urgent action and urgent investment. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, Paul. I have had some indications of unions that wish to speak on this important topic, NEU, NASUWT, NAHT, and GMB. Do you want to come forward? I will take NEU first.

**Daniel Kebede** (*National Education Union*): The Government's education policy merges austerity with a deep hostility towards those working in schools and an indifference to those studying in them. These qualities have shaped the incompetent policy-making that has dominated the last 13 years. The pandemic and its aftermath displayed this combination in disastrous technicolor and the teacher recruitment and retention crisis provided further evidence of its effect.

From this perspective we should see the dramatic re-emergence of the RAAC scandal as a third but probably not final act. What has been long known by the unions, building experts, and civil servants has over the last week become a public scandal. Schools told to close because they have been discovered to pose a risk to life; more than 100 partially evacuated. These numbers will rise. It is not their schools that are crumbling, it is not the Etons, the Harrows, the Winchesters. It is ours.

Keegan says she has been taking a cautious approach but cautious would have been to invest the £7bn needed to maintain the school estates. The reality is this Government has invested a third of that. If this Government had been cautious they would not have cut building schools for the future, a programme slashed by Gove in the name of austerity that would have eliminated RAAC from every school. Instead of caution this Government has delivered chaos, schools told to close days before opening, heads put under pressure the night before schools start and told to complete surveys by the DFE on Twitter. The fact is the school estate has been allowed to decline in an act of calculated neglect, and it is not just RAAC.



According to the National Audit Office 700,000 children every day are taught in schools in desperate need of repair: 90% of schools still containing asbestos creating a level of risk well beyond what is acceptable to expose our children to. Our profession and our children deserve better. This Government needs to come clean on the scale of the crisis but, more than that, we need a programme of rebuilding, a starting point for politicians should be to treat our children as they treat theirs. They would not have their children taught online, taught in marquees, or taught in Portakabins for unspecified periods of time, and neither should we. Congress, please support.  
*(Applause)*

**The President:** NASUWT.

**Mark Morris** (*NASUWT, The Teachers Union*): *Bore da.* Always have a lesson starter. I am a teacher. What is the difference between RAAB and RAAC? One is dense, full of hot air, dangerous, and past its expected useful life. The other is a type of concrete. *(Applause)* It is not the right minister but it is quite difficult keeping up, as Paul has said, with education ministers in Whitehall, but it is beyond a joke, isn't it. Indeed, our current minister proved herself to be a joke in that off-the-cameras comment she made earlier this week. We have heard a lot about how funding cuts in the last 13 years had an impact on people's lives but what says more about the dangers, the real dangers of these cuts, is the imminent collapse of a school building.

As somebody who works in the same valley as Aberfan I do not have to tell you how personal this feels. Health and safety is personal to me too. My great grandfather is still under ground in Senghenydd, the UK's largest mining disaster. As somebody

who lost their job in an architect's office in the 1990s because of the last Tory government kept in the building programme, I feel that personally too: buildings, health and safety, children's safety.

Other motions on this agenda and passed today show that sometimes people have to die before the law is changed and people heed the warnings, Senghenydd, Aberfan, Hillsborough, Grenfell, where people put profits first children die. The ideology of austerity is a danger to life. Austerity kills. (*Applause*) Colleagues, let's be honest, is there a health and safety regulation in law that has not been hard fought for by trade unions, generally following years of health damaging practices and/or deaths.

Congress will be aware of the numbers of schools in England that have been forced to close to some degree due to the presence of RAAC with the department seemingly called out even though the first known collapse was in a school in 2018. The potential dangers of RAAC have been known for some time and the NASUWT has been pressing the department to be more proactive in dealing with the issue for many, many months. Before the summer colleagues met with the department to be told about the advice the department were issuing to schools before the summer holidays. The advice included going round with a screwdriver and poking the concrete to see if it was crumbly – poking concrete to see if it crumbles.

Never ones to waste an opportunity for profiteering the ministers have wheeled out this last week or two to say the Government was in control of the situation, one offering temporary classrooms to be built quickly. Who is making the money for the temporary classrooms? Follow the money, people. Congress, they are taking us for

mugs. Even though the union supports the decision that has been taken, if the Government had properly invested in the schools estate or taken the required steps when the problems first became apparent, it would not have come to this. Congress, we have heard about the building programmes. I can skip that. Instead we have a building programme that at the current rate will take 450 years to make our schools safe for children.

**The President:** Could you wind up, delegate, please?

**Mark Morris** (*NASUWT, The Teachers Union*): One sentence, thank you. Congress, you have a government that understands the profit to be made in everything and the values of nothing, a government that does not care for children, does not care for anybody. Please support this statement. (*Applause*)

**The President:** NAHT.

**Paul Whiteman** (*NAHT, General Secretary*): President, thank you for allowing time to debate this matter this morning, although I know time is tight so I will be brief. Congress, what a metaphor for the crumbling state of the country, the RAAC crisis is: the Government ignoring warnings, making the wrong decisions, and once the political choice of austerity and inaction comes back to bite them, they panic, and blame everybody else.

Let's just look for a moment at what happened in schools, a decision by the then Chancellor to ignore the warnings and appeals of his own ministers to fund essential

estate maintenance. Note that this is denied in the face of overwhelming indications that it is true. Warning from the profession over a number of years put to one side. A joint letter from education unions in March of this year demanding progress: no satisfactory reply. Then over the summer an undisclosed point, law advice given to Government that the steps taken to keep classrooms open were insufficient and classrooms needed to be evacuated. A new policy decision taken with just three days to go to the start of term. School leaders and their teams thrown into chaos again. None of it caused by school leaders and their teams but all the responsibility for the solution thrown on to them. Then to be told by the Secretary of State through the Jeremy Vine show to get off their backsides and respond to her survey is simply an insult to far.

Our members will tidy up after the Government, they always do, but don't you dare insult us while they do, and the provision of temporary buildings must be that, temporary. What does teaching children in substandard conditions say to the nation about the ambition for them and the value we place on young people, the nation's future, and what does it say to the profession when they are already inadequately funded and will have to pick up the bill for much of the crisis.

Congress, as the members I am proud to represent may be heard to say now and then, "Gillian, we are not angry, we are disappointed. You have let schools down, you have let children down, but most of all you have let yourself down." (*Applause*) We cannot let the Government repeat the mistakes of the management of RAAC that they have in schools, we cannot let them repeat that across the public estate. Congress,

send the message to Government that we will demand better and we will not be treated with contempt as we do. Congress, support the Statement. (*Applause*)

**The President:** GMB.

**Martha de Bruxelles** (*GMB*) Good morning, President and Congress. I am speaking in support of the Statement. First-time delegate. First-time speaker. (*Applause*) The RAAC concrete scandal is a personal outrage and an outrage for the whole nation. Across England hundreds of GMB members found out at short notice that it was unsafe to open their place of work. Tens of thousands of school support workers did not know whether a survey has even been carried out. On a personal note my daughter, who is a teacher at a special needs school, does not know either. Our members already knew that they face unsafe building and violence in the classroom, Now they have to add to this scandal their knowledge that they will be in an unsafe place to work. No one should feel unsafe at their place of work. Our members want to keep children safe at all cost. GMB has said for years that urgent investment is needed in crumbling school buildings. It is something we have repeated time and time again.

The Conservatives must be held accountable for the decision to cancel the building of schools for the future problems. We need proper consultation with all school workers and trade unions should be consulted and kept updated to that. The RAAC concrete scandal affects many more sectors too. Congress, we must make sure that unsafe materials in our schools are not ignored. We need a response that brings together the trade union movement and takes into consideration the health and safety of all

workers. Keep our members safe should be our priority. Please support the Statement. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

**The President:** EIS? Yes, comrade.

**David Belsey (EIS):** Colleagues, this is a national scandal, a scandal that should never have happened and a scandal that seems to have come from nowhere and crystallised into a big bang in a matter of weeks, despite the fact that other people have been warning the Government and other bodies about this RAAC for some time. I have to say, colleagues, that this has been a terrible three years for pupils. Schools have suffered; we have all suffered from the ravages of Covid. Pupils' life chances in schools have already been heavily impacted by a rather clumsy and shoddy response to that crisis.

We have 40 schools in Scotland that are apparently affected by RAAC too. That is 40 schools too many. Dodgy school buildings can kill. That is a fact and, sadly, there was a tragic accident in Scotland a few years ago when a wall collapsed on pupils killing one. The reality is that this crisis is a lack of good school buildings, other lack of public investments, hospitals, and all those other areas which we fight for, they are not an accident, it is because of the many, many years public investment has not been at the levels that they need to be. We seem to be going in a place where a lack of public investment, doing things at the last moment, doing things as cheaply as we can, is having real effect and that culture has to stop. (*Applause*)

Colleagues, we have to fight for investment. It is not a boring topic, investment. It is something that affects every person's daily life, day in, day out. Colleagues, please support the Statement. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, comrades, for that really good debate. I now put the General Council Statement to you. All those in favour? I am getting that, I am getting a unanimous vote for that. I am getting a clear endorsement of the General Council Statement. To explain it is a slightly different process than the motion. (*Applause*)

*The General Council Statement on RAAC was ADOPTED.*

**The President:** Right, it is now my pleasure to introduce our guest speaker, from the Labour Party, Angela Rayner, one of us. Angela is, of course, a good and longstanding friend of the trade union Movement and is well known to Congress. In the recent reshuffle Angela was appointed as Shadow Deputy Prime Minister – whoo, whoo, whoo – and she is also, wait for it, wait for it, Shadow Minister for Housing and Levelling Up, and strategically taking forward Labour's package of new trade union and employment rights through the New Deal for Working People. Phew! I think it is probably just simpler to describe her as Labour's finest. Angela, you are so welcome to come to Congress. (*Applause*)

**Angela Rayner, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and Shadow Deputy Prime Minister, Addressed Congress**

**Angela Rayner:** Thank you, President. Hello, Congress. Thank you for inviting me to speak today. It is always a pleasure to address the TUC and it is fantastic to be in Liverpool, the home town of so many legends, the Beatles, the Albert Docks, and of course Paul Nowak.

I remember when I first met Paul as young trade unionists, well, I was, but I do want to pay tribute to Paul. In his first year as the General Secretary, facing down the Tories with this year's Minimum Service Levels Bill, to their insulting refusal to get around the table with public sector workers, to the economic crisis caused in Downing Street but paid for out of your pockets. Throughout, you have been a powerful advocate for workers' rights. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Congress, I come here with one message today, that the next Labour government will build an economy that works for working people, with the New Deal for Working People. (*Applause*) Labour will start by bringing forward an Employment Rights Bill to legislate for this within the first 100 days of entering office. That is a cast iron commitment. (*Applause*) Not only because this will be good for working people and good for our wider economy, but because our fair work agenda will be key to how we bring opportunity to every corner of this country. Last week Keir appointed me Shadow Deputy Prime Minister, strategic lead for Labour's New Deal for Working People and Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, almost as many jobs as I had before.

I am delighted to be in this new post. As a young single mum it was a Labour government that levelled the playing field for me. When I most needed it a council



house gave me and my son a secure home instead of sofa surfing, and that in turn meant that I could go out and find a job that I built a life upon, and the minimum wage meant that I earned more. A local authority job gave me better skills at work and a Sure Start centre gave me better skills as a parent, and joining a union changed my whole life. (*Applause*) It was thanks to my union, Unison, that I was able to improve my life and the life of my fellow workers who I represented. I may have been born in Stockport but I was raised in the trade union movement. (*Applause*)

That kind of levelling up transformed my life and my prospects because it was done right: a house and a job, a good unionised job, with decent conditions, a thriving community, and power to create good local services and educational opportunities. These things were my lifeline and I know what real levelling up means to me, what levelling up could have been and what it could still be. Good jobs and secure homes are the foundations of thriving lives and of a strong economy.

True growth which benefits all people in all places of Britain is built on the pillars of decent jobs and secure housing. They were the pillars that I relied upon to get to where I am today but, Congress, those foundations that I needed to improve my life and my community have instead been levelled down by the Tories, with house-building and wages plummeting across the whole country, the Government's agenda is a sham and a scam. (*Applause*) The mask has slipped and the public has seen the truth, warm words and politically driven hand bells will not touch the sides and empty slogans will not touch the sides, and empty slogans will not pay decent wages, false promises will not build secure homes and a soundbite will not empower local people and local communities to take control of their future.

Congress, never has this been more important. Thirteen years, thirteen years of Tory failure has left our economy shattered, people are on the brink with a cycle of insecure work, poor pay, and grave conditions. Recent scandals like P&O Ferries show how bad bosses can undercut the market. This Government has not just turned their backs on vulnerable workers but on our entire economy, but be in no doubt Tory ministers are the only workers that can get fired and rehired on better terms and conditions scaling upwards (*Applause*) and all the while everyone else is pushed down, including you.

For far too long unions have had barriers put in their way to do your work, damaging industrial relations and worsening disputes. The Tories pushed through the 2016 Trade Union Act preventing fair bargaining and holding back living standards, and this year – this year – they gave us the Minimum Service Levels Bill, a spiteful and bitter attack that threatens nurses with the sack.

We know that going on strike is always the last resort but it is a fundamental freedom that must be respected, so let me tell you loud and clear, Congress, the next Labour government will ask Parliament to repeal these anti-trade union laws within the first 100 days. (*Applause*) This will enable you to get on with your job and negotiating better for your members. I make no apologies that we will work hand-in-hand with the trade unions as we will work with business to deliver real partnerships based on mutual respect, cooperation, and negotiation.

Labour's New Deal for Working People will transform ordinary working people's lives, work will finally pay, rights will be properly enforced and, crucially, it will strengthen the role of trade unions in our society. This is vital. The New Deal was not created in an ivory tower by politicians, it was developed in collaboration with you, the trade union Movement, and it will be delivered with you. Key to this we will update trade union laws to make them fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; for too long these have failed to keep up with the pace of hard reality on the ground.

Take the laws protecting reps and officials, which do not account for the technological advancements of the past 10 years, how our fragmented workplaces actually operate today leaving you unprotected and exposed to harassment, or the sack; not just hampering your ability to properly represent and negotiate for your members, but ruining lives and livelihoods.

I started on the shop floor and I know how hard it is out there. The Consulting Association scandal that blacklisted thousands of union workers must never be allowed to happen again. (*Applause*) That is why I am pleased to announced today that the next Labour government will act decisively and conclusively to stamp out blacklisting once and for all. (*Applause*)

First we will update regulations to outlaw the use of predictive technology for black listing, and safeguard against singling out workers from this treatment or the sack without any evidence of human interaction.

Second, we will act to end the loophole that allows employers to pass the dirty work down to third party contractors so that any third party found to be carrying out blacklisting can legally be held to account.

Third, we will give employment tribunals the power to order the destruction of any list, digital or not, to stop them being hidden or used again. (*Applause*)

Finally, Congress, we will ensure that lessons are learned from the past historic injustices so that these scandals can never happen again. We will support a full investigation into the violent events at Orgreave. (*Applause*) In government we will launch a review into the official documents relating to the Cammell Laird prosecutions, and that is not all. (*Applause*)

We will give trade unions a new legal, reasonable right to access workplaces, like your sister unions have in Australia, New Zealand, and Nordic states, and more. (*Applause*) This will be underpinned by a regulated legal framework. There will be clear responsibilities and rules for all sides to follow, allowing you to meet, represent, recruit, and organise members so that you can get on with the job to build stronger, happier, and more productive workplaces without the threat or menace from rogue employers.

As you have seen with Amazon, a small minority of employers are taking advantage of the lack of regulations to frustrate the process, neither fair to workers nor productive to our wider economy. It only frustrates disputes making it harder to come to a resolution. Good employers know the value of a trade union.

We will also simplify the statutory recognition process to ensure that the gig economy and remote workers can meaningfully organise through trade unions, and we will level up the rules to allow trade unions to use secure and private electronic balloting by engaging, communicating, and polling their members, including for workplace balance. *(Applause)*

That is still not all, Congress. We will boost collective bargaining both at a firm level and sectorally, starting with fair pay agreements in adult social care. *(Applause)* We will empower workers and trade unions that represent them and employers in sectors to negotiate fair pay, terms and conditions, like training, in-staff benefits, and more.

Congress, as a former social care worker, I cannot overstate the difference this will make, not only to these low paid and far too often overlooked workers, but also to our entire healthcare system weighted down by years of Tory neglect. The laws will protect existing sector-wide deals like the Fire & Rescue Service's National Joint Council, and support workers to meaningfully organise together to improve their terms and conditions.

This is because we agree with the OECD that collective bargaining is not just good for workers, but it can also be a benefit helping companies and their staff adapt to technological and societal change.

Congress, there is even more: day one basic rights, a ban on zero hour contracts, an end to fire and re-hire, family-friendly workers, strengthen sick pay making it

available to all workers, including the lowest earners and from day one. *(Applause)*

We will go faster and quicker to end the gender pay gap, address unequal pay, tackle sexual harassment at work, and put mental health on a par with physical health.

*(Applause)* We will bring in a proper living wage that people can actually live on.

*(Applause)* This is not only good for workers, it is essential to growing the economy and raising living standards once more.

The state will take a more active and strategic role in our economy by fixing UK's broken labour market, giving businesses the confidence they need to invest in our infrastructure and people once more. It is how we will boost people's pay so they have more money in their pockets to spend down their local high street, and how we will turn the Tories' failure on productivity on its head because a healthier, happier, and motivated, workforce is good for the bottom line.

Make no mistake, this agenda is good for workers, our economy, and for business. Labour has a comprehensive plan to create good jobs across the entire country and raise living standards, all through our New Deal for Working People. Alongside decent work Labour has a plan to fix the housing crisis by building more homes, homes that people can afford to live in with priority given to local people and, yes, that means building more council houses. *(Applause)*

The Tories are no longer the party of home ownership, that is Labour, a party that will be on your side and that will govern in the interests of the whole country. Good jobs and secure homes are the foundation of thriving lives and the foundation of a strong economy, true growth that benefits all people.

Now, Congress, the battle for the general election is getting started and it is not going to be easy. This country cannot survive another five years of Tory rule. Ask yourself, what will be left? There is no doubt that Labour has to win but to get this victory we have to come together, stand together, and campaign side-by-side. We need your help. (*Applause*)

Congress, I need your help to get the word out about the New Deal for Working People. This is our platform to make Britain work for working people again. That is what is at stake, that is what our shared future can be so, Congress, join me and let's fight for it together. Thank you. (*Standing ovation*)

**The President:** Thank you, Angela, and you can tell by the reaction of Congress you have the support of this trade union movement. (*Applause*) We look forward to you leading in government on Labour's New Deal and we look forward to working with you to transform working people's lives. Thank you, Angela. (*Applause*)

Congress, we move on. Two years ago we established the Anti-Racism Task Force. We still have a lot to do but we are making important progress.

(*Video shown to Congress*)

**The General Secretary:** President, when I spoke to this Congress last year as General Secretary designate I said our number one priority had to be building a stronger, more diverse, more inclusive trade union movement. Anti-racism and the fight for racial

justice cannot be an optional extra. It has to be hardwired into everything we do, not just our organising, campaigning and bargaining work, not just our economic and political priorities, but also the way we support our own black staff and activists. That is why we set up our Anti-Racism Task Force three years ago under the leadership of Patrick Roach, Gloria Mills, and our race relations committee. We have made some important strides forward but we need to keep up that momentum.

The manifesto in your delegate packs sets out our ambitions for the future, creating new networks of black reps and activists, and that commitment to train 500 new black activists every year, bargaining collectively for change starting with outsourced workers, building international solidarity to challenge the far right and take on bad employers.

Congress, the change we want will not come about by just launching reports or passing motions, it comes through organising, it comes through taking action, and it comes from the work our reps do day in, day out, in workplaces. We know our own movement is not perfect, sometimes we have fallen short of our ideals, we have failed to turn our principles into practice, but our history is also proudly punctuated with examples of when we have risen to the moment, when we fought Mosley's fascists on Cable Street, when we were engaged in the long struggle against apartheid, and when we were united against the National Front, the BNP, the EDL, Britain First, or whatever other label the fascists give themselves, now is the time to write the next chapter in that collective story.



Congress, let's turn that anti-racism manifesto into reality, let's win equality, let's tear down the barriers facing our black members, their families and communities, and let's build a movement that proudly represents working class people in all our wonderful diversity. (*Applause*)

**Patrick Roach:** President, Congress, and thanks for that, Paul, a really important statement, Congress, this document is an extremely important record of our commitment. Three years ago when the country was locked down, the evidence emerged of black workers dying at work, black workers dying disproportionately because they were left unprotected by this shameful government of lawbreakers. We said as a movement at the time that we demanded better. We said at the time that we needed to demonstrate to black workers that we, this movement, is on their side. We said that we would commit to an anti-racism task force to take forward our work in concert with our black members, in concert with all of our members and, indeed, with communities, in concert with the General Council and, of course, our fantastic Black Workers' Conference, and it was a proud moment to see that manifesto and our action plan secure the unanimous support of this Congress.

We also said that our manifesto and action plan must be more than words on a page, and we called on every union to discuss that action plan, that manifesto, with your black members, with your executives, with your staff, and to take action, to take action to win racial justice in our unions and at the bargaining table with employers, to take action to secure more black reps across our movement, to take action to provide safe reporting systems so that black workers have the confidence to speak out

against racism, so that all of our members have the confidence to expose racism in their workplaces and in our unions.

We called on you to take action to fight the injustices of workplace casualisation and outsourcing, and to hold the Government's feet to the fire through the Covid public inquiry. Congress, you have risen to the challenge and I want to thank you for that. That implementation and oversight is working with you all to demonstrate and to report on our progress annually to this Congress. We have already published an evaluation of the good progress that we have made to date and I want to thank affiliates, our black workers' conference, our race relations committee chaired by the fabulous Gloria Mills, and you for your leadership throughout.

We have agreed priority actions and as you saw in the video clip our new anti-racism tracker will help all unions in taking forward the commitments that we prioritised, for this year and next year, and for the next five years. We need all affiliates to use the tracker because when we leave this Congress our work must continue and we must not stop until our movement at every level looks and sounds like the workers that we are here to represent. (*Applause*)

Congress, last year you pledged to progressing social and economic justice for black workers and to fighting racism in our workplaces and in our unions, and now we are asking your unions to demonstrate that we will walk the walk on the must do actions that we expect all unions to take. That is what the tracker is all about, colleagues. We have given you tools, resources, analysis, and now access to training as well as Paul confirmed in his great address to us yesterday. It is now down to you, colleagues, to

take action and to showcase what our movement is made of and what we are capable of. We need your action now more than every before.

Congress, the Tories are waging a war against working people, they are doing that by stoking fear, division, racism, misogyny, transphobia, you name it, they are trying to use the politics of hate, the language of illegal migration to garner support from many of our own members who suffered most under the last 13 years of the Tories, and we will not stand by and let that happen. (*Applause*)

Colleagues, we know that the road to racial justice is long, we know that black workers are more likely to be denied jobs or promotion, more likely to be excluded from access to training and development, more likely to be unfairly disciplined or dismissed from their employment, and under the last 13 years of the Tories the number of black workers in insecure work has increased by more than double. We need those workers to join our unions and we need to win a new deal for working people.

Congress, fighting for racial justice is what our movement is all about and we must continue that fight because the only thing that stands in the way of this government and its attacks on black workers and on all working people is our movement, recruiting, organising, building a more inclusive trade union movement, and demanding a government that will put racial justice for working people at the very top of its agenda because when black workers rise we all rise. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, Paul. Thank you, Patrick. Congress, as we mentioned earlier, we have been able to catch up with some time so I will be able to take some of the lost business that we have had over the last couple of days later this morning. Advance warning for those involved I intend to take Motion 28, Regulation on Corporate Profiteering, and Composite 10, Financial Services Supporting the e-Disadvantaged, after Motion 41, at the end of this morning's session, if delegates could be ready for that.

Congress, we return to section 3, Building a More Diverse Movement, from page 28 in your guide. I call Motion 37, Equal Conditions for Female Professional Footballers, the General Council support the motion, to be moved by PFA, seconded by the Royal College of Podiatry, and ASLEF to come to the front to speak. PFA.

### **37 Equal conditions for female professional footballers**

The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) calls on Congress to support its campaign for parity of conditions for our female professional members.

The women's game in England has seen success at the elite level and a huge growth in participation and support. PFA members have inspired through their actions both on and off the pitch, using their platform to drive positive change.

However, professionals in the women's game in England do not yet benefit from the same protections and structures which were fought for and won by their male colleagues.

These protections ensure that changes which will impact the contracts, conditions and rights of players in the men's game cannot simply be imposed. They ensure that players have a seat at the table and a voice on decisions which affect them.

Players in the English women's game also do not benefit from the types of collective bargaining agreements that are in place in countries such as the United States and Australia.

These agreements mean that players, and their unions, do not have to continually fight, issue by issue, for change.

Much progress has been made in the women's game, but much more still needs to be done. The recommendations in the recent review led by Karen Carney MBE provide an excellent framework for the future and recognise the vital role union representation has in supporting professional players. These recommendations must now be implemented.

### **Professional Footballers' Association**

#### **AMENDMENT**

› Insert new penultimate paragraph

“This different treatment extends to the design of footwear for female footballers being based on the structure of the male foot which can lead to injury. Conference welcomes previous calls for more research into the design of sports footwear for female footballers and other sports women.”

*Royal College of Podiatry*

**Maheta Molango** (*PFA*): President, Congress, it is a privilege for me to be here with you today at my very first TUC Congress as the Chief Executive Officer of the PFA.

(*Applause*) As we say, first-time delegate, first-time speaker. We heard yesterday from our General Secretary, Paul Nowak, about how proud he was to be the grandson of immigrants. Well, as the son of a Congolese immigrant and of an Italian mother, you can imagine that I would not be standing here today if it was not because my path crossed people like Paul who believed that the workplace should not be about entitlement and privilege but rather about hard work, dedication, and equal opportunities. (*Applause*) Paul, you said yesterday it was very personal, your words mean a lot to me, so thank you very much.

For those of you who do not know the PFA we are the oldest sports trade union in the world, we represent all kinds of professional football players in the Premier League, in the Championship, League One, and League Two, as well as the Women's Super League. This means approximately 5,000 current members but also approximately

50,000 people who no longer play active football who can still access the services from their union.

In terms of the future of the PFA, we have been at the heart of every major development linked to players' rights over the future of this game. For almost a century we have driven progress that has helped shape the game as we know it today and we continue playing a key role in putting the players and employees at the centre of every single decision on the men's side. Believe me when I say that because I played and worked in different countries, it is through the work of the PFA that the rights of the players are put at a level which is the strongest and the highest probably in Europe and probably in the world.

We now have a new fight on our hands. Congress, we must secure equal conditions for professional football players on the women's side of the game. (*Applause*) Over the last 12 months we have seen the unbelievable performances of our female athletes. Those high profile success stories have been responsible for driving a huge growth in participation and also in support. Those young women have been an inspiration on the pitch but also have been an example to follow as to how to use the platform to drive change off the pitch. They are PFA members and we are extremely proud of them.

However, the professional women's game in England does not yet benefit from the same protection as their male counterparts and this is something that we need to deal with immediately. This is simply unacceptable. In the men's game those protections ensure that changes that are part of the contract and conditions and rights of the

players cannot simply be enforced upon them. They ensure that players have a seat at the table and a voice on key decisions being taken which ultimately affect them. In England, the women's games are not afforded the same protection as the male counterparts. They also do not benefit from the type of collective bargaining agreement that are in place for female professionals in countries such as the US or Australia, an agreement that means players and their union do not have to continually fight issue by issue to seek change.

A huge amount of progress has been made in the women's game but still much more needs to be done. This is a time of significant change in the women's game because right now conversations are happening about the structure of the League going forward. Our members must be part of the discussions shaping the future of the game more for those who play currently but also for those who will follow later on. As you well know, there is no point having a seat at the table if the decisions have already been made.

The recommendation in the recent independent review for women's football carried out by the former Lioness, Karen Carney, provided an excellent framework for the future and recognising the vital role that unions have to play in supporting professional players. Now, we want those recommendations to be taken forward and implemented a.s.a.p.

I want to finish by taking the time to recognise the action that has been taken by players around the world to highlight the wide range of issues that still affect the women's game throughout the world. Players across the globe have come together

across borders and boundaries to show solidarity and support for each other and to devise change. As trade unionists this is something that we should be very proud of. Players in the women's game should not have to continually fight like they do. I hope you will join me to fight alongside them to achieve change. So, I would ask you to all do the same and please support this motion. Thank you very much and enjoy the rest of the Congress. (*Applause*)

**The President:** The Royal College of Podiatry to second.

**Sue Pyke** (*The Royal College of Podiatry*): It would not be Congress if we did not speak about footwear. My pronouns are she, her, and I am really proud to second Motion 37 with a little amendment. As we have just heard, we have witnessed an incredible journey for our Lionesses, victory in the Euros, followed by this year reaching the World Cup Final, what an amazing achievement. (*Applause*) It is a real testament to the growing prominence of women's sports and their ability to challenge bias and traditional gender stereotypes.

But, as we celebrate this progress, it is also essential to shed light on the pressing issue of appropriate sports footwear in women's sports. Most of you probably do not think about that but I do as a podiatrist and women's shoes are very different, or they need to be very different, because women's foot shape, their heels, their arches, are different to men's. So, wearing boots designed for men can result in injury so blisters, stress fractures; a lot of discomfort.



A recent study by a podiatry colleague of ours identified 82% of professional women players suffer from pain and discomfort while they are wearing their boots. Imagine the impact that has on their ability to play. Not just gender but race as well impacts on foot shape and the width of our feet, yet football boots are really tightly designed so there is not enough room for our foot shape within them. Women also run and move differently to our male colleagues but football boots tend to be designed on men's movement and on men's traction. Also, finding sizes is difficult for women. Now, some companies have changed their boots slightly to allow them to be made in different sizes to fit a woman's foot but they are still designed on men's feet.

The success of the Lionesses provides a much needed boost to sports participation, which is brilliant. However, the journey for these women is filled with compromises, including the kit and the boots that they wear. Injuries are more prevalent in our female athletes and they have longer recovery times compared with men, and the divide between foot anatomy and the boots available contributes to this.

FIFA recognises the growth potential in women's football attracting significant investment and sponsorship deals from companies. The PFA knows the financial disparities within the women's game and we must also ensure young women inspired by their football heroes have access to the right gear and the right boots.

This motion is not just about sports, it is about equality, diversity, inclusion, and health and safety, as we have heard throughout Congress crucial trade union issues. We call for further research and a campaign for leading manufacturers to supply suitable sports footwear for women and we urge the TUC to collaborate with all

stakeholders to prioritise the health and safety of our female footballers. We welcome the PFA's motion on equality for all sports people and believe this should be extended to firms around our footwear. I ask you to support this motion. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** ASLEF.

**Trevor Robinson** (*ASLEF*): Proudly rising to support this motion. Congress, 2022 saw us celebrating the England's women's football team winning the European Championships. This is the first senior trophy won by this country since 1966. *(Applause)* Only a year later they came ever so close to lifting the FIFA Women's World Cup and on both occasions we celebrated the success like the champions that they are. However, Congress will be saddened to know of the huge disparities between the women and their male counterparts.

Women footballers in the UK do not have the same collective bargaining agreements as their male counterparts, which makes it near enough impossible to negotiate agreements to improve their terms and conditions. Whilst the men's have regular live football to promote the sport, from Friday Night Football to Super Sundays, the women are allocated a slot where the viewing is not normally high. Proper healthcare is also a massive problem for the ladies' football. The majority of football boots are designed for men which puts women at a higher risk of injuries. Once injured many of these women leave the sport due to the lack of healthcare provided. They do not have the same level of sponsorships or wages as their male colleagues. Congress, this is not acceptable.

Former England international, Karen Carney, MBE, a former England professional has recently published a review on the future of domestic women's football. The recommendations aim to deliver sustainable growth in women's football covering crucial areas such as establishment of a standalone company, minimum salary floor and comprehensive healthcare, dedicated broadcast slots for women's football, and lastly identification of strategic partners. Congress, let's support this motion and ensure that not just the women of today but the ones that follow have the parity across the board of their male colleagues. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, delegate. Motion 37 is before you. Will all those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 37 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** I call paragraphs 3.1, 3.2, and 4.15, of the General Council Report. Now we go on, Congress, to Motion 38, Ending of Hostile Environment. The General Council support the motion and this is the motion from the Black Workers' Conference, to be moved by RMT on behalf of the conference and to be seconded by Unison.

### **38 Ending the hostile environment**

Congress notes with concern that the Windrush Compensation Scheme is 'not fit for purpose' given that only one per cent of appeals are successful. Figures revealed through a Freedom of Information request showed that out of 3,479 claimant appeals in 2021, only 42 resulted in a settlement.

Congress notes this low appeal success rate is unsurprising given that the Windrush scandal was perpetrated by the Home Office, and by having them run the Compensation Scheme is like marking their own homework. These figures show the

need for an inquiry into the scandal and for taking the compensation scheme out of the government's hands and having it run by an independent body.

Congress therefore calls for:

- i. a statutory judge-led public inquiry into how the Windrush scandal came about and the failings of the compensation scheme
- ii. the Windrush Compensation Scheme to be run independently of the Home Office
- iii. a Windrush Act that will place a duty on public bodies to reduce race disparities in areas such as education, criminal justice, work, health, and community cohesion.

This legislation to also establish a commonwealth community cohesion fund to tackle disparities and rebuild social and economic ties of communities damaged by the Windrush scandal.

### **TUC Black Workers Conference**

**Mel Mullings** (RMT): Moving Motion 38 on behalf of the TUC Black Workers and the Race Relations Committee. The *Windrush* scandal is actually misnamed and should be the Commonwealth scandal as Caribbean people are not exclusively affected. It affects not only those who came as children and grandchildren but with the wider effects on those who they had to leave behind. As long as you have racism and inequality you have a hostile environment.

During the 1920s the hostile environment was implied rather than actual policy. If you do not believe me, then where did *No Blacks, No Irish, and No Dogs* come from and who put those signs up. Winston Churchill ran his election campaign on the slogan, *Keep Britain White*. Theresa May was two years into her job as Home Secretary when she told *The Telegraph* in 2012 her aim was to create here in Britain a really hostile environment for illegal migration. She claims in recent times that she regrets her actions but, sorry, some of us who have sadly passed away without realising justice cannot hear you.

People that came over from the colonies had passports taken away by police and re-registered as aliens. I know you do not believe that. In May 1945, thousands of Caribbeans decided to stay after the War as was their right. They had loads of difficulties settling within the UK. They came up from various hostile policies, one known as *the coloured immigration of 1948 through to the 1950s*. Also, there is the unwanted, the secret *Windrush* files, and a whole list of other documentaries show what has happened since.

We are not immigrants, we were settlers. We were members of the Empire then. The European Union had free movement at this same time and were never treated or called immigrants, they were called European Voluntary Workers, EVWs. They worked and, more importantly, they came to stay. They were given preference through pernicious policy, even though some of these people had fought against Britain in the War, over black people who fought for the Empire. They tried to hide it but it is not hidden.

There were issues in returning to the UK when the British High Commissions were instructed to obstruct British citizens from returning to the UK or bringing over their loved ones. When Commonwealth citizens were trying to return they were mistreated as if they did not have any rights. Enoch Powell travelled to the so-called colonies and directly recruited us to come here. Yes, he did. *Windrush* victims are told that they have to pay upfront for cancer treatments, figures like £30,000, having their status and working rights taken away. The UK will not give *Windrush* victims their pensions, even though they can find government records of their history of attending

schools and paying taxes. Children in care get criminal records, get caught up in the scandal as they can then face deportation.

There is solidarity between refugees, *Windrush*, and reparations, 100 million people displaced around the world and poorer countries are doing their part. In fact, when showing disproportionality hardly anyone comes to the UK and you wonder why, the Nationality and Borders Act and the Rwanda agreement.

This year we are commemorating the many Caribbean contributions to the UK recognising 75 years of *Windrush*. We are still fighting to get justice, adequate compensation for those affected by the hostile environment. There are minor and slow changes occurring in the scheme, however the compensation scheme must now be run independently of the Home Office. *Windrush* compensation scheme is being used to silence the Commonwealth community and right now the compensation scheme is prolonging the suffering of victims because so many are being wrongfully told they are ineligible. This is not right.

The Government does not like being embarrassed and on a verbal stage we need to look up when it gets discussed at the UN Committee there must be a public inquiry. This is a Home Office scandal based on unfair ideology and a superiority mindset influenced by policies that created the effects that have unfairly treated so many. As you have heard, clearly from the fringe meeting yesterday, real life impact is deep and harrowing. There are trade unions doing very good hard work on this. Our communities, industries, our movement, have all benefited from migrant workers so

we need to be there to defend them. Our families, friends, members, we can do so much more, comrades. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** To be seconded by Unison, and then I am calling Unite and CWU in this debate, too. Unison.

**Kebba Manneh** (*Unison*): I am Chair of Unison National Black Members' Committee, seconding this vital motion from TUC Black Workers' Conference on behalf of Unison. Congress, 75 years ago the *Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury Docks. It may have been blown along by the waters of a terrible history of Empire, of cronyism, of racist exploitation, but in the words of the great Maya Angelou, the people it contained were determined to rise, rise above the cold winters, rise above the racism they encounter, rise above the fear-mongering politicians. They transformed our trade union movement, they brought their solidarity and their struggle, and above all they faced a future with dignity and hope.

Congress, we must put an end to this hostile environment. No individual, no child or adult, should live in fear of being wrongfully targeted by oppressive inflation policies. Congress, that is why we in Unison are working with others to take a legal challenge, a judicial review, against Suella Braverman for the outrageous decision not to implement in full recommendations of the lessons learned review. (*Applause*)

Congress, in January this year Braverman decided to abandon three key recommendations, including strengthening the power of the immigration watchdog, a new word for migrant commissioner, and a commitment to one reconciliation event

with *Windrush* families. Congress, we demand an end to this hostile environment, call for a public inquiry into the *Windrush* scandal, a judge-led inquiry, and in order to prevent such tragedy from recurring in the future we need to create a *Windrush* Act of Parliament, the Act will guarantee value, respect, and protecting the *Windrush* generation and their descendents, to actually end the hostile environment. Congress, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Unite.

**Susan Matthews** (*Unite*): President, Congress, supporting Motion 38 on behalf of Unite the Union, ending hostility. The mover has said a lot of what I was going to say in terms of background but let me just put a little bit more meat on what is happening. Here we are this year marking the *Windrush* 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As we acknowledge that this Government not only uses us as a scapegoat but also the immigrants from all over this country. We seem to be pushing the campaign for the *Windrush* campaign, we all witnessed this Government asylum environment and immigration that led to the *Windrush* scandal. This Government encouraged structural systematic racism with their political machinery obviously in terms of their policies and procedures, making a challenging environment for undocumented immigrants, including the *Windrush* generation who were denied access to services such as the medical healthcare, housing, and employment. It is still ongoing. It is important that we ensure that all trade unions are focused on the key action so that people receive the compensation they do deserve; it is not a given, they deserve it. Also, to hold this Government to account and to push to ensure that the hostile environment ends and we prevent any injustice from happening again in the future. People deserve support and empathy.



They lived and retired but their lives were turned upside down and there should not have been a fight or a struggle for compensation; they should receive it in full. There needs to be an independent review as my colleague mentioned for the *Windrush* scandal. Lessons learned need to be implemented. It means that our unions support Black and Ethnic Minority workers in challenging institutional discrimination, practices and policies, within all organisations.

Because this Government continues to support hatred rhetoric and diversion, a leading lawyer, Jacqueline McKenzie, who served on the review and represented many *Windrush* victims, has now been the subject of a slur campaign from the Conservative Party headquarters because of her opposition to their discrimination, policies and practices, they have in place. There has been clear racism against migrants in going about with their campaign plan in terms of the election. Congress, we need to show solidarity and support for Jacqueline McKenzie, the lawyer who worked hard and tirelessly, free of cost for the *Windrush* generation.

Right now we are encouraged to push back on the *Windrush* victims in terms of not getting their compensation. The Government is saying sorry but then on the other hand they say, "Oh, no, but not sorry," adding more injury and insult, and injustice, to the *Windrush* generation.

Now I have finished the formal bit I have two minutes left. In the struggle in terms of the words of the favourite Jimmy Cliff, "the bigger they come the harder they fall." Jimmy Cliff inspires songs and does play in many parts of our *Windrush* generation and in terms of that, in terms of the many rivers to cross, it is only my will that was a

keeper for life, I have been washed up for years, and I have survived because of our pride. The *Windrush* generation will still survive because of their pride. Congress, support this motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** CWU.

**Michelle Bailey (CWU):** Congress, this year with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Windrush* generation and along with the CWU I celebrated all the good that has come out of the contribution that has been made building this country and joining together. It saddens me that we are still talking about the *Windrush* scandal and the hostile environment that has been created and that is still affecting people today. Commonwealth citizens were invited to this country from the Caribbean and all these years later are caught up in the Government's hostile environment legislation, a policy that was announced in 2012 which tasked the NHS landlords, banks, employers, and many others, enforcing immigration controls. Falsely deemed as illegal immigrants or undocumented immigrants British citizens came to lose their access to housing, healthcare, bank accounts, driving licences, many were placed in immigration detention centres prevented from travelling abroad and threatened with forcible removal while others were deported to countries they had not seen since they were children. Tens of thousands of people were ultimately impacted by the scandal. In yesterday's fringe meeting we had another sad story of yet another grandfather who cannot speak of the country's treatment.

The *Windrush* compensation scheme was established in 2019 but has been consistently criticised for delays, low offers, and unfair rejection. Claimants are

unable to access the requisite legal aid necessary to complete the burdensome application process and treated with contempt by the Home Office staff. As of January 2023, only 12.8% of the estimated nearly 12,000 eligible claimants have been compensated. Congress, let's support this motion and change the Conservative Party's illegal immigration bill that has internationally been criticised for effectively outlawing asylum in the UK. Let's support. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Congress, moving on to Motion 38 and the vote. This is the motion from the Black Workers' Conference. Will all those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is unanimous.

*Motion 38 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** I move on to Motion 39, Research and Guidance for Trans Young People. The General Council support the motion, to be moved by AEP, seconded by AUE, and FBU to come down as part of the debate.

### **39 Research and guidance for trans young people**

Congress notes that the trans community is one of the most discriminated against in the UK today. As a result, the welfare of the trans community in the UK is of deep concern.

Congress promotes social justice and inclusion for everyone in society. These are values equally held by educational psychologists (EPs).

EPs support young people and their families to feel safety and belonging in their settings and communities. EPs know that feelings of safety and belonging are vital to an individual's personal growth. Yet, there is much evidence to suggest that the transgender community faces many barriers to accessing the material and social conditions required to feel a sense of safety and belonging. This is particularly pertinent for trans young people, 84 per cent of whom have deliberately hurt themselves. Two in five have tried to take their own lives (Stonewall, 2019).

Congress calls for robust, bias free research to establish what best supports trans young people to flourish. This should inform published guidance for settings and services working with this vulnerable community.

Congress further notes that similar action is also needed for the non-binary community.

**Association of Educational Psychologists**

**Cath Lowther** (*Association of Educational Psychologists, General Secretary*). My pronouns are she, her. First-time delegate. First-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, as trade unions we promote social justice and inclusion for everyone. The discrimination experienced by the trans community in the UK and the welfare of the trans community must be of deep concern to us all. We saw how Westminster quashed the gender recognition bill. We watched aghast at the Government's culture wars aided by some sections of the media stoking an increasingly hostile environment for trans people.

Educational psychologists support young people and their families to feel safety and belonging in their settings and communities. We are therefore especially concerned about young trans people who face many barriers to feeling their sense of safety and belonging and as a result experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Stonewall research shows that more than four in five trans young people have self-harmed and nearly half, nearly half, have attempted to take their own lives. Trans young people report discrimination, feelings of rejection from peers and school staff and experiences of bullying, harassment and verbal and physical abuse.

Trans young people constantly manage their disability knowing that it is stressful to hide who you are but feeling that coming out will attract social disapproval and exclusion. Intersectionality, such as being both disabled and trans, or belonging to marginalised ethnic or religious groups, exacerbates these challenges, yet there is little

evidence-based guidance available to schools around supporting these vulnerable individuals. For instance, schools have recently been instructed to tell parents if a young person is out in school. This could make that young person unsafe at home. They may therefore hide their identity leaving vulnerable young people completely isolated and unsupported.

Too often as educational psychologists we are asked to help trans young people too late. I think particularly of a young trans man who I got to work with only when he had stopped attending school. He had felt completely unsupported there and not seen or accepted as himself. Educational psychologists would rather be involved early so our trans young people do not experience the levels of distress and pain that statistics show. We know that experiences in childhood and adolescence can affect whole lives.

Congress, we can do so much better as a society. We should prioritise early support and put in place the practices and cultures in schools that create a safe and positive environment. We can do this with better policies, staff training, peer support, an inclusive curriculum, and greater visibility and representation. Educational psychologists can support this development in schools and in other settings such as children's homes, supporting young people directly, and supporting other professionals to improve their practice and feel more confident in what they do.

Congress, the AEP calls for bias-free guidance based on the best research that shows what best supports trans young people to flourish. This should be directed at all settings and services working with this vulnerable community and their families.

Congress further notes that similar action is also needed for the non-binary community. So, let's send our best message from Congress, from trade unions as a collective force for good, trans and non-binary young people, we hear you, we see you, and we will uphold your right to be and belong. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** AUE to second.

**Lorraine Monk** (AUE): Trans rights is, as our President stated in her speech to Congress, a matter of human rights, human rights essential to our duty as human beings to uphold what trade unionists fundamentally stand for. It is not pick-and-mix. Human rights are the same rights for all, a right to be valued, respected, and live lives free from oppression.

*The Guardian* yesterday carried a report on the consistent rate of suicide for every group. We are not surprised when people's lives are becoming harder, poverty rising, and support services cut. The rates of suicide among children and young people have increased as have other at risk groups. Young trans people are suffering an increase in mental health issues, not surprising in this political climate, a situation exploited by right wing MPs, like Lee Anderson, who in February this year observed that to win the general election the Tories needed headline issues. He observed, "It will probably be a mix of culture wars and trans debate." Wars, indeed: an organised backlash attacking almost 1% of our population, attempting to drive a wedge between different oppressed groups, divide, rule, and exploit.

Congress, when the human rights of trans people are attacked, homophobia is not far behind. The campaigns are raw funded and depend on disseminating lies, stating fear, prejudice and hatred. We support the initiative of robust bias-free research to establish what best supports trans young people, grounded research, not hysterical headlines written by Tory speech writers. Dignity and respect for everyone. Congress, please support. (*Applause*)

**The President:** FBU.

**Maria Buck** (*Fire Brigade's Union*): The debate on trans rights continues to make people who are trans and non-binary a tool to divide us and spread hate. The debate continues to be highly toxic, focusing on presenting trans and non-binary people as a threat, as sexual predators, and in particular for trans women as being a danger to women's safe spaces. The impact of this debate is real with trans and non-binary people being subject to attack and violence and that threat was brought home by the murder of Brianna, a 16-year old trans girl in February of this year in Warrington. Brianna was a child who did not identify in the gender of her birth. The position of Westminster government does nothing to recognise and support trans and non-binary people. The decision by Westminster to veto the extensively debated reform on the GRA over a number of days by the Scottish government was unprecedented in the use of legislation that has never been used since the introduction of devolved administration 26 years ago. (*Applause*)

That decision was not based on any House of Commons debate but on party political position. It is frustrating that the Labour Party dither on this issue and we as trade

unions have been consistent in our support of trans and non-binary communities. I ask Congress to support this motion and remain resolute in our support for the right of individuals to live the life in the gender that they identify. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Okay, Congress, Motion 39 is before you. All those in favour? Hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 39 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Moving on to Motion 40, Protecting Trans and Non-Binary Rights, the General Council supports the motion. This is the motion from the TUC LGBT Conference and it is to be moved by NHBCSA, on behalf of the conference, to be seconded by GMB; and NASUWT, PCS, UCU, EIS, and Unison, if you want to come down to the front.

#### **40 Protect trans and non-binary rights**

Congress notes:

With deep concern that the UK government prevented the Gender Recognition Reform Bill passed by the Scottish Parliament from going for royal assent, using (for the first time) section 35 of the Scotland Act 1998.

The Scottish Parliament overwhelmingly passed this progressive bill with over 65 per cent of MSPs from all parties supporting it.

The bill would have removed barriers for people to legally change their gender by allowing for self-identification.

In the 25 years since devolution no UK government has taken this step until now.

Congress notes the UK Govt's statement to restrict trans+ and non-binary people's ability to have their Gender Recognition certificate recognised in the UK if it has been issued by countries who allow self-identification.

On the 16/1/23 a high court, to challenge the long waiting times experienced by trans+ people seeking help from the NHS, was rejected. Congress believes:

i. people should be supported through transition and self-identification (regardless of medicalised process)



- ii. transphobia cannot go unchallenged, and the TUC should challenge it
- iii. the TUC has responsibility to trans and non-binary workers to respond strongly to attacks on their rights
- iv. LGBT+ people should have rights to live free from discrimination.

This Congress stands in solidarity with all trans+ and non-binary people from the attacks on their being from the UK state.

We condemn the proposals by Kemi Badenoch in February to ‘clarify’ the Equality Act 2010 and amend the current definition of sex, which would remove decades long rights protections from discrimination for trans people. We also condemn the collusion of the EHRC in this. We welcome the letter from Paul Nowak in response making clear the TUC commitment to oppose these proposals.

Congress calls on the TUC:

- a. to strengthen solidarity with trans and nonbinary workers in hosting an online event focusing on international progress toward trans and non-binary self- identity, and inclusion within unions and in wider society
- b. to support union affiliates in becoming more trans and non-binary inclusive
- c. to commend Scottish Parliament for this action and provide vocal support for such change to happen across the whole UK
- d. continue to highlight the impact of the onslaught on trans and non-binary people’s lives
- e. continue to work alongside the STUC LGBT+ Committee, LGBT+ Labour and other grass roots organisations to support and protect Trans+ and non-binary people’s lives
- f. support efforts, as far as practicable, to overturn the Section 35 Order
- g. work with appropriate decision makers to prevent the continued erosion of trans+ and non-binary people’s lives.

### **TUC LGBT+ Conference**

**Julia Georgiou** (*NHBCSA*) and LGBT+ Committee member, proposing the motion from this year’s LGBT+ Conference. I did not ask for this, like last year, up until Sunday I did not know I was proposing this motion but here I am. You know my background, I am the only trans General Secretary in the union movement banging on the same old drum, trans rights, equality, blah, blah, blah. (*Applause*) But, hey, hello, put down your divisive choice for five minutes, and think, “Isn’t equality what we are here for?” I stand in support and solidarity with any and all minorities. I stand with my sisters in the continued fight against misogyny and abuse, for equal rights and

equal pay, with black workers in their fights against racism, with striking workers in their fights for better pay and conditions.

As I said last year, it does not matter, race, colour or creed, I stand with you, shoulder to shoulder, though if you are 5'6" like my husband perhaps shoulder to ear. Black, brown, women, men, religious or not, I will support you but quid pro quo we must work together. We welcome every and all allies, minority or not, union member or not, everybody is welcome to fight alongside us and they are, including Paul's strong letter to following advice on possible changes to the Equality Act and, Paul, thank you for your support. As we heard in the last motion which I was going to speak on, I support in full and thank you for your support; young people are particularly affected.

I remember as I came to realise who I was in the 1970s how that felt. There was not much support. It was section 28 and different times but the same hurts and the same harms are happening now, and we know that politicians on both sides are campaigning to carry on or intensify those hurts. When we are hurt, you are hurt. When our rights are challenged, your rights are challenged or at least next in line.

Congress, the wonderful independent English legal system has recently ruled that despite guidelines of 18 weeks from first referral to consultation, over four years is fine for trans people and that is increasing. Think about that. You go to your doctor to present with a problem, you need help but you know as soon as you go into that surgery it is going to take over four years to get some treatment. Is it any wonder that people with dysphoria have mental health problems and need support.

*Pink News*, possibly not the most independent of outlets, reports that, and I quote: “Coverage of trans people has risen dramatically with an average of 154 articles about the trans community now published every single month since 2015.” That is over 13,000 articles focused on less than 1% of Britain’s population. This may well be a welcome change if the coverage was positive and inclusive, but analysis of the actual articles, as you have probably guessed, shows it is not. Frankly, no shit, Sherlock.

Imagine if that had been a focus on a different minority and I do not want to push that across to anyone but some mainstream religions are around 0.5 to 1.7% of UK population according to the latest census so that could be 36 stories a day about a minority religious background. Or imagine the same level of coverage for the 17% of people in England who have identified as disabled, 17 times 13,000, if you do your maths quickly, is 221,000 or over 600 a day if it were in proportion, but 90% negative, is that right? It is not.

The great British public’s majority is in favour of trans rights but that support is fading. Congress, we in the unions have consistently been a beacon of support to trans and non-binary young people and workers. Our film regarding Liam’s name badge won awards. Our support for trans equality and trans rights has been unwavering. The message must be taken to the political community on all sides in an election fought on equal rights, not a culture war, rights to healthcare, housing, equal pay, transmasculine, transgender, or non-binary, rights following on from that to equal pensions, a hurt to workers through their lifetime is reflected in their pension rights, basic human rights. Black, women, disabled, religious, or LGBTQIA+ we in the TUC fight for equality for all. Congress, support this motion. I move. (*Applause*)

**The President:** GMB.

**Dean Ismay** (*GMB*): Supporting Motion 40 on behalf of my union and LGBT+ Workers Conference. My pronouns are he, him. Trans and non-binary workers are under attack. They need our support. We must reject the bogus culture war which is harming LGBT+ communities and our trans and non-binary siblings most of all. Freedom of speech is not freedom of consequences. This so-called culture war is being led by government that has no answers and no moral compass. This is demonstrated by the unprecedented move to block the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill which was passed by the Scottish parliament with overwhelming majority.

Trans and non-binary people deserve dignity and respect. They are under attack from the Government and large parts of the media but they can never forget our solidarity from the trade union movement. Trans and non-binary people currently face huge barriers as they try to live their lives freely and fully. Whether this is to act as gender reaffirming healthcare their waiting lists can be many years long or in the process of gaining a gender recognition certificate. There is still no legal process of recognition for non-binary people on passports and other government documents. This simple act of oversight erases our non-binary siblings. It is dehumanising, colleagues. We need our labour movement to stand up for working people's rights and this includes LGBT+ rights. I am proud that my union GMB created a trans inclusion toolkit to help workplaces be more inclusive to trans and non-binary workers and we need to use our TC networks to roll this out into more unions. There are too many parts of

society that are hostile to trans and non-binary people but we can make sure more workplaces make clear that trans and non-binary people are welcome here. Congress, an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us. I stand with my trans and non-binary siblings as always. Support the motion. Solidarity. *(Applause)*

**The President:** NASUWT.

**Michelle Codrington-Rogers** (NASUWT): Proudly supporting this motion. My pronouns are she, her. I am a proud member of the LGBTI community, a proud LGBTI mum, and a proud LGBTI auntie. *(Applause)* I am a loud mouthed queer black woman and I do want to thank AEP and AUE for the last motion. I also want to thank my sister Julia for introducing this motion so well. Passports for toilets for trans people. Trans history month to be imposed on a US state from next year. Do not require schools to tell parents their child is trans or non-binary. Give parents the right to see the context of sex education lessons in schools. Do not issue guidance making it unsafe for school students to question their gender identity. As Julia said, these are just a sample of some of the headlines that are out there that impact on the lives of our trans brothers, sisters, and non-binary siblings. Before the end of term last year our wonderful LGBTI friendly advocating government with due guidance that they had for schools in relation to how to support trans and non-binary students, as always the education sector is still waiting for that guidance, but when there is no guidance there creates a vacuum and when there is a vacuum there creates fear, there creates schools who no longer have confidence in standing up and supporting their children and young people despite the Equality Act, the Human Rights Act, and the convention on the rights of the child all clearly protecting the rights of our children.

When schools and local authorities do introduce policies they face court challenges and they face embarrassment in the press for trying to do the right thing to protect our children. NASUWT has created and supports our trans members network. It informs our policy and it helps us to understand what information our members need to know when they are in school and they are often in the front line in front of our children and young people who just want space to be themselves. It is crucial that children are able to protect themselves and they know that the schools are there to support them because sometimes that threat comes from their own families.

Apologies for a slight trigger moment. When Heartstopper came out children like my daughter and her rainbow of friends celebrated the fact that their world was so beautifully represented on the screen. For those of us who are older members of the LGBT community it created pain and hurt because that was the way that education in schools should have been for us. It is no longer good enough to say, “It gets better”, but what we do need to say to our trans and non-binary children is, “We are here to protect you and we are here to protect you now.” There is no LGB without the “T”. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

**Fran Heathcote (PCS):** PCS supports the motion. We think it is a good motion which sets out positive action for supporting our trans and non-binary members. The Government’s blocking of a Scottish Parliament Gender Recognition Reform Bill was outrageous and it has to be said that Keir Starmer’s instructions to Labour MPs to abstain on the Tory government’s use of the Scotland Act allowed it to pass. Reform of gender recognition processes is essential to move barriers for our trans and non-binary comrades. The current restrictions on acquiring legal recognition cause

unnecessary harm and suffering to trans and non-binary people, emotionally, physically, and financially, and removing all of these barriers must be a priority. The lengthy and invasive process of acquiring medical evidence to support a change of legal identity must be streamlined and simplified and non-binary people must be given legal recognition. The Tories present their actions to voters as prioritising women's rights. The idea that Tories are defenders of women's interests would be laughable if it was not so shameful. 86% of the impact of the UK government's austerity policy since 2010 have fallen on women, from the scandal of poverty pay in female dominated sectors such as nursing, and social care, to the drastic cuts in vital local services. British women at work endure the highest childcare costs in Europe while our pensions are amongst the lowest. It is true that sex and gender have become contentious issues but we must not let Tory politicians provoke more angry online discourse. We must not allow them to prevent constructive conversations about trans rights.

At last year's Congress I came up here and argued that to resolve tensions amongst our members and activists it is essential that there is discussion and debate. Women members of PCS are raising legitimate concerns over some issues; others are raising concerns from an opposite often polarised position. The discussion of ideas allowing people to explore their concerns and find ways of uniting is a vital part of building wider support for trans rights.

I am pleased to report that this year in PCS we are building unity and discussion making people feel safe to express themselves. The next stage in our work will be to discuss and consult on the civil service gender identity policy and any changes to the

Equality Act so that we can build unity in our rights on a campaign against the Tories' exploitation of these issues. They are the real enemy. PCS supports this motion. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

**The President:** UCU.

**Tilly Fitzmaurice** (UCU). Hello, Congress. Pronouns, she, her. First-time delegate. First-time speaker. (*Applause*) As a member of the UCU LGBT+ Members Standing Committee, I am really pleased to speak in support of this motion on behalf of UCU. I have a simple message to put across so I will keep this brief: according to UCU's own research trans and non-binary staff are more likely than cisgender staff, whether men or women, to directly experience sexual violence. The number of reported hate crimes in the UK against trans people rose by 56% in the year to March 2022. These numbers are shocking but, friends, as trade unions this is not a problem that we can just sit back and let other people deal with.

I am really proud that UCU has played a leading role in affirming the movement's support for trans rights and for robustly defending any members who receive criticism on social media or in the press for doing so. We must keep challenging attacks on our trans siblings. We all know that unions are the only organisations that workers have on our side. This means that it is unacceptable if even one trans or non-binary union member cannot rely on their union to have their back. (*Applause*) We have to lead from the front. Please support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** EIS.



**Selma Augestad** (*Educational Institute of Scotland, National Equality Officer*): First-time delegate, supporting Motion 40. (*Applause*) Congress, we believe that young people have a right to learn and teachers and lecturers have a right to work in an educational environment that is free from discrimination, where you can be your whole self and where the rights and dignity of all are equally upheld, whether you are a boy, a girl, or non-binary person, migrant or born here, whether you are white or a person of colour, and whether you are transgender or not, equality has no exceptions.

Friends, what we are seeing today is toxic misinformation peddled by the far right and sensationalist media attempting to scapegoat, minorities, and marginalise people, to distract us, a tactic as old as time. We will not fall for it, not now, nor ever. (*Applause*) When the Gender Recognition Act was first introduced in 2004 objections were on religious grounds but today the rhetoric reminds us of the shameful language used at the time of section 28. This same rhetoric was familiar to international trade union colleagues that I met during Sidney World Pride conferences, including those in the US, “Don’t say gay,” states. As highlighted by the UN independent expert on protection against violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, LGBT rights are under attack across the globe but all eyes are on Scotland and the UK as a reminder that our hard won fights can again be lost and we cannot afford to lose: an injury to one is an injury to all. (*Applause*)

Congress, this GRR Bill passed by a majority of 86 to 39 with no abstentions. This Bill is one of the most consulted on piece of legislation in the history of the Scottish Parliament, with the consultation process involving numerous rounds of evidence gathering and nine months of scrutiny. This process found that there will be no

changes nor any new exemptions to the Equality Act 2010 as a result of the Gender Recognition Reforms proposed. What these quite minor reforms to the process would do, however, is to have a major impact on the rights and dignity of trans people.

At the EIS AGM in June this year, delegates overwhelmingly reaffirmed our support for the passing of the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill. It is worth remembering, though, who we are talking about when we talk about gender recognition. We are talking about a very small minority in our society who are often completely invisible in debates about their own rights, their dignity, their wellbeing. *(Applause)* We should be listening to what minoritised and marginalised groups in our society say that they need and to any trans or non-binary siblings who are here today we stand with you, we support you. *(Applause)*

Friends, they seek to divide us, to pit one marginalised group against another, one area of inequality against another, but our strength is solidarity, our power is collectivism, and there are no exceptions. Equality is not a pick and choose agenda. We know that only by standing together can we win equality for all. Please support. *(Applause)*

**The President:** Unison.

**Bev Millar** *(Unison)*: Morning, Congress. All right then, Good Morning, Congress! *(Congress response)*. President, Congress, Unison is proud to support this important motion. As trade unionists we must stand up for all workers and look at ways we can build solidarity with the most marginalised in our society. I do not identify as trans

but I do believe that all people, including those who are trans, are to be treated equally and not subjected to discrimination or abuse. (*Applause*) There is so much prejudice, discrimination, and hostility, experienced by trans people that cannot be justified and that is *never* acceptable.

Raising awareness can help to promote a better and real understanding of what it means to be a trans person in a world that often ignores anyone perceived as “other”. Unison’s trans equality campaign launched in July last year has been a huge success. This campaign focused on how we can organise our trans, non-binary, and gender diverse members. We also included how to promote and support trans allies in the workplace. We have developed a trans allied training package that is being delivered by Unison’s staff and members of our trans, non-binary, and gender diverse network.

This training gives practical tips on how you can be a good trans ally by providing an overview of current legislation and issues trans people face and outline of the material we have available to support members and looks at how to create an inclusive environment in your workplace. The demand for this training has been incredible. We have trained almost 2,000 members. We have now trained around 40 trans, non-binary, and gender diverse members on how to be trainers just to keep up with the demand for this training. This training has been run in all of Unison’s regions and we will include even more branches next year. This will be part of our plans to celebrate Unison’s year of LGBT+ workers. We are very proud of what we have achieved. Our trans ally training has led to a sharp increase in trans activism. We now have over 400 members as part of the trans, non-binary, and gender diverse network. They meet six times a year to progress Unison’s work. We recognise the importance of

ensuring that the voices of trans people are integral to the work that is done to promote trans equality. Educating and promoting trans allies is the best way to support trans and non-binary rights and we look forward to continuing to work with the TUC on this. Congress, support the motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Congress, Motion 40, from the TUC LGBT Conference is before you.

All those in favour? Hands down. Those against? That is carried. Thank you.

*Motion 40 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** I call paragraph 3.3 and Motion 41, Young Workers Say No to Poverty Pay. The General Council supports the motion, to be moved by Unison on behalf of the Young Workers Conference, and seconded by GMB.

**41 Young workers say no to poverty pay!**

Young workers are some of the lowest paid in the workforce. Often in casual, junior or apprenticeship positions, they are on the sharp edge of the cost-of-living crisis. The TUC notes that annual pay growth in the UK has been -0.2 per cent since 2007, and it is one of just 7 out of 33 OECD countries where real pay growth since 2007 is negative.

The TUC attributes this to austerity politics and hard trade union laws, impacting the ability of workers to organise.

The last year has seen a wave of strike action across the trade union movement aimed at safeguarding and improving pay, terms, and conditions for workers. UNISON's young members have taken part in strike action in the higher education sector and the ambulance service.

Congress believes that young workers should not have to shoulder the burden for economic policies that benefit corporations rather than workers; and that strong unions are the best way to safeguard pay levels for all workers including young workers.

Congress asks the TUC Young Workers Forum to:

- i. promote the importance of union membership to young workers to improve pay
- ii. share examples of young workers taking part in strike action and organising for better pay
- iii. consider producing a guide to industrial action for young workers who may not have taken part in industrial action previously

iv. work with the TUC General Council to campaign against discriminatory minimum wage rates for young workers.

### **TUC Young Workers Conference**

**Ruben Brett** (*Unison*): Moving Motion 41, Young Workers say No to Poverty Pay, on behalf of the TUC Young Workers' Forum. First-time delegate. First-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, we are in a cost-of-living crisis or rather a cost-of-profiteering crisis which affects us all as workers. Everyone has seen rising energy costs, rising housing costs, rising food costs, and 13 years of disastrous mismanagement of the economy by the Tories has left us dealing with stagnant pay, underfunded public services, which are quite literally crumbling in many cases as some other delegates have pointed out, and a government which lurches from crisis to crisis without a plan to improve anything for working people. Young workers, along with other workers, have been at the sharp end of this.

There are now 1.2 million people on zero hour contracts in the UK and nearly half of those, that is 474,000, are aged 16-24. Young people are more likely to rent in the private sector while rents have risen steadily since 2019 to record levels across the UK. House prices have risen beyond the reach of almost all workers, even more so for young workers, meaning young people cannot afford to get out of the insecure private rental sector. Young workers are still discriminated against in the minimum wage regulations which allow employers to pay a 20-year old just 71% of the rate that their colleague who is over 23 gets, even if they are doing exactly the same job.

It is no wonder, then, that 18-24 year olds are one of the groups most starkly affected by the current crisis and that impact is severe. For example, in mental health last year

Unison surveyed our young members about their mental health and that revealed a shocking statistic, 80% of young members told us that they had experienced mental health problems within the last year. Of course, many factors can affect mental health but the economic crisis is a key one. The stress of low pay, precarious work, and insecure living arrangements takes a toll. Moneen as a member reported, “A lot of my stress and anxiety was related indirectly to work, the cost of living, and being unable to afford it was the main stress,” and another reported, “Living pay cheque to pay cheque takes its mental toll on top of the inevitable burnout of being overworked.”

Young workers are fighting back. We have had enough of putting our lives on hold, unable to afford secure housing, unable to start families securely, unable to plan for the future, we have had enough of watching the Government hand tax breaks to the rich whilst school staff and NHS workers are forced to rely on food banks. We have been at the forefront of industrial action to secure better wages. Young Unison members were on the picket lines when ambulance workers took strike action in the NHS. Myself, and many others, have been on the picket lines with our colleagues in universities calling for a fair pay settlement, but there is much more work to do.

We know that young workers are under-represented in our movement and that means we need to focus on building our strength with the next generation of young workers. We have to make sure we are relevant to young workers and that we take young workers’ problems seriously, that means young workers need to be visible in trade unions, that means trade unions need to be campaigning on things that are important to young workers, that means we need to be reaching out to young workers and

actively encouraging them to become trade unionists, to become organisers and leaders in our movement. Only then can we secure a sustainable future for the trade union movement, and make sure that young workers have the pay and conditions they need to survive and to thrive. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

**The President:** GMB to second.

**Charlie Gray (GMB):** Supporting Motion 41 on behalf of TUC Young Workers Conference. Congress, our motion is informed by the reality of so many young workers and at our conference earlier this year pay was at the top of our list of issues in the workplace. Office for National Statistics stated and confirmed our industrial knowledge that the lowest earning employees in the UK tend to be younger workers. In the industries that are the lowest pay are the industries we know young workers are more likely to work in, hospitality, social care, and retail.

Congress, age banding in the minimum wage is one of the starkest examples of how inequality faces workers with pay. Under 21s in our country are currently missing out on £2.5bn due to age banding. That works out as an average of £2,800 lost in wages for every worker under 21 being paid less than the full minimum wage. It may be legal, Congress, but it certainly is not moral and I will call it what it is, friends, it is theft, plain and simple, money taken out of the pockets of young workers, that is money siphoned out of working communities across the country. This endemic low pay is ruining many lives. Under the last Labour government a million children were brought out of poverty. We have to ask ourselves, Congress, how many of them due

to stagnant wages have this Tory government plunged adults and teenagers straight back into the poverty they were lifted out of as kids.

Congress, it is important that we recognise and applaud wherever young workers are organising and winning. This year young members in GMB working in the Apple retail store in Glasgow won union recognition in their workplace making history as the first ever unionised Apple store in the UK. *(Applause)* GMB's Apple Glasgow members organised around pay and building workers collective confidence in a sector that the Tories rely on keeping both of these low. They did so by utilising digital platforms to share resources information. Their collective agreement was hard won but was just the start of their work. This month members voted to reject Apple's pay model and have instead won improved pay for the majority of staff.

Our young members at Apple Glasgow told our union's congress young workers in the private sector are ready and willing to organise but far too often lack the knowledge of how to organise. As young workers we demand fair pay, good work, and strong unions, strong ambitious unions that organise on issues that affect young workers. President, I second the motion. *(Applause)*

**The President:** Motion 41 from the Young Workers Conference is before you, Congress. All those in favour? Hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 41 was CARRIED*



**The President:** We are running slightly ahead of schedule this morning so I will now take Motion 28 on Corporate Profiteering, to be moved by the Bakers' Union and seconded by POA.

**28: Regulation of Corporate Profiteering**

Congress notes with concern reports in *The Sunday Times* on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2023 suggesting that at a time of acute cost-of-living crisis for households with food inflation running at over 14%, UK supermarkets are set to announce higher than anticipated profits.

Further notes that Tesco alone is set to forecast increased operating profits of nearly £2.5bn, significantly above its five-yearly average.

Shares the reported fears of industry insiders that the supermarket giants are benefitting from so-called 'rocket and feather' pricing, where prices rise sharply in response to an inflationary spike, only to remain persistently higher than necessary as the rate of inflation falls.

Is scandalised that corporate shareholders should be making excessive profits and more and more households are forced to use foodbanks.

Remains concerned that, despite these rocketing profits, the big retailers in the food and drink sector continue to place undue commercial pressures on their suppliers, leading to a further squeeze on the terms and conditions of workers across the food sector, and more suppliers closing sites or going into administration.

Notes that food workers, like other low-paid groups in society, are disproportionately impacted by the relentless increase in grocery prices.

Congress, therefore, agrees to join the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers union in calling for urgent regulatory action to tackle the plague of excessive corporate profiteering by the UK supermarkets and urges the government to introduce a statutory 'right to food' for everyone in our country.

**Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union**

**Sarah Woolley** (*Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union, General Secretary*):

Apologies for the delay. I did not think we were going to get to this after the last motion. Congress, at a time when our members, food workers, key workers, were telling us how they were embarrassed, they no longer ask for friends to come over as they sit in blankets, supermarkets were announcing record profits putting more cash into the pockets of shareholders and wealthy directors and CEOs while our members were and still are being forced further into poverty and telling us that they are cold and poor, quite isolated, and that their home has become a bit like a prison.

Our members, as well as other low pay groups in society, are disproportionately impacted by the relentless increase in grocery prices, they are being crippled by increases to energy prices, on top of wages, terms and conditions, all being squeezed because their employers are saying there is not enough money for more. We are calling for a statutory right to food for everyone in our country. The quotes I have given from our most recent survey, which was published earlier this year, Food Workers on the Breadline, that Nick, our delegate, spoke about during a motion earlier in this week so for time I will not cover again.

I am sure you will agree that the experiences of our members is in stark contrast to the successes that supermarkets are celebrating and it should be noted that we appreciate this is not being filtered down proportionately to the shop floor workers. Through our work with the food and work network that we created on the back of our initial report to look critically at the food industry, how we raise awareness about the importance of decent, nutritious, affordable food, how we organise around it, and how we cap this profiteering.

We know that the situation spans far further than the food industry because after 13 years of austerity and cuts the majority of our class is struggling to survive. Excessive corporate profiteering by UK supermarkets, their power to put pressure on the supply chains, squeezing and eroding terms and conditions of workers, or just imply closing down sites, has to stop. We need a statutory right to food for everyone because nobody should be going hungry, parents should not be going to work without meals so their children can eat and then having to go and do a 12-hour shift on an empty

belly, and nobody should be in a position where, and I quote, “We have blankets on all our chairs to avoid using heating. We have gotten out of bed with hot water bottles in the morning. I earn more now than I have ever earned and I still struggle to cover the bills. I’ve even stayed late at work to avoid having to heat the house for longer than I need.” We are in 2023, and this is how workers are living while shareholders are getting richer and richer.

Just a quick plug, there is a week of action from 18th to 23<sup>rd</sup> September, it is *A Right to Food Week*, please look out for the information, I know there have been some flyers outside the Congress hall and I hope to see plenty of you there; there are lots of unions in the hall that are supporting Ian Byrne’s *Right to Food Campaign*. Please support the motion. Solidarity. (*Applause*)

**The President:** POA.

**Joe Simpson** (*POA*): President, Congress, Steve Gillen has asked me to come down and speak on this because he is still a bit nervous after yesterday. Congress, it is an absolute disgrace that the people who work in supermarkets cannot even afford the food that they sell. It is an absolute disgrace. It is also an absolute disgrace that bairns are going to school on empty bellies. It is also an absolute disgrace that parents are going without food so they can feed their bairns. This has got to stop. The obscene profits that we are seeing from some of the top UK supermarkets is just absolute pure greed. (*Applause*)

Congress, at our annual conference we passed the motion for right to food to support our members in the workplace but also in solidarity with our colleagues in the Bakers' Union. When you are talking about right of food and this is where some of these cloth heads who are in government do not understand, we are not asking for free food, what we are asking for is a good job with a living wage so we can afford to eat good decent food. That is what we are asking for. For all these people who turn around and say, "Well, I can cook a good nutritious meal for 30 pence," shut up! Congress, please support the motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, delegate. Now, Motion 28 is in front of you, Congress. All those in favour? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 28 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Congress, I had hoped to take Composite 10 this morning but we are on the edge of time now and we will be running over if I took it, so we are going to have to fit that in later on with a couple of other motions that we still have to fit in. Bear with us on that one. We will get back to you.

This concludes this morning's business. Can I remind delegates there are various fringe meetings happening, if you look in your Congress Guide, on page 33, check the listings on the website, and again to remind people the hall will be closed between now and 1.45, so make sure you take everything you need with you and you will not be able to get back in until 2 o'clock. Please be back promptly for this afternoon's session; there is lots to do. Congress is now adjourned until 2.15. Thanks.

*Congress adjourned for lunch.*

*Congress reassembled at 2.15 p.m.*

**The President:** I call Congress to order. Could you take your seats, delegates, please.

Many thanks again to Esme Bridie who has been playing for us again this afternoon.

Thank you, Esme. (*Applause*)

Congress, you will be aware of the issues in Birmingham City Council and the potential bankruptcy of Europe's largest local authority. Just to let people know, we have contacts there and there will be a rally at 5 p.m. tonight in Birmingham, organised by Unison, Unite, and GMB, and they are highlighting Standing Up for Public Services. Do pass that on. If you do need any more information about where the rally is, and all other details, for further information can you contact the unions directly.

Congress, we have a bit of good news to share. This morning we have heard that Community members at Glen Dimplex in Prescott have won an improved pay offer after five-and-a-half weeks of industrial action. (*Applause*) They were originally offered just £10.61 an hour, but 170 members have secured pay above the living wage and lump sum payments between £1,100 and £1,800, and, Congress, can we give Mark Thomas and Gavin Miller from Community, sat here in the front row, a round of applause, please. (*Applause*)

Thank you, Congress, for your cooperation this morning and I am hoping this afternoon we will be able to catch up further on some of the business lost yesterday. I will let Congress know where we are fitting things in when we are able to.

Without further ado, we return to Section 4 of the General Council Report, Winning a Better Future for Working People, from page 46, I call paragraph 4.8, and a very important debate for the future, Composite 13, Artificial Intelligence in the Workplace. The General Council support the Composite Motion to be moved by CWU, seconded by the Musicians' Union.

### **C13 Artificial intelligence in the workplace**

#### **Motion 42 and amendment, 43, 44 and amendment and 45 and amendment**

This Congress notes the accelerated pace of developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and the range of issues this creates for workers and wider society and welcomes the work to date by the TUC.

Surveillance technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) are being rapidly expanded and used to exacerbate workplace inequalities, create pressure on staff and in some cases, create an unsafe work environment. Congress believes that if these technologies continue to be introduced in our workplaces without consultation and agreement, they will result in a degradation of pay, terms and conditions and infringe on our basic human rights.

We know that Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications can be very powerful tools in assisting human endeavour. However, they also have the potential to limit the future careers, income and work opportunities of composers, featured artists, session and orchestral musicians, as well as those of other creator and performer groups. This applies not just where it is by intentional design but equally as dangerously through the unconscious bias of developers.

Search-AI and generative-AI applications could undermine the entire music sector and our culture more widely, so it is crucial that the potential impacts are explored and relevant stakeholders consulted before any legislative or licensing solutions are put into law. We know from experience that legislation (including copyright law) does not always keep up with technological change. Global corporations may benefit while individual creators, whose works are exploited, see their rights and income diminish.

Congress notes with concern the proliferation and widespread deployment of generative AI, allowing systems to generate text, images and other media, similar to the training data originally inputted.

This poses clear and immediate issues – including breaches of copyright, threats to jobs and freelance work and the undermining of original content from diverse creators. It risks malign fake news environments creating serious ethical concerns and

resulting in the continued decline of public trust in the media. Scraping uncurated content off the internet also serves to embed and reinforce biases.

These issues are vital to all workers, and particular to those in the wider creative industries, risking individual livelihoods and the erosion of a vibrant creative sector in the UK.

The UK finance sector is a key part of the economy. It provides over 1.1 million workers with relatively good quality jobs. The recent advances in Artificial Intelligence poses a threat to many traditional roles in our sector and to workers across the economy. According to McKinsey up to 375 million jobs worldwide will be replaced by automation by 2030 and it's clear that white collar and administration roles in our sector will be amongst the hardest hit.

Many financial services providers are already using AI to detect fraud and make trading decisions. The predictions around job displacement are frightening, with call centre and customer service roles estimated to drop by 75 per cent as a direct result of AI.

Congress notes that AI brings opportunities as well as threats. AI has the capacity to affect humanity profoundly, for good as well as ill, yet its development is driven by private corporations whose work is subject to minimal public oversight.

Congress believes there is also a growing problem in the lack of knowledge and policy surrounding the development of technologies like AI and that the labour movement must improve our resources if we are to confront the inappropriate use of these technologies in the workplace.

Congress believes that the gap in workers' rights in regards to technology must be addressed and an iron-clad legal right to consultation must be introduced.

Congress acknowledges the excellent work the TUC has already done on AI in the workplace. However, the unprecedented pace in which AI is advancing means that more work is required to prepare organisations and workers for the impact.

Congress resolves to:

- i. work with the Labour Party and the government to ensure that the legal right to consult trade unions on the introduction of new technologies is enshrined in law
- ii. lobby to ensure that:
  - any licensing solutions developed to permit the use of human-created musical works to train AI must afford the original human creators, not just the current rights holders, the right to decide whether their creations can be used or not
  - the original human creators receive a fully fair share in any remuneration should they agree to such use
  - any such rights should be unwaivable and remain with the creators.
- iii. lobby for AI regulation nationally and internationally, including an urgent UK Royal Commission
- iv. put pressure on the government to:
  - address the lack of state regulation
  - provide funding to support the reskilling and retraining of workers at risk of being replaced by AI, and to support workers in benefitting from changes to their roles and work-focus through the introduction of this technology
  - ensure employers introduce safeguarding policies to support employees in the new AI driven workplace
- v. campaign for:

- significant and long-term investment in skills and retraining, including a fundamental overhaul of the Apprenticeship Levy and recognition of the vital role of trade unions and union learning reps in encouraging workers to take up training opportunities
- ethical usage of AI, with consent and appropriate remuneration of creators for their content
- information and labelling to be attached/attributed to all “products” and all creative work that has been “made “or “constructed” by AI
- vi. campaign against the use of AI in workplaces without explicit collective agreement
- vii. deliver safeguards against discrimination
- viii. invest in a major research project which identifies the use of and the risks of technology, including tracking and AI, in workplaces across multiple sectors
- ix. make the TUC campaign against the unscrupulous use of technology in the workplace a key initiative for 2024
- x. develop and widen the work of the TUC’s AI working group.

**Mover: CWU Seconder: Musicians’ Union Supporters: NUJ; Aegis; Usdaw;**

**Community; AUE**

**Karen Wells (CWU):** Congress, there are so many important issues being discussed at this Congress but the unregulated increase in the use of technology and artificial intelligence in our workplaces is one of the most significant threats we have faced currently. Artificial intelligence is everywhere, from Netflix recommendations to human resources management, including the hiring, firing, and surveillance of workers. Our members in CWU are already experiencing the damaging and dehumanising impacts of AI systems, including work intensification, discrimination, and the invasion of privacy.

In Royal Mail delivery workers must now carry digital devices on their rounds, collecting data on their productivity and pace of work. The data from these devices has been used to pit workers against each other and we have seen some of our members being questioned and disciplined by management for stopping to rest or answer a customer’s question. Also in the delivery sector, we have seen Amazon



drivers reporting that they are being forced into dangerous driving to hit unachievable delivery targets set by the company's App. In BT's contact centres our workers have AI powered Apps to guide customer conversations and to meet stringent goals for call handling. BT's Chief Executive also told investors earlier this year that he expects AI to replace 10,000 jobs in the business by the end of this decade; that is 10,000 jobs just in one single employer wiped out by artificial intelligence in just a few years. In the text sector workers are also monitored by surveillance systems, including mouse tracking and screen recording to scrutinise every detail of their behaviour and performance.

Employers across our economy are increasingly reliant on advanced technologies to make managerial decisions with devastating results, where data is incorrect or biased. When workers are told, "The computer says No," they do not have any clue where to appeal, there is no automatic right to human review, and we welcome the TUC's call to change this.

Earlier this year, Just Eat couriers were instantly deactivated from the company's app for minor infractions, no evidence of a human review of the decision. Ubah drivers lost their jobs when the company's automated face-scanning software could not accurately recognise people with darker skin, and Teleperformance came under fire for fitting an AI based webcam scanning system into workers' homes.

Trade unions have been held back by the government's refusal to bring in much needed regulations and we must now urgently pursue legislation against the unregulated use of AI in the workplace, prioritising workers' rights, wellbeing, and

job security. This includes establishing guidelines to ensure humans are an integral part of the decision-making processes. Protecting workers from exploitative practices, promoting transparency and accountability in AI systems and ensuring retraining and redeployment opportunities are in place.

It was great earlier this month to see the launch of the TUC's AI Task Force which brings together unions along with leading experts, lawyers, and politicians to draft and promote new legislation to safeguard workers' rights and ensure AI benefits all. The importance of this work cannot be underestimated. That is why we are calling on Congress to agree to invest in a major research project which identified the use and risks of new technology, including tracking and AI in places across multiple sectors. We also want the TUC to campaign against unscrupulous use of technology in the workplace to be a key initiative for 2024.

Most importantly, the TUC and trade unions need to be working with the Labour Party and the Government to ensure that an iron-clad legal right to consult trade unions on the introduction of new technologies in the workplace is enshrined in law. That needs to be part of the New Deal for Workers. Congress, we are not opposed to the use of new innovative technology, we know it can make life better for us all but we want trade unions and workers to be at the heart of how we approach the rapidly changing world of work. Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, Karen, and while the Musicians' Union are coming up to second, can NUJ, Aegis, Usdaw, Community, and AUE come to the front supporting

this composite and I will call another couple of people in the debate if we have time.  
MU.

**Robert Scott** (*Musicians' Union*): Rock and roll is here to stay. Somebody made that observation about 70 years ago and I make the same prediction about artificial intelligence. Why do I say that, because you cannot uninvent new technology and new technology like this will move forward very rapidly and, of course, it will bring huge benefits to a lot of people. However, it has a big downside. It has been launched without really a very full understanding of what it can do and there is virtually no legislation around it.

The first question is, what actually is it? It is a piece of software that can generate new content such as text, images, audio, and of course music, and it does that using something called an algorithmic computer programme and these things learn patterns to generate new patterns, or to put it another way it uses existing music to create new music. An example may be that you take somebody like Mozart, Frank Sinatra, David Bowie, Jimi Hendrix, and you put their material into it and it will produce new songs for you and that is called training the AI programme to generate new music using existing work. The problem there is what I have just described, it is all under copyright and the owners of that copyright have not been asked.

Now, the Government has proposed an exception to existing copyright law that allows AI corporations to use all British recorded music to train the software. This may sound familiar. Do you remember *Buccaneering Britain* with its offshore economy attracting new investment by a low taxation deregulated economy? Well, here we go.

We have a new circus but the same old clowns. So, here we go, no permission needed and no payment to the musicians. Existing material could be used for non-commercial purposes or to create new records for sale but the problem is all over the world the legislation is not clear on this.

What we are asking from you today is copyright protection for existing work used to train AI programmes, rights of human creators to refuse to let their work be used for AI, and to be paid for it if it is, AI generated work to be clearly labelled as such so there is no confusion with the public, and record keeping to protect existing work. Please support us and we will support you when it is your turn. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** Thank you, delegate. I have Aegis, and then NUJ, Usdaw, Community, and AUE.

**Fiona Steele** (*Aegis the Union*): Supporting Composite 13. This composite covers a variety of challenges in a range of sectors that the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence poses to us all. As a trade union representing workers in the financial services sector, we recognise that AI has the potential significantly to reshape our industry impacting both employers and employees. We are committed to ensuring that our members are well informed and adequately prepared for the challenges and opportunities presented by AI.

AI has already started to revolutionise various aspects of the jobs in our sectors, this includes decision-making and risk assessment, customer service, fraud detection,

investment management, and detail analytics. While these advancements offer a great potential for increased efficiency, they also present a range of challenges that must be addressed to safeguard the interests of workers and consumers alike.

As the composite states, the predictions around job displacement are frightening with an estimated 75% of customer service roles being lost as a direct result of AI. Whilst as unions we strongly advocate the proactive measures to protect jobs and ensure that employees are equipped with the necessary skills to adapt to the evolving nature of the roles, we have still to see firm action plans from the Government and employers to tackle the transition. We urgently need to see both parties investing in retraining and upskilling programmes to ensure that everyone benefits from AI and that it improves inequality in the workplace rather than exacerbates it. Too many employers see it as a cost-cutting tool rather than an opportunity for workers to develop themselves to new and hopefully more fulfilling roles.

We are also working with employers to emphasise the importance of ethical AI so that the technology is developed and employed in an ethical manner within the financial sector. This includes addressing concerns around bias, transparency, and accountability, and algorithms in decision-making processes to safeguard against discriminatory practices and to protect the rights and privacy of workers. It requires strong government frameworks to oversee the implementation of AI, frameworks which prioritise workers' rights which need to be developed collaboratively with employers, industry bodies, and policy makers.

We welcome the launch of the TUC Task Force on AI and we need a fair transition to these new technologies so that workers share the rewards and benefits of the opportunity it brings. Congress, please support this composite. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** Calling the National Union of Journalists.

**Steve Bird** (*National Union of Journalists*): Speaking in support of Composite 13.

Congress, President, the exceptionally rapid development of AI is a tidal wave coming towards us, there is no doubt about that, it is going to affect everybody in this room, and obviously far beyond. We are already starting to see the effects of that, even the likes of Bill Gates have compared it to the invention of the PC, the Internet, the mobile phone, and the microprocessor. That is the scale we are talking about. We need to remind ourselves, however, that the people driving this are those with exceptionally deep pockets. They are the Googles, the Amazons, the Microsofts. Occasionally there are rogue states developing spyware.

The dangers of this are already being articulated not just by the likes of us but actually by some of the AI pioneers themselves. The development is far outstripping the supervision of it, the scrutiny of it, the legislation, and this is something obviously at the heart of our motion. The race is on. They want to make as much money out of this as possible and at the moment there are very few controls. In the UK we know this Government is not a big fan of any kind of legislation and they are already planning to dump human rights laws, they are not fans of health and safety legislation.

and the few rules that we have are important in our fight to defend our rights as employees in the face of what is likely to happen.

What are the dangers? What we are talking about is at the heart of everything is data. When we say data it sounds a bit dry but this is everything we do, our words, our music, we have already heard from the Musicians' Union and from Equity about this, but also every single thing that is produced is data that is going to be fed back to us via algorithms; whether we pay for it or not again is open to question. That is one of the dangers.

How will we know in this new world what is fake and what is real? We need to have indicators, we need to have legislation, there is a world coming in which a newsreader could be physically duplicated, their voice could be duplicated as well as the content. We need to have safeguards around that. We need to have safeguards around the bias that is built into the algorithms, things that we do not know, they are in the black boxes that are going to be rolled out and employers are going to be using. We need to have safeguards to make sure that because the software is seeing white faces it just does not give us white faces, and when recruitment software is rolled out it does not just pick able bodied recruits because it does not know any better. That is one of the dangers of the bias of the system.

It is not just a social problem, it could also intensify our workload. We have already heard about the case of the robo firing, six taxi drivers fired by a machine, no humans were involved in that, it took them two years to go to court and fight; they won this

year after a two-year fight to prove that they had not committed fraud. The company refused to give access to the data. This is the prospect of management by machine.

**The President:** If you could wind up, please.

**Steve Bird** (*National Union of Journalists*): I really appreciate all your time and please do vote for the motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** The next speaker is from Usdaw.

**Jane Jones** (*Udaw*): Supporting the composite on artificial intelligence in the workplace. This composite raises a number of critical issues for our union members. The combination of the rapid development in artificial intelligence as well as increasing use of automated decision-making processes by employers are fundamentally changing the world of work as we know it. However, in light of the ever growing use of these technologies the protections offered to workers are increasingly being left behind. To truly say safeguard our members from the risks of the tech revolution we need to deliver a proper legal framework, a legal framework that focuses on the protection of workers' rights, that gives workers a voice when new technology is being introduced, and deliver specific provisions on equality issues, providing real safeguards against discrimination.

Whilst the world of modern technology generates AI and automated decision-making processes may seem complex, we should not forget the simple calls of this composite, a call to ensure that unions have the right to protect our members. As part of this we



need a greater focus on skills and development. An estimated nine in ten employees in the UK will need to retrain by 2030. This means that retraining is essential when it comes to preparing for work for the future yet the Government refuses to recognise the urgency of the situation. In 2021, they scrapped the Union Learning Fund in England and despite widespread criticism they have continually failed to address huge flaws in the apprenticeship levy. This approach cannot continue. We need urgent fundamental reform of the apprenticeship levy. We need the reinstatement of the Union Learning Fund across England and we need proper recognition of the vital role that trade unions play, especially Union Learning reps, in supporting workers to retrain and develop new skills. Many of the roles with the lowest training rates are both lower pay and insecure jobs. For technology to benefit working people it must be accessible to all workers which means the Government and employers need to act now before it is too late. Congress, please support the composite. *(Applause)*

**The President:** Community.

**Dwight Miller** *(Community):* First time TUC Congress. *(Applause)* Thank you.

Before I start, you all heard the news about Glen Dimplex and if you did not, well, we would just like to extend our congratulations to them, especially branch secretary, Mark Thomason, and everyone who was involved in those negotiations. *(Applause)*

Congress, one of the biggest events in human history started right here in the UK, and that was the Industrial Revolution. It rapidly transformed almost every part of life in our country and around the world, electricity, aeroplanes, telephones, antibiotics, and much more. It all became mainstream in a single lifetime.

Another revolution is on the way, though. Artificial intelligence, or AI, is already transforming the world of work. It will radically change economic models and the way businesses are organised. In time it will transform every industry from education to healthcare, from finance to logistics, private and public sector services and beyond. Ultimately, this technology will shape how our society functions for generations to come. Change is upon us. We cannot stop the tide but we can build a boat.

We at Community commend the work that the TUC has already undertaken on AI in the workplace but the pace of change is fast and we need to do more. We need to be preparing and equipping our members for the introduction of AI in their workplaces. We need to identify the risks and the opportunities of AI across all sectors of our economy, and we need to advocate for AI usage which enhances people's work and enhances their quality of life.

Congress, our movement also needs to be at the forefront of shaping national policy and positive regulations for AI, ensuring our voices are heard in the corridors of power, that regulations are written which work for us and which do not take our work from us. We do not serve our members by protesting innovation. Our job is to make this change work for our members, to make change work for working people.

Congress, please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Artists' Union England, and while Lorraine is coming up can Equity, Prospect and Unite come down and be ready to speak after Lorraine.

**Lorraine Monk** (*Artists' Union England*): If you Google AI painting boy do you get a list, best AI paintings free, unlock your creativity with the best AI generator, create stunning and unique artwork, and this is my favourite, effortlessly. If effortlessly, why work at something. They show one tool, one tap, instant art – instant art. If only art was instant, yes. AI has been hailed as a technological breakthrough. The global corporations do not care about individuals. Their priority is profit for the shareholders and bonuses for the senior managers, not for them worries about breaches of individual copyright, threats to jobs and freelance work, and the undermining of original content. It will leave creative workers at risk of exploitation with their choice being low wage or unemployment. What price do we put on what is made or produced, what price our human experience making art with everything that makes us human. AI is too little understood and patent-secretive, UK governmental policies surrounding the development of technologies like AI almost invisible. We believe that AI must afford the original human creators, not just the current right holders, the right to decide whether their creations can be used or not. The original human creators must receive a full fair share in any remuneration should they agree to such a use and any such rights should be unwaivable and remain with the creators, and this is our wording, it still stays in the composite, for buyers and audiences we want the information and labelling that must be attached to be attributed to all products and all creative work that has been made or constructed so buyers and audiences know what they are getting. Morris observed in 1884 that art is central and necessary to everyday life, and to our work, a sign of freedom and happiness, nothing should be made by labour which is not worth making but which must be made by labour degrading to the makers, we need to remember that today. We need to act quickly. The race to make

profit while destroying everything we believe in is not stopping. Congress, we need to act. Please support. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Equity.

**David John** (*Equity*): The union for creative workers, supporting Composite 13.

Thank you, President, for giving us this time to contribute. Congress, a year ago Equity tabled a motion, AI and performers' rights and here we are a year later with the composite motion. The threat to our members' rights is already in full swing. We have had many members this year, specifically voice actors, reporting incidents where their voices which are the tools of our trade, have been offered on websites without their permission or without offer of remuneration. It is quite simply theft. Our voices are our voices and we do not give permission for AI companies to exploit them without our consent, without a contract, and without remuneration.

Our motion was passed unanimously. We asked for reform of the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988, which is urgent and is even more urgent now. Ratification of the Beijing Treaty, implementation of the provisions of the EU Copyright Directive, all that would protect our performers' rights, and none of these things have happened. We did talk about the Intellectual Property Office's proposed data mining exemption which would have meant, basically, AI companies could have used any voice or image for commercial use, legally without paying us, without paying the original creative worker a penny. This basically reduces us arts and cultural workers to mere inputs in AI development. We argued strongly against this and successfully, and this

data mining exemption has now been withdrawn so a win there for Equity and everyone else.

There is a lot more to do. We are working very hard at the moment to insert AI protection clauses in the agreements we are currently negotiating with BBC, ITV, and PACT, which is the producers association, incredibly important for us, but the truth is, Congress, it takes a human being to lift our voices by using AI as a tool so what we need urgently is this legal and ethical framework where AI can be used for the good of us all but not to weaken workers' rights. Our work is precarious at the best of times. We in the Musicians are the original gig economy after all, when we need our legal protection quickly of our voices, of our images, and our performances.

Just very quickly I want to shout out to our sister union, SAG-AFTRA and the Writers' Union in the States, across the pond. They are on strike at the moment and we are supporting them in their strike because their issues are our issues. Thank you. (Applause) Their main two issues are lack of residuals from the streaming companies who are making a fortune, and a lack of protection from the unscrupulous use of AI. They are the two main battlegrounds and we send our solidarity and we say victory to SAG-AFTRA. Please support the composite. Thank you. (Applause)

**The President:** Prospect.

**Toby James (Prospect):** He, him. Proud to be supporting this composite. It is time to demand better AI regulations from our government. Automation and artificial intelligence are advancing rapidly and if we do not act now our jobs and our

livelihoods are at risk. We need strong regulations that protect workers, ensure job security, and prevent exploitation by profit hungry corporations. That sounded good, didn't it? That was ChatGPT wrote it. Talk about self-indictment. We ran a survey this year and 58% of workers supported the need for regulation and 45% of workers believed they would not be involved in any decisions to introduce AI in their workplace. Prospect members across all sectors are worried, they are unsure, but actually this is not just about the future. AI is already in our workplaces, it is surveilling us, 22% of workers have had software brought in to monitor them. It is hiring us, it is firing us, it is reading our CVs when we apply for jobs, and it is making decisions. When it is making these decisions AI is informed by the data around it and any biases in this data are replicated, learnt, and drawn upon.

In my work this is an annoyance. I am data scientist, I work in green energy research, and if there is a bias in our data about electric currents or reactor temperature it is just something we need to iron out, but think about biases in recruitment data. Think about a statistic that shows that most engineers are white, a statistic that shows, on average, women earn less than men. These are the realities of our workplaces and we have been working so hard to change them and yet when AI models are determining who to hire, how much to pay them, these are the ideas we are feeding them. You can imagine the outcomes. Congress, this is not how we build the workplaces of the future. Support this composite and demand regulation. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Unite.

**Tom Murphy** (*Unite the Union*): President, Congress, speaking in support of the composite. Congress, workers in the print industry have long memories and we remember the charging horses of the Wapping dispute where millionaires imposed automation by force. New digitalisation and the rapid rise of AI are undoubtedly more subtle than the brutality of that dispute. If left unchecked, the impact on workers' jobs and livelihoods will be no less profound. This debate is not about holding back the tide of progress, it never has been, it is about the terms by which it was introduced and who benefits.

Analysts at McKinsey are already forecasting AI could increase corporate profits by a further \$4.4 trillion. It should be no surprise to us that this is not how workers experience it. Take call centres, AI voice analytics is used, not only to judge if a sale or a service is successful, or the length of the call, but to judge the pitch and tone of a worker's voice at every point of every call, to give workers sentiment ratings. This unheard of level of surveillance is happening from workers' own laptops and devices within their own homes.

Congress, yes, we need regulation and, yes, we need safeguards on individual rights and intellectual property but we must also focus on what only our movement can deliver, protection and fair distribution of the benefits of AI at work. That can be won through new digital collective bargaining agreements. That must mean consultation on the introduction of new technology, it must mean protection from surveillance, and it must mean the fair distribution of productivity gains. Finally, Congress, I will let you in on a secret, well, it ain't that much of a secret because the previous speaker just said it as well, this speech was written using AI on ChatGPT. If AI can automate

Congress delegates then truly nobody is safe! Congress, please support the composite. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Okay, Composite Motion 13 is before you, Congress. All those in favour? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Composite Motion 13 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Right, moving on to Section 2 of the General Council Report on the Economy and Cost-of-Living Crisis, which is from page 18. I call Motion 19, on RPI Save the Rates. The General Council supports the motion to be moved by GMB and to be seconded by Usdaw, and NASUWT will speak as well.

**19 RPI – save the rate**

Congress believes the planned abolition of RPI represents an attack on millions of workers and pensioners' living standards and a permanent deepening of the cost-of-living crisis.

Congress notes that:



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- i. trade unions have always fought for an inflation measure that reflects working people's cost of living as a foundation of collective bargaining
- ii. the government plans to effectively abolish the RPI rate of inflation from 2030
- iii. the Royal Statistical Society has said that alternative CPI/CPIH indices are 'an unsatisfactory measure of inflation as it affects British households.'
- iv. the government's neglect of RPI since 2010 has raised the cost of borrowing, putting further strain on public services.

Congress condemns:

- a. the withdrawal of the RPI link for public sector pay and pensions, which disproportionately lowered the incomes of women, ethnic minority, and disabled workers and pensioners.
- b. the suspension of RPI's routine methodological updates since 2010
- c. the Treasury and the UK Statistics Authority's refusal to hold a full consultation on scrapping RPI.

Congress calls upon the TUC to:

1. establish a priority campaign and working group that brings together interested affiliates and other appropriate organisations through to 2030
2. lobby Labour and the government to preserve an independent RPI, or otherwise create and agree with unions a new rate suitable for collective bargaining
3. create resources that affiliates can use to defend the link
4. hold a conference during the lifetime of the working group to discuss the campaign and the importance of RPI for pay and pensions.

## **GMB**

**Gary Smith** (*GMB, General Secretary*): Moving Motion 19. (*Applause*) Congress has heard a lot over the past few days and our members are at the forefront of the cost-of-living crisis. Our members are under constant attack by a Tory government that is out of time, out of ideas, and utterly out of touch. We have had powerful debates this week and tomorrow we will leave the Congress with a renewed sense of unity and purpose in our fight to Make Work Better. Congress, we must have and I believe we do have responses to the attacks that we face today, but we also must plan for the attacks of tomorrow.

Congress, generations of trade unionists that came before us understood that it is essential that we have the building blocks and the proper infrastructure around our industrial relations processes, and that is why trade unions fought to establish an inflation rate that was suitable for collective bargaining, an inflation rate that was designed to measure working people's true cost of living. The RPI rate grew out of the Attlee government's determination to right the injustices of the pre-War years. It was our unions which shaped the evolution and the credibility of that rate through the TUC.

When RPI was created we were around the table but now we must understand that this essential tool is to be removed under the Tory plans. The Tory government did not even fully consult over their plans to effectively abolish RPI from 2030. Of course, that RPI rate has already been taken away from more than five million public sector workers, that has had a detrimental impact on pensioners and, in particular, women members of other unions. Now the Government changes will leave millions of private sector workers and pensioners out of pocket, too. The reality is that if pay or pensions uprating is switched from RPI to CPI then a decade later those payments will have been devalued by 8%, and whilst the arguments may be technical, let's be very clear, the Tories motivations are political.

The Royal Statistical Society has made it clear that the Tory plans will result in us having unsatisfactory measures of inflation as it affects British households. Congress, we are being threatened with a permanent deepening of the cost-of-living crisis. Congress, this is an utter Tory con, they are trying to make our members poorer and their hypocrisy is breathtaking. Ministers in business do not hesitate to raise our

members' phone charges, their rail fares, or their rent, by RPI but at the same time we are being told that we should hold back on our pay claims. Congress, we must not stand for it. If we are serious about the future of industrial relations then we must have a serious coordinated response to this Tory attack. Congress, it is another Tory attempt to strip away the infrastructure of industrial relations that has been built up by generations of trade unionists. We need to campaign against the Tories and we need to work with Labour, otherwise our unions will reconvene in the years ahead asking themselves why we did not do more.

This is why GMB submitted this motion, this is why we are calling for this campaign under the TUC to save the rate because we must have an inflation rate that is suitable for collective bargaining. This is about fighting for our members' pay and pensions, let's develop that common agenda, let's make the defence of the rate a key part of the new political economy that will deliver growth, investment, and the wages our members deserve. Congress, support the motion, save the rate. Thank you.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** Usdaw to second.

**Dave McCrossen** (*Ushaw*): In support and seconding this motion. Congress, with the ongoing cost-of-living crisis talk of rising prices has never been far from the news and as prices continue to rise it has been trade unions ensuring that wages, pensions, and welfare benefits, have kept up. However, throughout that whole debate, through all the wage negotiations we conducted, through every negotiation that we have attempted to have with this Government, we needed an effective measure of how

price rises are rising and, more importantly, how those increases have an impact on our members and their households. Unfortunately, over the past 13 years the Tories have taken us further and further away from a measure that truly reflects the impact of price rises on households. Instead, they have become increasingly and indefensibly reliant on measures of inflation which gauge the general performance of the economy. The Consumer Price Index measure, which the Government now favours, was designed originally to compare one international economy to another and while it can do that with some degree of accuracy it does not reflect or offer a full picture of how much our members' wages need to increase in order to protect their living standards.

CPI and CPIH are flawed measures for our members. They consistently underestimate the level of inflation and are not truly representative of people's lives. For example, the CPI and CPIH measures include the spending of the top 4% of earners and the spending of those people holidaying from abroad in the UK. As a result, the CPI measures over-represent changes to the price of luxury goods, such as yacht maintenance costs, or stockbroker fees; the kind of things our members have to do every day! Importantly and deliberately, I think, they underestimate the real impact of price increases on essentials such as food, and rent.

Congress, all of these issues why we need to protect and defend the RPI against this Government's continued attacks. Please support this important motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** NASUWT.

**John McGill** (*NASUWT, The Teachers Union*): Congress, we are currently living through a cost-of-living crisis, and the rate of inflation has featured prominently in the news since 2021. Significant increase in prices for food and energy, in particular, have pushed many UK households into poverty and the use of food banks as mentioned here today and on many occasions in the past couple of days. Despite suffering the financial, suffering for most workers the Conservative government has said inflation busting pay rises are unaffordable but the war in Ukraine has put further pressure on an already increasing scale of costs and has reduced the amount of grain available.

In January 2023, annual inflation saw food prices increase by 16.4%, gas prices by 132.9%, and electricity prices by 66.7% compared to 12 months previous. It is these supply pressures that are pushing up inflation, not increase in workers' pay. The pay cut in 2021 for public sector workers followed in 2022 by the largest real terms pay cut was totally unjustified and is causing serious amounts of hardship for many. The Government has taken credit for awarding 6.5% for teachers in 2023 and around 5% to 6% for many of the public sector workers. This does not meet the current CPI rate of 6.8%, nor does it match the latest RPI published inflation figure for July, which was 9%.

Many public sector workers have endured significant real terms pay cuts since 2010. Many teachers, for example, have endured a 25% real terms pay cut in comparison to an RPI inflation matching pay rise. Claims that public sector pay is significant and will drive up inflation have been roundly rejected by many economists across the political spectrum. Paul Johnson, for example, of the Institute of Fiscal Studies,

stated, “It is not true that giving public sector workers a bit more would increase inflation. The correlation between public sector pay increases and inflation is negligible.” Through this decade of austerity pay freezes and below inflation pay awards has led to a devastating impact on the pay of public sector workers.

As already mentioned by previous speakers, there are different measures of inflation and are designed to do different things. Put simply, CPI and CPIH measure the change in the cost of goods and services that people are buying. RPI tries to measure the investment and expenditure needed to maintain a minimum standard of living. CPI tracks prices of cheaper alternatives whereas RPI tries to maintain current living standards so, clearly, most often CPI and CPIH will be lower. In fact, in the last 15 years it was only 2009 where that actually did not happen.

Pay awards below RPI inflation forces people into poverty and food bank use. The TUC calls for all public and private sector salaries to be restored in real terms to 2010 level using RPI to protect living standards.

**The President:** Time, delegate, please.

**John McGill (NASUWT):** Basically, enough is enough. All workers should have a pay rise. Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, delegate. Motion 19 on RPI Save the Rate is before you. All those in favour? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 19 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** I call paragraphs 2.5, 2.7 of the General Council Report, and now Composite 6, Tax Raising Measures and Fair Taxation. The General Council supports the composite motion. It is going to be moved by EIS, seconded by Accord, and CWU, PCS, FDA and NEU, please come down.

**C06 Tax raising measures and fair taxation  
Motion 20, and 21 and amendments**

Congress proclaims that working people are facing unprecedented pressure on their household incomes as wages continue to lag behind inflation.

This isn't true for everyone though. CEO pay is up 23 per cent in the last year, bankers' bonuses are at a record high since the financial crash and dividends are rising three times faster than wages. Corporate profit margins are at their highest in 70 years, but the UK's corporate taxes are below the OECD average rate.

In short, wealth is being rewarded, work is not. What is worse, under our flawed system this expanding wealth is not being taxed fairly. This must now be addressed. Of course, a strong and growing economy is a prerequisite for funding decent public services and fairly rewarding our public service workers. A fair tax system is critical to that too.

The provision of high-quality public services, including welfare support, relies on the fair taxation of people and companies. The UK is taking proportionately less tax than our neighbouring countries and our public services are falling behind as a result.

The latest figures show that the UK's total tax-to-GDP (of 33 per cent) is lower than the OECD average (34 per cent), well below the EU14 average (39 per cent) and significantly less than that in Scandinavia (41 per cent).

Furthermore, whilst individuals' taxes are comparable with the OECD average, they are lower than other Western European countries. The UK's social insurance taxes are also below the OECD average.

Who pays tax, and how much they contribute, are political choices. They have direct impacts for our essential public services and our wider infrastructure. These choices impact directly on fairness and the cost-of-living of working people too.

The money you make from working hard shouldn't be taxed at a higher rate than the money shareholders and property investors generate from their existing wealth.

Equalising capital gains tax and income tax would generate an extra £10bn into the Treasury, to fund public services and public sector pay.

There are other options to explore as well, including applying a wealth tax, ending inheritance tax loopholes that benefit the already wealthy and implementing a tax on share buybacks.

Congress notes that the Public Accounts Committee said in January 2023 that the UK is missing out on £42bn of unpaid tax because HMRC does not have enough resources including staff. Whatever shape the tax system takes it can only be delivered through a properly resourced and funded HMRC.

Congress commends the STUC report "Options for increasing taxes in Scotland to fund investment in public services". Congress calls upon the TUC to develop proposals by Congress 2024 to enable the General Council to lead a debate on reform of our tax system in the UK to deliver fairer outcomes for working people, public services and public sector pay. Congress also calls upon the TUC to lobby the government and the Labour Party to introduce a fairer system of taxation.

The report should include, but not be limited to proposals for:

- i. how companies of all sizes could pay a larger and fairer share of taxation
- ii. how taxation (including social insurance) may be increased in a more progressive manner
- iii. how Scandinavian and other Western countries configure their taxation and social insurance systems, outlining the benefits to public investments arising from such higher rates of investment
- iv. an increase in staffing to crack down on tax evasion and close the tax gap
- v. a fully resourced cadre of civil servants to effectively deliver taxation policy
- vi. recommendations on closing tax loopholes at the UK level.



**Mover: EIS Seconder: Accord Supporters: CWU, PCS, FDA**

**Alan Crosby** (*EIS, Vice President*): First-time delegate. (*Applause*) Colleagues, back in the Autumn of 1986 I was heading off to university to begin a degree in English Literature. Part of the soundtrack to my life at that time was Billy Bragg's just released album, *Talking to the Taxman about Poetry*. How could I have imagined that after 37 years I would find myself talking to the poets of the trade union movement about taxation, but here I am and very proud I am to be moving this composite.

At that time, colleagues, the UK Corporation Tax was 35%. Just three years earlier, in other words, exactly 40 years ago today, Corporation Tax under Thatcher was 50%, an astonishing fact. In three short years her government slashed it by 15% and the downward spiral continued until it got as low as 19% in 2017 where it remained until, of course, April of this year when it was raised by Jeremy Hunt to 25% reversing the madness of "Trussonomics", which had been going to keep it at 19%. Even with that rise to 25%, the UK tax on companies' profits is lower than the G7, the G20, and the OECD. As we quote in motion after motion, in speech after speech at this Congress, 40 years of governments valuing corporate greed over human wellbeing, profits over people, have been utterly devastating for communities and working people across this broken land and for all the members of our unions. We need a change. We need to find a better way.

The STUC commissioned report mentioned in this motion was published in December 2022 and offers a signpost for possible better ways ahead. The report

focuses on tax powers that are devolved to the Scottish Parliament and outlines a range of measures which could raise an extra £3.3bn used to fund the real terms increase in public sector pay as well as substantial investment in Scotland's public services, and they include such things as a series of Income Tax reforms, increases to land and buildings transactions tax, increasing the additional dwelling supplement, increasing Scottish landfill tax, introducing a wealth tax, replacing council tax with a proportional property tax, the introduction of a land value tax for commercial land, and a carbon emissions land tax.

Colleagues, £3.3bn is a lot of money but it is small when compared to the dozens, if not hundreds of billions that could be raised and spent on public services at UK level and then of course shared with the devolved administrations through resulting increases in the block grant if similar progressive taxes were brought in at Westminster. Our motion is calling for an investigation and report into what those reforms may be and what can be learned from the tax and spend regimes in Scandinavia and other western countries. In terms of income inequality the UK has one of the worst track records doing better are Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Iceland, Slovenia, Slovakia, the more equal a country is the better its outcome in all key indicators such as health, education, criminal justice, and overall happiness and wellbeing. We need to look at how we can increase our tax to GDB ratio nearer to the average levels in Scandinavia, we need to widen the tax base, increase progressive taxes, close tax loopholes, and then spend much more on public services.

The report we are calling for in this motion could look at measures such as the UK's non structural tax release, which cost the public purse £195bn in 2021, equalising capital gains with income tax, applying national insurance to unearned income, introducing a financial transactions tax, taxing wealth, cutting inheritance tax loopholes ending non-dom release.

Congress, in conclusion, I want to remind you that in January this year Oxfam reported that two-thirds of the new post-pandemic surging wealth went to the top 1%. It is clear that the Tory Party is the political wing of that 1% and we need to get rid of them but, sadly, in many ways Labour, too, seems to be missing in action when it comes to exploring radical tax reform and their current refusal to commit to a wealth tax if elected is utterly incomprehensible given the appalling levels of inequality in this country and given the chorus of different voices clamouring for it. As we know well and as Billy Brag sang, there is power in the union and if our politicians continue to behave like butlers to the billionaires, then it falls to us and the trade union movement to pile on the pressure, demand change, and genuine tax justice. This composite motion is a step on that journey. Please support it. Solidarity, colleagues.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** Seconded by Accord.

**Carol Knowles** (*Accord*): As we have heard so many times this week working people are facing unprecedented pressure on the household incomes. Despite today's headlines, most people's wages continue to lag behind inflation. This is not true for everyone, though. CEOs' pay is up 23% in the last year, bankers' bonuses are at a

record high since the financial crash, and dividends are rising three times faster than wages. Capital is being rewarded but labour is not. In short, wealth is being rewarded, work is not. What is worse under our flawed system this expanding wealth is not being taxed fairly. This must now be addressed. A fair tax system is critical to that, too. Who pays tax and how much the country gets are political choices. They have direct impact for our essential public services and our wider infrastructure. These choices impact directly on fairness and the cost of living of working people, too. The money you make from working hard should not be taxed at the higher rate than the money shareholders and property investors generate from their wealth. As our new TUC General Secretary in his brilliant speech on Monday said, we need an economy that rewards work, not wealth. This inequality is bad for our economy. Fairness and growth go hand in hand and that is why those with the broadest shoulders should bear the greatest load.

Let a start be made by closing tax loopholes, charging VAT on the fees for private schools, a proper windfall tax on the energy companies, and tax capital gains at the same rate as wages. Congress, we call on the TUC to develop proposals to enable the General Council to lead a debate on reform of our tax system to deliver fair outcomes for working people, public services, and public sector pay. I am proud to second this composite motion and I ask for your support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** CWU.

**Andy Mercer** (*The Communication Workers Union*): Rising to support. The cost-of-living crisis has pushed working class people to the brink while profits of corporations

have literally never been higher, whilst food prices soar, inflation making wages drop in real terms, and insecure work grown, bosses and CEOs are being paid large bonuses and shareholders have received record-breaking dividends, paid directly by those struggling workers, we have public services and the NHS in crisis, you would think the Government would have taken advantage of the windfall profits to help rebuild our national infrastructure after the devastation of austerity and the pandemic, but they have not. Instead, they have allowed the 1% to have more wealth than they have ever done before through tax break loopholes, whilst working people are paying more and more just to get by.

The UK's current system of taxation is completely unfair and allows corporations and wealthy individuals to escape their responsibilities. Workers are also unfairly taxed compared to those with assets and other forms of income. A graduate earning £35,000 a year pays almost double the tax on their wages as someone who earns the same income from property and at a time when our public services are literally crumbling in front of our eyes a system of fair taxation could provide the funds that our schools and hospitals so clearly need. The TUC's own research showed that a modest wealth tax on the wealthiest 1% could raise between £70bn and £130bn for the Treasury. It also shows that equalising capital gains taxation with income would raise roughly £10bn.

It is now more important than ever that the UK taxation system does not place an unfair burden on working people while the rich get away with hoarding their wealth. How can it be right that there are millions of people struggling and live month to month while the global giants, Amazon, paid nothing in corporation tax in 2021.

Now, trade unions must be at the front of this discussion. This has been made clear by the Labour Party who recently said that they would not introduce a wealth tax. Congress, the CWU will not accept a Labour Party that allows the wealthiest to profit while claiming that there is no money for our public services. (*Applause*) There is enough money to fund the NHS, there is enough money to rebuild our schools, it is just in the wrong place. The TUC and the trade union movement needs to remind the Labour Party where they come from. They are the party of the working people and if they will not fight to get a better deal for us, we need to make them. The CWU wholeheartedly supports this motion creating a fairer society for all and finally ending the decades-long inequality that has brought us to the crisis we are in. Support a wealth tax and a fairer system of taxation. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** PCS.

**Kevin McHugh** (PCS): speaking in support of the composite. Congress, there is one phrase that has dominated above all others this week, “*Britain is broken*”, broken with very little sense with schools and hospitals falling to pieces, and successive governments have cut corners and cut costs, and ordinary people are suffering. The difference between those at the top and those at the bottom is more like a wealth chasm than a wealth gap. Those at the top continue to hold more wealth siphoning it away offshore, public services are starved of cash, and it is ordinary people who pay the price. Ordinary people do what is asked of them, they play by the rules, they pay their taxes, and quite simply the game is rigged.

I work for HMRC. We have a situation where we do not have enough staff to actually collect the tax that we need. Then customer services in HMRC are planning over the next pay rate to cut 4,000 jobs. We don't want cuts of jobs. We want more jobs so we can go after the tax and actually make them pay what they have to pay. Rachel Reeves, as has been mentioned, has ruled out a wealth tax. I think that is a staggering admission and would lay bare a lack of ambition and hope for a better future. Lucy Powell, Shadow Minister, said there is no money left and the reality is there are eye-watering amounts of money left; company after company are posting profits. There is too much at stake to get this wrong. As I say, what we have to do is collect the tax payer debts in HMRC, which historically is at a low level, the tax gap is not improving, it is getting worse, and during the pandemic when we had all of the schemes that helped people out, fraudulent claims made on the pandemic were not being pursued or recovered.

Each member of compliance in HMRC actually collected over £200,000 a year, and we are going to cut 4,000 of those staff? What we demand is more staff and a change in the HMRC rules to let us go after these people who are avoiding, evading, and downright fiddling the taxes. (*Applause*) They are aided and abetted by this Government because some of the fiddling is actually legal and even when it is not we find, "Don't go after that, it's not enough," yet people on benefit are getting pursued for very, very small amounts. We are actually not collecting millions and millions of pounds. If you give us the staff, give us the resources, we will go after the debts and we will get the money but if they do not want it – this is the fault of Labour – and I hope that Labour do change their mind on a wealth tax and that they actually

introduce it; but give HMRC the resources and we will get them. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

**The President:** FDA.

**Tony Wallace (FDA):** Good afternoon, Congress, President, a Billy Bragg fan, and a taxman, asking you to support Composite 6. Congress, tax, the level at which it is set, the basis on which it is assessed, whether that be earnings, profits, purchases, capital gains, distributions, interest, assets, or wealth, and the sections of society who are asked to contribute, are all matters of political choice. You adopt a progressive approach based on earnings and the level of your pay, a regressive approach which places a greater proportionate burden on those at the bottom of society, all this motion suggests is you collect a greater share of the money and income, wealth and capital.

The motion calls on the TUC to renew the debate on the form of our tax system and I welcome that. However, no matter how that review turns out or which government leads us into the next election, the UK's choices when it comes to taxation will only be delivered by investment in a modern and effective tax administration and the people who work within it.

I have spent my entire 40-year career administering and collecting tax along with 64,000 colleagues, including the colleague from PCS before, with whom I share that load. Make no mistake, we are not the tea-swilling lazy, feckless and ineffectual stay-at-home caricatures portrayed by (?)Gregal Fox, Harry Cole, Jacob Rees-Moggs, the



Taxpayers Alliance, the *Daily Mail*, and others trumpeting the anti-public sector bile put out by that partisan mob in Tufton Street. We are hard working, dedicated, public servants delivering for this country every day and my job for many years has been to challenge those people who would seek to break or bend the rules by avoiding and evading the obligations of tax that society has placed upon them.

Congress, HMRC touches the lives of almost every person in the UK. Five million businesses and over 34 million individuals and the money we collect to spend on public services, including schools, the NHS, hospitals, and the police, in the financial year 2022/2023 HMRC'S expenditure of £6.9bn enabled us to gender £814bn for this country. We paid out £33.9bn to support our customers. Overall it costs just half a penny to collect each pound of tax in the UK and in December 2022 the National Audit Office recognised HMRC's compliance work was good value for money, we return an average £18 for every single pound that is spent on compliance. Why would you not invest in a return like that? Congress, support Composite 6 but only by investing in the people who actually deliver for you and for the country or you make the change you want. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** NEU.

**Andy Bridges** (*NEU*): First-time delegate. (*Applause*) Before I jumped ship and became a lecturer a little under a year ago I was employed by HMRC. HMRC was formed in 2005, on the 18<sup>th</sup> April, actually, when the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise merged. At that point in time there were about 90,000 staff in the department. When I left last year there were approximately 54,000 staff, a 40%

reduction in staff over a 17-year period. I am sure everyone here has a similar story. So where are all these savings going, in tax breaks and handouts to Tory Party donors and Tory chums. We heard Mark Serwotka talk about the £45bn in uncollected tax on Sunday and yesterday the General Secretary, Paul, said we could beef up HMRC. I cannot disagree with him.

Next I want to address the RAAC crisis in our schools and in the spirit of solidarity other public service buildings are available to be included in the crisis. How are these repairs going to be funded? Now, we have heard how Britain is the sixth largest economy in the world on a system measured by gross domestic product. In 2022, it was worth £3.07 trillion, yet vast amounts of workers are feeling the pinch of the cost-of-living crisis, while CEO pay, company profits, and shareholder dividends increase. So Rishi, Jeremy, et al, do not be telling me or telling us the money is not there, it just needs to be taxed correctly.

I am sure we all remember the Panama paper scandal when David Cameron was PM. It has never been addressed at governmental level. Tax loopholes could and should be closed.

Finally, I want to address the Labour Party stance on future taxation. Apart from their pledge to review the non-dom status, which is expected to bring in £3.2bn, which is a paltry figure when taken against the £60bn underfunding shortfall in public services. Whenever you do get a Labour MP in front of the media, the party line is, “We aren’t going to review our tax plans because we don’t know what state the economy will be

left in.” In fact, I saw Angela Rayner say that this morning on BBC Breakfast. She was stood over there when she said it.

Let me offer a prediction on the state of the economy in a year’s time. It will not be much better than it is now because the Tory Party seem hellbent on a scorched earth policy doing as much fiscal damage as possible as they saw all the wards being wiped out in the next election. There has never been a better time for us as a trade union movement to be bending the shell-like of Sir Keir and Rachel Reeves, we must be pressing for a comprehensive, progressive package of tax measures on the underlying proviso that our members, the workers, are no longer targeted to keep bailing out the failed Tory ideology. Support the composite. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Congress, Composite 6 on Tax Raising Measures and Fair Taxation is in front of you. Will all those in favour please show? Hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Composite 6 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** I call Composite 7, which is about Secure Affordable Housing for all Workers. The General Council support the composite motion which is going to be moved by NASUWT, seconded by Equity, supported by Usdaw, and I will be calling a couple of other people in the debate. NASUWT, then Equity to second, and then Usdaw. Thank you.

**Rosemary Carobine** (*NASUWT, The Teachers Union*): The housing crisis in the UK is having a profound impact on living standards and is exacerbating the recruitment and retention crisis in the public services, including schools, the NHS, and in social care. The shortage of affordable high quality housing is a pressing issue for key workers, including teachers, and it is impacting adversely on the provision of public services across the board. Rapidly rising property prices, the rises in mortgage interest rates caused by the Kami-Kwasi budget last year and escalating rental costs have rendered housing unaffordable for many. This affordability gap forces educators to seek accommodation way outside the areas where they are needed leading to teachers having to do a long commute, resulting in increased stress, increased cost, and a higher likelihood of burnout.

Here in Merseyside many teachers are deterred from pursuing their career due to the strain of housing costs. Like many other areas in the UK, Merseyside struggles to attract and retain teachers leading to a shortage of educators, particularly in key subject areas. House prices in Liverpool increased by an average of 10% in 2022. The average semi-detached house was in excess of £250,000 while the average public salary in the city is £27,384, resulting in the average family home being almost ten times the average public sector salary.

We need to ensure all key workers, including teachers and low paid key workers, can access their work without prohibitive housing costs. Poor housing makes it harder to attain a decent education, insecure housing, overcrowding, noise, and cold and damp, all mitigate against high educational attainment. Decent housing must be a right. It is essential that we tackle and address this issue with a comprehensive and collaborative

approach. There has simply been a failure of successive governments and administrations to address the shortage of affordable housing for working people and their families. All workers have a right to a safe and affordable house, or housing. Governments must implement policies that encourage the construction of affordable housing that are specifically targeted towards education and other key workers, as a minimum; affordable housing for all key workers, including teachers; a huge increase in social house building, with the local authorities to be able to raise finance to build again; proper regulation on all private landlords and fairer tenancies in the public sector. The housing situation in the UK is now critical. Urgent transformational change is not just desirable, it is essential. Congress, I move. Please vote for this vital composite. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Equity to second.

**Sam Swann** (*Equity*): Delighted to second the composite which looks to get the endorsement for Equity's *Dignity in Digs* campaign. Performers and stage managers on tour, touring round to various theatres have historically stayed in digs and digs are a kind of bizarre and sometimes charming quirk of the theatre. They are called digs but actually they are just short-term accommodation when you are working away. In the past that has meant staying in the spare room of an elderly person who is a friend of their local theatre and they provide a bedroom for a relatively cheap price and maybe a bit of company. But since Coronavirus it has not been safe for vulnerable people to share digs and as the tentacles of Thatcherite neo-liberalism have spread themselves, the fewer decent cheap digs options there are, standards have slipped but prices have risen, which is a familiar story that we are hearing across the board, with

terrible short-term accommodation, with mould, cold, and barely working facilities, often too far from workplaces to be safe for the travel back after shows late at night, which is particularly bad for our visibly LGBTQ members and our members of colour. This is why we are calling for dignity in digs.

The campaign focuses on providing touring workers with accommodation that is safe, secure, clean, private and close to the venues they work within; and, of course, as the composite makes so clear, housing is one of the greatest issues that affects all workers. According to a recent study, the average UK household spent 42% of income on rent and in London that rises to 72%, that is nuts, that is a nut system. Tory excuses for capitalism usually rest on arguments in favour of productivity but the UK is genuinely nutty Thatcherite landlord system. It is unfathomably unproductive. Landlordism produces nothing while leeching of the labour of others. After the Housing Act of 1980 it enabled the selling off of local council housing stock at discounted rates. Within 15 years 2.1 million council built homes were no longer owned by councils, laying the foundations for the Wild West private rental market we see today. How bitterly ironic that despite being in the mud Thatcher still lives rent free in our housing system. This has to be reversed. Hundreds of thousands of genuinely affordable homes need to be built in each year of the next decade, council housing stock needs to get back to pre-1980 levels and rents need to be capped. Housing is a basic need, homelessness can be eradicated and standards can be raised. This is not some wild Utopian dream as the Tories would like us to think, and if their system cannot provide that basic need it is their system that should go. Congress, comrades, please support this composite. *(Applause)*

**The President:** *Usdaw*.

**Jane Jones** (*Usdaw*): Supporting the motion on secure affordable housing for all workers. Congress, this country's housing system is in a state of disrepair. The appalling truth is that many workers have no prospect of finding an affordable, secure, and good quality place to live, instead they face a market where the only certainty is ever increasing costs. In the private rental sector tenants are expected to jump through a dehumanising series of hoops or to live in unaffordable, unsuitable, and unsafe housing. Soaring rents are forcing key workers, including those in the private sector, such as shop workers and delivery drivers, out of the communities in which they actually work, and as it stands the crisis will only deepen with rising interest rates and demand outstripping supply year after year, and yet much of the Tories solution, these so-called affordable homes are nothing of the sort. 80% of an extraordinary unaffordable rent is still an extraordinary and unaffordable rent, especially if you are in low paid and/or insecure work. This is all entirely avoidable.

The housing crisis is being driven by the Tory government's policy decisions. Report after report shows that the solution to the housing crisis is to build more homes for social rent, more homes on a scale which can only be delivered by central government. Congress, housing is simply too important to leave to the free market and hope for the best. It has far-reaching consequences to every aspect of workers' lives from their health to their finances and their ability to work. We urgently need to move away from the broken status quo where people are having to hand over a massive chunk of their wages each month to pay off their landlord's mortgage. The Government must accept its responsibility to ensure workers have access to genuine

affordable homes. The fact is every real solution to the housing crisis involves building more high quality affordable social housing. Secure tenancies in a reasonably priced quality control home can provide the stability that workers need. Please support this composite. (*Applause*)

**The President:** I am going to call Unison next, and then CWU, FBU, and RCM.

**John Gray (Unison):** Speaking in support of Composite 7. It highlights the profound impact of the housing crisis on all key workers across public and private sectors. Congress, my day job is of a housing officer in London for a large housing association. I work in a regional team, providing housing services to over 23,000 homes and to many vulnerable residents spread across North London.

In my own particular team there is nine of us. We are all tenancy LSB specialists but, Congress, why is it that I am the only member of my team who is able to live in London? Why is that? None of the others live in London so they all have to undertake expensive and exhausting commutes before and after a demanding day's work. While inadequate pay is one reason the main reason I can live in London is simply due to age. Despite my youthful looks, I was lucky enough to work in London at a time when a worker could buy a flat. I paid three times my salary at that time but due to house inflation vastly outstripping pay there is no way that my colleagues on current wages could afford to buy the same flat in 2023. They would need a multiple of nearly nine times their income to buy that very same flat.



As a Unity NEC member for all our housing association and charity workers I know this is not just a London thing, in all our regions the housing crisis has worsened and blighting the experience of citizens and key workers, especially the low paid. Congress, this composite recognises the devastating impact of the crisis on the position of critical services across the board and this is having a detrimental effect on recruitment and retention, especially in services such as health and social care. Unison evidence shows that rising rents, mortgage rates, and transport costs, are putting rocket boosters on the cost-of-living crisis. It is pushing people into positions of financial hardship, poverty, and homelessness with many having to cut back on food and essentials. The churn of our members who are forced to leave high cost housing areas is putting a strain on key workers, on production, and on service delivery.

Congress, the Housing Secretary, Michael Gove, has admitted that the Government should build more homes of every type each year, especially social housing, but it is failing to build a sufficient number of these homes that are so desperately needed. This is why we must step up the pressure of the Government and all political parties to take action to resolve the housing crisis by committing to building homes. This will need money and this will need a subsidy. We have to be honest about this.

**The President:** Time, delegate, please.

**John Grey (Unison):** Please support the Composite. (*Applause*)

**The President:** CWU.

**Jackie Murray** (*Communication Workers Union*): to support Composite 7.

Congress, we have already heard how real term pay cuts and the cost-of-living crisis has impacted all of our members. A shortfall of affordable housing adversely affects our disadvantaged communities most by excluding key workers in schools, the NHS, and social care, as well as those in low paid insecure employment. In the 1960s three million homes were built in England but only 1.3 million have been built since 2010. Since 1991 there has been an annual average loss of 24,000 social homes and more people and households have been pushed into private rental. For the year to March 2022 private renters spent a third of their income on rent or 40% if you are unlucky enough to live in the capital. High rental costs and the spiralling cost of living makes it increasing unlikely that a deposit can be saved and the prospect of home ownership is increasingly unattainable for many.

In not so great Britain in 2021 a senior care worker could not afford a mortgage in 98% of council areas, a postal worker in 96%, a nurse in 74% and a secondary school teacher in 60%. In 2022, 23% of private rental properties failed to meet the decent home standard compared to 10% of social rental and 13% of owner occupied homes. Congress, having a decent home should be something available to all. Congress, this situation is unacceptable. Social housing and affordable housing should be a priority. Affordable housing should be accessible. Key workers in high cost areas should not be excluded from access to suitable accommodation. Congress, please support.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** FBU.

**Maria Buck** (*Fire Brigades Union*): Good afternoon, President, Congress. We welcome this composite on affordable housing and I hope this Congress sends this message loud and clear: every human being deserves a safe home. Congress, we are still waiting six years on for justice to Grenfell; a disgrace. We will continue to demand justice. (*Applause*) We stand with the victims, the bereaved, and the wider Grenfell community and all our members. We are happy that the Labour Party has committed to do right by the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire and give them the support they need and bring those culpable to justice.

We need to keep up the pressure to ensure there is an end to the deregulation of building and fire safety to prevent a fire like Grenfell ever happening again and to ensure that there are mandatory building standards but they need to go further. They need to commit to rental caps and mass council house building programmes. We cannot afford to wait to tinker around the edges. We want safe, affordable, secure housing and it should not be a luxury. It is a human right. Firefighters, all workers, and this Congress demand it. Please support. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Delegates, the Royal College of Midwives have been very patient.

**Nikki Charleston** (RCM): Pronouns she, her. I am a very nervous public speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, I come to you today with a personal story. In my third year as a student midwife, myself, my spouse, and our three young children, were made homeless, two weeks before Christmas. We were unceremoniously evicted from our house by a bank because I had been paying my rent but my unscrupulous landlord had

not been paying her mortgage. The bank took no pity on us. We were left at the hands of the social housing system. We were put into a hotel room, a single hotel room for five people. We lived there for 12 days before being moved into temporary accommodation two days before Christmas. As a student midwife I was on £600 a month in a bursary because I was lucky enough to live in Scotland. My colleagues down south do not have that luxury because the Tories took that away from them, but £600 is not enough for a deposit or for rent. So, we were still at the mercy of the social housing system.

We were then two days before Christmas moved into wildly unsuitable temporary accommodation. We were put on a fourth floor when I had three young children, one of whom is profoundly disabled. We lived there for three months and we only managed to qualify for social housing because we were poor, my child was disabled and because I was gobby enough to speak to my MSP, Hannah Bardell, and beg for help and her team worked tirelessly to get us that house, and I will be for ever grateful.

Congress, I do not present my story for pity. I present my story because it is not unusual. It is not unheard of. The system of landlords is vastly unregulated. It is £12,000 fine to be an unregistered landlord. That landlord still has not paid that fine. I want to highlight the failings of the government to protect me and my family, to protect us from a system that is being abused for profit. It is not there to help people, it is for sheer profiteering and greed, and it is a story that is going to continue to be repeated. Congress, it cannot continue. We need affordable housing, we need private landlords to be held to account and we need to protect our key workers because if I

had not have gotten that house I would not have ever become a midwife. I ask you to support this motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Composite 7, will all those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Composite 7 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Congress, we are now moving into a debate on Covid. Before we start this debate we want to acknowledge and note there will be many people in this hall who have been directly affected by the Covid pandemic, there will be many people who have lost loved ones, family and friends. There will be many colleagues and comrades who have worked through the most traumatic experiences. In this debate many will be reliving some of those experiences and if you feel upset by this debate please do not feel you have to stay, and please can everyone look out for their colleagues and comrades who may be affected.

I call paragraph 2.11 and Composite 11, The Covid-19 Public Inquiry. The General Council support the motion to be moved by Unison, seconded by NASUWT, and RCM, and FBU, if you can come down.

**C11 The Covid-19 public inquiry  
Motion 30 and amendments**

Congress notes the Covid-19 public inquiry hearings, which began in June, have revealed serious failings in the UK government's preparedness and response to the pandemic and a systematic, long-term failure to address deep structural inequalities in society and systemic labour market discrimination which resulted in poorer households, disabled people and Black people suffering disproportionately – 60 per cent of people who lost their lives to Covid-19 were disabled.

Congress applauds the important evidence that the TUC, with input from affiliates, has submitted to the Inquiry so far. This has demonstrated to the Inquiry that austerity seriously damaged the UK's resilience. Safe staffing levels, public service capacity and resources, protections for pregnant workers, the social security system and health and safety protections at work were all subjected to funding cuts in the decade before the pandemic. This reduced capacity to respond. Congress agrees that it's crucial that this evidence is reflected in the Inquiry's conclusions and recommendations about preparedness for future pandemics (including devolved government experiences). Congress condemns the government's failure to prepare for pandemics, despite longstanding warnings in its own national risk register. Congress commends the response of trade unions during the Covid-19 pandemic, by protecting our members, other workers and our communities through collective bargaining and collective action.

Congress agrees that the most fitting memorial to all the working people who died during the Covid-19 pandemic would be for the right lessons being learned and acted upon.

Congress agrees that the TUC should continue to:

- i. raise the issues of direct relevance to union members, their families and communities
- ii. support trade unionists to share their experiences with affiliates, so that these can be built into TUC evidence, and direct to the inquiry through the 'Every Story Matters' process
- iii. highlight the equalities impact of the pandemic, including the disproportionate impacts of long Covid
- iv. hold decision makers to account.

**Moved: UNISON Seconded: NASUWT Supporters: RCM, FBU**

**Libby Nolan** (*Unison*): Moving the composite on the Covid-19 Inquiry. Congress, as the text of the composite makes clear, the hearings as part of the Covid-19 public inquiry have already laid bare major government failings and it only started in June, that is a couple of months to get to the conclusion already that the Government has failed in their preparedness and response. This comes as no surprise to many of us in this hall and those who worked unprotected and exposed from the beginning of the pandemic on the front line. As a nurse I used bin bags to cover my uniform and a Tesco's carrier bag on my head to cover my hair along with many others. We knew the Government was not ready.

This lack of PPE caused unnecessary exposure and a huge amount of fear. We thought we were going to die. We were told we may die. As many shop floor union reps will tell you, they are still dealing with members whose lives have been changed due to Long Covid, not to forget the many who are still dealing with the bereavements and disabilities that Covid caused and continues to cause.

Covid has not gone away. As I stood on my ward last week, the masks are back on and we are once more struggling with staff shortages due to sickness due to Covid. Patients are again becoming very sick due to Covid and operations are once again cancelled due to Covid. As new strains continue to develop this is now a common thing. In the past fortnight it has been announced that the vaccinations will be brought forward and I know in my place in Swansea it starts tomorrow and testing once again will be scaled up.

Congress, the effects of Covid have left many deep scars. The UK had one of the worst death rates, reaching nearly a quarter of a million in the UK by August this year. We continue to see approximately 30 deaths a week. I want to remind Congress that the UK was amongst the highest Covid-19 deaths in health workers in the world. This demonstrates to me the very poor response to the pandemic. Not only were we catching Covid, we were spreading it and placing our families and patients at risk. This is why it is so important that the Covid-19 inquiry is a full open public inquiry and that the stories of those affected are told.

Congress, it is also essential that people are held to account not just the Government ministers that were in power at the time but also those that failed our public services in the decade before. We know in many ways it took the pandemic to expose the true cost of austerity. Prior to the pandemic austerity cuts were having a devastating effect on our services and on our communities. When Covid arrived it became all too clear just how hollowed out public ground had become. In my hospital we were already on our knees and we are still on our knees. We failed and many workers in the UK are left with guilt and PTSD. Remember, we had hospitals needing to cope with a huge



influx of patients but shortages of staff, equipment, drugs, even sheets and uniforms, and the biggest shortage of them all, personal protection equipment, PPE. Our social care systems that had been cut to the bone still was expected to care faithfully to those in need. Those sent out of hospital without testing, no safeguarding for those patients, no safeguarding for the residents in those care homes that they were sent to and we asked the questions, many of us in this room that worked in that area we asked the questions why weren't they being tested. Not to forget the public health, another area that has been repeatedly reorganised and subjected to major cuts prior to Covid, meaning that when the time came for the driving force of a credible test-and-trace system from day one, it was not possible.

The austerity policy hindered our ability to fight this virus and that is not all, Congress. The pandemic also shed a harsh light on the huge inequalities in our society. The Office of National Statistics tells us that black people suffered up to five times, five times more risk of death, that is with the shocking statistics of the 60% of those who died from Covid being disabled.

Congress, as the composite makes clear, it is right the TUC has been on the front foot making a case to the inquiry and to the public that austerity has already damaged impact on our ability to plan and respond. It is essential that the TUC and individual unions continue to play our part in that inquiry. Many of our members dead and alive rely on it. We must make sure that individual experiences, the stories, are told and that the truth comes to light; and, please, while I am on this can you visit the Covid-19 inquiry stall out in the arena there and tell your stories. Please tell your stories and

help identify those responsible for the failures and ensure that they are held to account.

Congress, it is also right that we pay our proper respect to all those who have lost their life due to Covid and that we stand alongside those that have lost loved ones, or who are struggling with life changing effects of Long Covid. We know the right lessons have to be learned so that if and when we are faced with another pandemic the same mistakes are not allowed to happen again. Let's remember, always remember, the dead and fight for the living. Thank you, Congress. I move. (*Applause*)

**The President:** NASUWT.

**Jane Peckham** (*NASUWT, The Teachers Union*): Seconding Motion 30, with thanks to Unison for bringing this to the agenda at Congress this year. Congress, this motion is of huge importance now that the public inquiry into the UK's government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic has begun and we are all involved in supporting the TUC as a core participant to collate the vital evidence needed to truly reflect the experiences of our members.

The pandemic has exposed the long-term failure to address deep-seated inequalities in our society which resulted in the desperate experiences of workers across all sectors impacting most heavily on those with a disability but also negatively in relation to race, gender, geographical location, and socioeconomic status. NASUWT believes that as we continue to highlight the equalities impact of the pandemic to the inquiry

we have to include the disproportionate impact of Long-Covid, especially at the intersection of protective characteristics for workers.

Contrary to what you have just heard from the sister, this can be classified as being over but Long-Covid sufferers are living with its effects every day and their plight must be recognised and addressed. Teachers are amongst the groups of workers most likely to be affected by Long-Covid. The varying impact of Long-Covid has been recorded by scientists around the world. The Swedish Karl Institute leads a global consortium on Long-Covid and has revealed and reported that the proportion of female Long-Covid patients outstretched men with Long-Covid by up to 70-80%. As a union operating in the sector with a predominantly female workforce this is clearly of concern.

Throughout our Long-Covid campaign NASUWT has been pressing for the condition to be classed as a disability and whilst many employers have taken this approach others have not, which is why workers are not receiving the support they should and being treated unfairly. We are also campaigning for reasonable adjustments, flexible working, and financial compensation for teachers left unable to teach as a result of contracting Covid at work.

Most recently in supporting our members with submitting their testimony to the Covid inquiry we received many personal statements from members who have suffered and are still suffering from Long-Covid symptoms. Many are struggling financially as well as physically, and emotionally. Consigning the pandemic to history risks leaving those who have been significantly and in some cases permanently affected by Covid-

19 without the treatment and help they need. Congress, the legacy of Long-Covid must not be ignored. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** As the delegate from the Royal College of Midwives is coming up can I notify the CSP, Prospect, PCS, NEU, UCU and Unite, you can all speak in the debate if you want to come forward.

**Mandi Masters (RCM):** Good afternoon, President. Good afternoon, Congress. I was going to tell you lots of what has been said beforehand but I am not, I am going to take my paperwork and I am going to put it to the side. What I am going to tell you, this is my second visit to a Congress first-speaking under the TUC, and I am like a rabbit in headlights so I apologise. (*Applause*)

I have been asked to talk on a subject that is really close to my heart as I have Long-Covid, I had Covid pneumonia over two years ago. I was hospitalised for several weeks. I was going through the oxygen masks, the Ventura masks, knowing that a little bit more and I was going to be intubated. Luckily, I was not but it took a hell of a lot out of me. I walked to the toilet but I would have to carry a canister of oxygen to walk from here to the gentleman in the front, on 15 litres of oxygen. I could not walk that far. When I finally managed to get out my husband took about 20 minutes to take me into the house. Excuse me, it is a bit emotional for me. It still gets me.

(*Applause*) My apologies, Congress.

It took him over half an hour to get me up a set of stairs. He brought up a stool with me as I walked up a couple of stairs and had to stop. I was up in my bedroom for two

weeks and I was told when I left hospital I would be phoned and be offered oxygen. I am still waiting for the phone call. I was in a wheelchair for at least six months afterwards and when I did actually manage to walk and we went round Tesco's I would get to the first two aisles and I would have to rest, and by the time of the end of it I was pushing the trolley not so I was pushing the trolley, I was pushing the trolley so I could lean on it. I had 18 months that I did not return to work. At 18 months, I managed to go back to work. I was well enough to go back to work. I am not recovered. I still drop my stats. By the end of the day my stats are down to my boots.

I still suffer and this is two-and-a-half years later. Covid has not gone away. Covid still is here. I am working staff with Covid. Please, please, please support this motion. I could tell you that 57% of midwives and support workers, 64% of midwifery educators, 97% of midwifery students felt that the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health. As you see me standing here you can see that it does exactly that. Please, Congress, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** FBU.

**Ian Murray** (*Fire Brigades Union*): Speaking in support of Composition Motion 11 and I would like to thank all of the unions involved in bringing this composite motion to Congress and to put on record the thanks to the TUC and the other affiliated unions for the work they have done so far in the public inquiry.

The FBU would like to add our solidarity on the issues raised and add some experiences of what firefighters faced during that time. The motion is absolutely right

to criticise the serious failings of the Westminster government and their lack of preparedness for the pandemic. Since 2008, they have published a national risk register highlighting the range of risks referred to across the UK and from the beginning this national register warned about pandemics. They knew in advance about the experiences of Avian flu, Swine flu, SARS, MERS, and other earlier pandemics. Many public services took part in pandemic planning and this was a decade before the Covid-19 outbreak.

However, in the Fire & Rescue Service this almost entirely ground to a halt after the coalition was formed in 2010, as I am sure it did in many other sectors. Instead of preparing for major emergencies that they had identified on a national risk register they imposed austerity, pushed on with privatisation, deregulation, and contracting out the fragmented and damaged public services, including the Fire & Rescue Service. This left us unprepared, underprepared when Covid-19 emerged in 2020.

In the Fire Service ministers and chief fire officers were asleep at the wheel when the pandemic struck. They told us they had assessed the risk. They told us that everything was covered, they were prepared but during the first few months of Covid, the pandemic, it was clear that this was certainly not the case. The public inquiry has now begun to document and record the failures, including the failures of ministers, some of which are still in government, some of which are still in Parliament, and they should be held to account and at most it is right to point the finger at the people at the top.

Congress, I would just like to say a few words on the role of trade unions that was played in the pandemic. As we have heard and as we know, too many of our loved ones' lives were lost but many more would have died had the unions and our members not done their work. Whilst ministers made a mess of it the unions stepped in and stepped up to protect the wider public but, importantly, to protect our members, so that they could continue doing their job, so that they could continue saving lives, so that they could keep the essential services that were needed across the country running, and trying to ensure that whilst carrying out this vital work they did not lose a life during the pandemic and, sadly, Congress, some of our members did pay that ultimate price.

To finish, during the pandemic the FBU negotiated some bespoke national collective agreements with our employers and the chief fire officers. These agreements paved the way for firefighters to provide assistance to the NHS and other public services. Firefighters drove ambulances, they assisted in the temporary morgues that were set up, they delivered essential medicines, a whole range of activities and, Congress, the Fire Brigades Union will never forget or forgive the National Fire Service Chief's Council and the National Service Employers who pulled the plug on these national agreements mid-pandemic, at the height of one of the spikes. They did that for political reasons and also the fact that we were unwilling to compromise our members' safety regarding PPE, or lessen the protection measures that were in place in the existing agreements because our colleagues in the NHS were telling us it was absolutely necessary to keep our members safe so they could carry on doing that work.

Congress, this Government, and future governments, need to wake up and prepare for future pandemic because without a shadow of doubt they will come. Congress, support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** A delegate from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists.

**Michael Mander** (*Chartered Society of Physiotherapy*): Supporting Composite 11. It is vital that when examining the UK's pandemic response the independent Covid-19 inquiry considers the contribution of our trade unions and the workers who guided the nation through the pandemic. We know of members forced to work wearing bin bags to deliver care, who were asked to repeatedly use single use items, who were provided equipment with no regard to fit testing, we know of vulnerable members who were let down with inadequate or zero risk assessments, or were forced to fight tooth and nail for the support that was owed. An example in our own trust is when, were it not for the intervention of trade union support, we were minutes away from senior management withdrawing all PPE use from all staff with immediate effect. It also led to the setting up of PPE working groups with trade union representation at all levels to ensure our staff were protected. These are the stories that need to be heard in the independent inquiry.

Throughout the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy supported members working across healthcare. From independent sector practitioners who saw their incomes disappear overnight to NHS physiotherapists whose efforts and dedication undoubtedly saved lives. This dedication to the NHS is why I am proud to announce that 88% of our members voting in Northern Ireland, the lowest paid NHS workers in



the UK, have voted today to go on strike in support of better pay for staff and better care for patients. (*Applause*)

Across the UK we work with employers bodies, and individual employers on workplace safety in relation to PPE and risk assessments for staff at increased risk from Covid. It will also shock no one here to learn that these experiences are not spread equally among our members. It was our marginalised members, women, those with caring responsibilities, disabled members, and those with black, Asian, or minority ethnic identities who bore the brunt. These outcomes were not inevitable. They were the results of deliberate policy choices and wilful blindness from those in positions of power. Nor did they come out of the blue, they were the result of a social safety net gutted by decades of austerity, decades of under-investment in public services, and what was the Government doing while these experiences were happening to our members, they were too busy handing out illegal contracts to companies with questionable links to their own friends. They were wasting billions of pounds of public money on PPE that was ultimately deemed unfit for use. This is why we continue to support the TUC's invaluable contributions to the independent Covid-19 inquiry. We must hold decision makers to account for their actions before and during the pandemic and insist these mistakes are never made again. Please support this composite. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you, delegate. Prospect.

**Geoff Fletcher** (*Prospect*): Speaking support of Composite 11. Congress, I do not have a personal story to tell but I am aware that the legacy of Covid will remain with

all of us for a very long time, but could we in the UK have been better prepared; that is the question that the Covid-19 inquiry is asking. As somebody who has 23 years' experience as a health and safety inspector, I know part of the answer because for years Prospect has been warning of the folly of the cuts being imposed on the Health and Safety Executive and we take no pleasure in having our concerns proved right.

You will have heard previously that since 2010 the HSE's funding has fallen by 43% and the inspector numbers have fallen to an all time low. Fewer inspectors simply means fewer inspections and investigations, and that means fewer opportunities to keep workplaces safe through advice enforcement and sometimes the inevitable prosecution. These cuts have hit HSE and its staff with real terms pay cuts of between 20 and 25% and HSE is in the middle of a staff retention crisis, particularly around scientists and inspectors. HSE's own figures lay bear the impact this is having on its ability to regulate workplaces. Under HSE's own enforcement policy HSE must investigate the more serious of incidents that are reported to it. A few years ago mandatory investigations that were cancelled because of insufficient resources were in single figures. Since then that number has begun to rise and is now soaring to the number of several hundred serious incidents each year not investigated and that means that justice is not delivered to victims, not because the investigation was not necessary but because there is simply not enough inspectors to carry it out.

Such issues were highlighted during the pandemic. HSE simply did not have the capacity to regulate effectively workplaces to the extent required to keep workers safe from Covid infection in the workplace. Insufficient independence of HSE from government resulted perversely in HSE telling the inspectors that they were not

allowed to wear RPE when visiting site and also sites without breaks, because COSH did not apply. That was just to fit in with the Government's mantra of *hands, face and space*.

It is critical that the Covid inquiry hears the full extent to which cuts to regulators like the HSE contributed to the country's ill preparedness in the pandemic. Whoever is in government when the inquiry reports back must take the provision of sufficient resources to HSE to regulate properly health and safety as an action, and this includes taking up the recently published public bodies review of HSE which recommended that HSE should become a non-ministerial department, a move Prospect believes would bolster HSE's independence. Congress, please support the motion and let's ensure the right lessons are learned across the board and that the important services and organisations that protect workers and the public that we all hold dear are appropriately funded in a form that we as a trade union movement would support. Please support. (*Applause*)

**The President:** PCS.

**Carol Revell (PCS):** Supporting Composition Motion 11. The Covid-19 public inquiry revealed serious failings and highlighted the UK Government's failure to address deep structural inequalities in society. Covid hit after years of austerity which devastated the Civil Service. Over half the magistrates' courts were closed, prisons were overflowing, cuts impacted the most vulnerable in society, and an inability to oversee health and safety compliance in the workplace. Office closures in HMRC and DWP impacted the services we delivered. PCS repeatedly warned the Cabinet Office

that the systematic underfunding of vital services severely undermined the UK's preparedness for dealing with a pandemic. The Government is supposed to have contingency plans for things like pandemics but did nothing. The warnings from China and Italy were not heeded, which meant that by the time they decided to accept the Covid was real it already had taken a hold in the UK and we all suffered for their inaction.

Many of our workplaces were not safe, we did not have adequate PPE, and most ventilation systems in our own buildings were not fit for purpose. In DWP the minister pushed the job centres to remain open as she claimed it was safe whilst at the same time the website said she would not be holding constituency surgeries because it was unsafe. Workers and claimants' lives did not seem to matter as neither of them felt safe travelling to these offices. Trade union reps throughout the Civil Service fought for safer workplaces while continuing to support the most vulnerable in society. It is important that we all share our experiences with *Every Story Matters*, as it will be the workers' account at the time. We have to capture and expose the Government's greed and corruption giving contracts to their buddies whilst the workers were trying to keep society safe. Too many of these greedy capitalists did not deliver what they were paid to do; they must be held to account.

One Tory donor said he would make ventilators but only if he could make them outside the UK because he could not make enough profit within the UK. We definitely were not all in it together. Lessons must be learned. It must not happen again. Support the motion. (*Applause*)

**The President:** NEU.

**Elise Poulter** (*National Education Union*): First-time speaker. (*Applause*)

Illusionists and crooks use the technique of creating a deflection so that the focus is shifted away from the real deception, the real crimes. Trade union siblings we absolutely know that the clapping for the NHS and for public sector workers was the deflection to mask their many, many, crimes. (*Applause*) It is important that we all detail our experiences for *Every Story Matters* and explain how the failings, the deceptions, of the Government to initially listen to the science to waste millions of pounds of public money on paying their friends for useless PPE, to not provide safe working conditions for those continuing to work through the pandemic are heard.

As a teacher I see the continuing effects of these failings every day. Some of the 12 and 13-year olds that I teach are barely able to write and this is not because teachers were not teaching but because they were from the lowest socioeconomic strata who had not either the technology, the nourishment, or the support to access the online learning. On returning en masse to work class sizes of 32-plus meant social distancing was impossible in many state schools, probably not in Eton. So many school buildings of which we have heard lots were not built with ventilation that meant that teachers were not safe as many other public sector working places were neither. Teachers would not have contracted Long-Covid and the legacy of Long-Covid which we are still living with as we have heard, if we had been provided with smaller class sizes and with buildings that were fit for purpose. We are still dealing with pupils who have lost – I have two children actually in my classes who lost both parents during the Covid pandemic and the ongoing effects that that has for them.

Basically, we have heard from everybody else many of the issues but I would urge you to support, as I am sure you will, this composite motion because we do need to tell our stories and we do need to get justice. (*Applause*)

**The President:** UCU.

**Pat Roache** (*UCU*): First-time speaker. (*Applause*) The reason that I am speaking is because I need to tell the story about one of our FE members who died at work, and I need to tell you what our union, and other unions, in this room are doing about Long-Covid and I need to tell you about the Government's approach, which is like so many disgraceful.

While Donna was at work and she died they were partying in the Houses of Parliament having a good time. The Government's policy regarding the pandemic was, "Let's pretend that we're getting back to normal." When more than three outbreaks of pandemic started the Government told the message, "It's all over now, there's no problem, nothing to think about." Britain's Covid policy is essentially Rishi Sunak watching the waves come in like King Canute and thinking, "If I think they won't come in they won't," and then finding out that actually they still do come in, denial is not an effective long-term plan and it is one this Government uses again and again and again, denials, all of it. Covid still kills one person every three minutes. Every three minutes, and there are people in this hall who will be sad, angry, upset, distressed, ill, because of this Covid that happened. It could have been so different. A government's first responsibility is to look after its people. Our member died Burnley College. They had a damning health and safety report, the first college to

actually be found breaking the health and safety at work law. We were fortunate we had a wonderful regional official, Michelle Monaghan, who tried and tried and tried to get Burnley College to take its responsibilities seriously without any success. What also happened as well is that we were in the same storm but in a different boat. Our fractional workers were more likely to die than anybody else and (?)FE&H full of casual workers. That is the new norm, working out of your car.

Let's pay tribute to the collective work of our unions including eight unions in this room who have done a protocol on long-term Covid for employers to sign, and let's pay tribute to our members in FE who are going to go on strike so that we do not have roulette policies, that we have a single policy that is obeyed by all the colleges and not just the ones who want to pick. So, one college may do safety and another one may not. Don't forget the TUC is fully behind telling your story, telling your story is really important, but we need to keep carrying on telling this story because I tell you now Covid is nowhere near finished, absolutely not, and we are playing Russian Roulette with disability if we don't accept that. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Last but not least Unite.

**Steve Turner** (*Unite*) Speaking in support of Composite 11. Wow what a powerful and emotional debate. I was sitting at the front there thinking how lucky I am, I only got asthma as a consequence of getting Covid during that early period. Comrades, we welcome the composite. Unite was one of those unions first off the block calling for a full and independent public inquiry and we continued to provide evidence to assist the TUC in coordinating our collective input. Like all of us here, we have lost members

to Covid, disproportionately, of course, from our black, and Asian, and ethnic minority communities. Congress, it is no surprise to us that after 13 years of austerity, cuts to public services, privatisation, and deregulation, it was working class communities, the elderly, the vulnerable, and the disabled, those already struggling with poor health, too often hungry relying on food banks, and living in housing that in too many cases should have been condemned long ago, that bore the brunt of the pandemic.

Congress, we have also highlighted that in many sectors with the highest numbers of deaths they have a history of working both long and unsocial hours, and we have asked that the inquiry investigate whether this made workers more susceptible to the disease. So we welcome the call to highlight the equalities impact of the pandemic in the motion. Congress, the motion calls for decision makers to be held to account and while we can stand proud of our collective role in protecting millions with furlough, there were our members who returned to work to manufacture the PPE and the medical ventilators desperately needed on the front line, our health and care workers who put their lives on the line and too often lost them to save ours. Those government ministers who failed to prepare went on to fail us at every level and every opportunity, passing VIP contracts to mates who went on to bill us for millions from the bar of the pub that they ran. Congress, while they were pissing up in Downing Street across the river at St. Thomas's loved ones were gasping for their last breath.

So we say let there be no hiding place, no escape routes, or collective failure excuses, we demand that those responsible for gross negligence, corruption, and a wider dereliction of public duty, are identified, prosecuted, and locked up. Lock the



bastards up, Congress. (*Applause*) Let's lock 'em up and deny them their freedom just as they denied some 229,000 victims their health and a fruitful life. Finally, Congress, we pay tribute to the work and the determination of Lynn and the whole team at that Covid Bereaved Families Group to seek justice, seek justice for the victims, and we stand here in absolute and complete solidarity with them. Support Composite 11, Congress. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Congress, Composite 11 is in front of you. Will all those in favour please show? Hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Composition 11 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Congress, it is my privilege to introduce our guest speaker from the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice, Lynn Sudbury-Riley. (*Applause*) Lynn is one of the hundreds of thousands of people who lost a loved one to Covid-19 alongside thousands of others in the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice, someone who has turned their grief and anger into action, demanding and campaigning to secure the public inquiry that will scrutinise the failings and the consequences of the last 13 years of our austerity Conservative government. Lynn, you are very welcome to this Congress. (*Applause*)

**Lynn Sudbury-Riley** of the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice addressed Congress.

**Lynn Sudbury-Riley:** Thank you, it is a real privilege to speak with you all today so thank you again for inviting me. As a Professor at the University of Liverpool I am a member of the UCU and involved in the ongoing industrial action but, as you know - (*Applause*) – I am proud to be here today representing the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice and to talk about the importance of the public inquiry.

The inquiry is so personally important to me due to the way my lovely Dad died in March 2020. He had gone into the Royal Liverpool Hospital for a foot operation, he had some post-surgery complications and they had to keep him in and during this time we were watching the news, listening to doctors in other countries, especially Italy, telling us what was going to happen but, of course, not everybody would listen. On 11<sup>th</sup> March the Champions League match between Liverpool and Atletico Madrid was allowed to go on even though the Madrid fans would not have been allowed to go to such an event in their own country. The result was catastrophic as Covid ripped through this city and yet on 19<sup>th</sup> March the Prime Minister announced the UK is going to turn the tide on Coronavirus in 12 weeks: completely delusional.

So we as a family stopped visiting our Dad, we did not want to risk taking the virus into him but it was too late and when lockdown eventually came they discovered my Dad had Covid, caught in hospital despite our family's efforts. We then began begging to be allowed to go and see him but we were denied and my Dad died alone two days later. I knew that my Dad's death was different with the denial of normal grieving and mourning rituals because of the way he died when we knew we should have been locked down earlier. It felt incredibly wrong.

When I discovered the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Group I realised I was not the only one who felt betrayed by the system. As a professor I research end of life care and bereavement services so I felt compelled to do a piece of robust research with bereaved families. In all my years of interviewing hundreds of bereaved people I have never come across grief as acute as this. Total sequestration and the legal banishment from our families emerged as one of the most distressing elements in people's stories, and that was not just when people got sick or when they were locked away in care homes, or hospitals, it carried on when they were dying and even then it did not stop, we were not allowed to go to chapels of rest, we were not allowed to have proper funerals or wakes, or access for social contact that is so important when we are grieving, and that is why Partygate matters so much, to find out that that government were having jollies while our loved ones were dying alone is beyond obscene. (*Applause*)

We also need to change the rhetoric that was put out in narrative that the people who died were sick, or they were told, or they were weak; many, many Covid deaths were preventable. These people were not collateral damage. Many of you worked through the pandemic and some of you will have lost family and many will have lost colleagues, perhaps, as they were doing their jobs to keep the country going during lockdown. This is why what happened must never be allowed to happen again and we must learn those lessons and put effective plans into place to make sure that future pandemics will not repeat the problems of the past and there will be others, pandemics are increasingly in frequency, SARS, MERS, Ebola, and then Covid, and these are the reasons why the current inquiry is so crucial to us all. Your movement was there with us. I am glad the TUC and many other unions engaged with the bereaved families

even before the inquiry. Many of you will know the 2021 International Workers Memorial Day was marked with a contingent led by Paul Nowak and Christina McAnea from Unison, and that took place at our beloved Covid-19 memorial wall, so it is good to now that we were not alone and we never have been, and your solidarity means everything.

Bereaved families have expressed a real fear that the inquiry will not be fair, people drew an analogy with Hillsborough and what went on there but maybe there is hope. The inquiry pushed back against the Cabinet Office's attempt to obstruct it and the chair has promised that bereaved families will be central to that inquiry. We have had a few bumps in the road since but we have to keep going. The inquiry's listening exercise has now been rebranded as *Every Story Matters* and it really does. These people were husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, friends, and dear colleagues, they were real and they mattered and these stories need to be told; so do the stories of working people every one of them impacted by the pandemic. Please, encourage your members to tell their stories to the listening exercise; if we are ever going to get to the truth and learn lessons that we need in order to save lives in the future it is vital that the voices of the bereaved and those with Long-Covid and working people are heard loud and clear.

So, staying strong together is crucial to ensure this inquiry will not be sanitized. We hope we can get to the truth, learn lessons from that truth, and save lives for the future. We must keep fighting to ensure that that happens. We must keep engaging with the inquiry to shape it and point out when it loses its way and we must do this together along with the other poor participants because we are all fighting for the

same thing, for truth and for justice, and we can only do this together with your solidarity. Thank you. (*Standing ovation*)

**The President:** I think, Congress, you can agree that that was a powerful and moving speech from Lynn. Thank you, Lynn. Delegates, we return to section 4 of the General Council Report, Winning a Better Future for Working People, on page 46. I will call Composite 20, Future of the BBC, and it is going to be moved by MU, and seconded by NUJ.

**C20 Future of the BBC  
Motion 69 and amendment, and 70**

The BBC is the single biggest employer of MU members in the UK and is in the unique position of supporting five full-time orchestras. The BBC orchestras alone employ more than 400 contract musicians and many hundreds more on a freelance basis. The BBC also employs and supports musicians and other performers working in all genres through its radio and television programming. The BBC is also an essential source of voice work, including through radio dramas, to many performers and audio artists. Providing vital income to highly trained but precarious workers who are too often struggling to maintain a living from the industry.

The freezing of the licence fee and the reduction in BBC income over the past ten years has led to proposals to make job cuts in the BBC Singers, the BBC Orchestras and BBC Introducing as well as local news and programmes. It has also put salaried jobs at risk.

One of the most important elements of universality for the BBC is the fact that it ensures that arts and culture are available to everyone. It is essential that the BBC continues to be able to provide this access to a wide range of culture that the market may not provide for and which may not be viable on purely commercial terms.

This Congress notes a general election is expected in 2024.

Congress believes that accurate reporting and access to reliable information is vital for voters to make informed decisions. Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) plays a crucial role in providing unbiased news reports, scrutinising political parties' claims, and holding politicians to account.

Congress notes there has been a proliferation of dis- and misinformation in recent years, including on social media, which has impacted voters' views and judgement. Congress further notes a YouGov survey (May 2023) which found that PSB broadcasters have the highest net trust ratings of all media outlets, including BBC, Channel 4 and ITV. Of these, the organisation that the largest number of people trust is the BBC.

BBC local radio reaches audiences other media do not. Yet, BBC management want to cut local output across 39 local stations by up to 50 per cent, cutting journalists'

jobs and drastically reducing coverage of local issues. This will adversely impact listeners, including many elderly, disabled and digitally disadvantaged people. Congress condemns cuts to BBC Local and calls for the corporation to rethink its plans to make output less local, especially given the upcoming general election. Congress instructs the General Council to:

- i. support the BBC licence fee model and lobby for adequate funding for the BBC in order to secure its future and sustainable jobs for those who work for it
- ii. lobby for the Media Bill to be used as an opportunity to strengthen PSB in every respect, including ringfencing funding for local output
- iii. campaign for professional journalism and impartial reporting to be at the heart of PSB, with the public's right to know enshrined for future generations.

**Mover: Musicians' Union Seconder: NUJ**  
**Supporter: Equity**

**Naomi Pole** (*Musicians' Union, General Secretary*): I have actually been working in the union for a long time but it is my first time speaking here. (*Applause*) From Glastonbury coverage to the BBC Proms, from Strictly to Jules Holland, to Desert Island Discs, the BBC is synonymous with music. It is the biggest employer and engager of musicians in the UK. We have 400 musicians in the BBC performing groups, five orchestras, and the fantastic BBC singers. We also have tens of thousands of contracts issued by the BBC to musicians every year, freelancers, including composers and performing musicians. The BBC is a daily part of most of our lives and it plays the part in all musicians' careers. It is a really crucial training and development ground. When my Nan was stuck in her flat during the pandemic the BBC was her window onto the world and it kept her company, TV and radio, all day and most of the night. There are 33 million listeners to BBC Radio, live, each week. 426 million people around the world access the BBC each week so that is six times the UK population.

Under Tory rule the BBC licence fee has fallen behind inflation significantly, massive cuts, this means lost jobs and lost services. Of course, it is always the local and the regional services that are the first to go, a vital window lost into local communities. In March this year the BBC announced that they would be cutting 20% of jobs in our

BBC orchestras in England and also cutting the BBC singers altogether. If you have not seen the BBC singers in action I would encourage you to have a look at BBC iPlayer and look at the BBC Last Night of the Proms, which happened at the weekend, and their fantastic performance. They are completely unique and they are the UK's only fulltime professional choir. The backlash to the BBC's announcement was fantastic, we had so much support from across the music industry, from the wider public, from amateur choirs who made videos in support of the singers, and the BBC singers have now, we hope, got a secure future. (*Applause*) Thank you.

Thank you to all of our BBC stewards and the BBC singers' stewards who have been working with us around the clock to try and save those jobs. The thing is, what I say again and again is the BBC is not the enemy here, the issue is the fact that the funding has been cut by the Government so significantly and they have a difficult choice to make, the BBC is trying to make significant cuts in lots of areas and at the end of the day it impacts audiences and members of the British public.

What this motion calls for is support for the BBC, properly funded BBC with a secure future offering secure jobs on decent pay and conditions. I move this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** National Union of Journalists to second, and Equity and Prospect want to come down here.

**Seamus Dooley** (*NUJ, Assistant General Secretary*): Incongruously and improbably first-time speaker at Congress. (*Applause*) Probably a good place to start will be a



musical note. Louis Armstrong famously declared, “If you have to ask what jazz is you’ll never know.” The same, delegates, applies to public service broadcasting, the true value of public service broadcasting in UK is best understood if you close your eyes and imagine a British media landscape without the BBC, a landscape dominated by Murdoch and his cronies in a parallel universe for political analysts and is dominated by the incisive commentary of the B-list cast of GB News. Think about that the next time you are going to tweet against the BBC.

The current plight of the BBC is no accident. It is a direct result of a systematic attack on public service broadcasting by a parade of Tory prime ministers and culture secretaries intent on the destruction of public service broadcasting. The freezing of the licence fee for a decade was a deliberate and strategic undermining of public service broadcasting, an act of culture vandalism. These attacks are as pernicious and as deliberate as the attacks on the NHS and the attacks on public services. They are part of a pattern and say what you will about the Tories they are certainly consistent.

George Bernard Shaw, an NUJ member, used to say that the definition of a cynic was someone who knew the price of everything and the value of nothing. Yes, this is a cynical government but what is worse they know the value and they do not care.

Local radio is a window on the world for many listeners and today the NUJ has called for an urgent equality impact assessment on those not just at risk of redundancy but the minority and disadvantaged groups because we believe the BBC is in breach not just of its public service obligations but on the Equality Act. I am proud of our members who have been on strike and work to rule in defence of public service

broadcasting. Yes, the BBC is not perfect but I do want to use this opportunity to call on trade unionists to remember that BBC workers are trade union members who have no responsibility for the current crisis. In criticising the BBC, and you will and I do, be careful not to fall into the trap of strengthening the agenda of those who are intent on destroying public service broadcasting, those who sound eloquent in their criticism, but remember there is nothing more eloquent than a vested interest disguised as a point of principle, and it is to those people, I say go and dance on someone else's grave, save the BBC from itself and from this bloody Government.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** Equity.

**David John** (*Equity*): Speaking in support of the composite motion and to our amendment to the motion, which has been accepted. Thanks for that. President, Congress, we strongly support this. We just wanted to include audio performers. We at Equity are big supporters of the BBC, of course, but we do not always approve of the people who run it. We called for the resignation of the Chair of the BBC and Tory donor, Richard Sharp, after the discovery of his cosy relationship with the Prime Minister at the time, who gave him his job and, of course, we were delighted when he finally went.

Audio actors rarely get the opportunity to have a salaried job. We alongside the MU are the original gig economy and we live a precarious and freelance life. We do not often get offered the rights that a salaried worker gets, holiday pay, pension contributions, and very importantly for us, residuals. You may have heard the result

of the Musicians' Union survey today saying half of their members are on less than £14,000 annually. Our own research at the University of Warwick in our report recently not here to help, which shows the abject failure of the Universal Credit System for creative workers, discovered that the average in the cultural and creative industries is £15,270 before tax.

So, back to the BBC. The BBC has a great tradition in radio drama, it is world renowned, radio drama companies known as "the Rep" it was formed in 1939 when it had 50 actors, more or less, and it basically invented radio drama. It is a brilliant thing to have invented. It has been copied throughout the world. By the 1980s, however, it was down to 30 actors, and by 1999 15, and now it is down to eight. These were salaried jobs, good union agreements, with holiday pay, pension contributions, and residuals. The output of audio drama has shrunk drastically at the BBC. We have lost Friday drama, we have lost the weekend drama, we have lost the Woman's Hour drama slot, and the BBC singers and the orchestras; and our comrades at the MU are of course now vulnerable to more of these types of cuts. They are nothing short of cultural vandalism.

We just want, finally, to say that alongside the MU we want the BBC to be properly funded, financed, nurtured, supported, the licence fee model to be protected, so that we can retain at least some good union jobs as we can continue our struggle in our lives of precarity and we want the BBC, I will say it again, they are the envy of the world, we want them to continue with their mission to inform, educate, and entertain. Please support this composite. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thank you. Prospect.

**Christine Daniel** (*Prospect*): Supporting the composite on the future of the BBC.

The BBC is a national treasure, a public service broadcaster that is the envy of the world, bringing us independent, local, national, and global news in an era of polarisation and disinformation, creating incredible television drama that brings the family together on the sofa and putting British stories on screens around the world. Broadcasting moments, our sporting triumphs, and gut-wrenching defeat that unite the nation, and as one of the biggest unions in the BBC our Bectu members are critical to all of this, working behind the scenes to bring you the content that you love.

This national treasure has come under sustained attack in recent years. Political decisions to freeze the licence fee has seen the BBC's real terms income fall dramatically leading to job losses across the organisation and significant cuts to local services. Our talented members and those in our sister unions, the MU, NUJ, Equity, and The Writers' Guild, are suffering the brunt of these job cuts. These cuts are an act of cultural vandalism and they are an intentional one because they have been accompanied by relentless attacks on its independence from the Government, threats to abolish the licence fee funding model, accusations of political bias, and the appointment of a Chair who failed to declare he had secured a loan for the Prime Minister who gave him the job.

The BBC will not always get it right, no organisation does, but it remains the shining beacon of broadcasting around the world and it must be defended. That is why we have been running our hashtag and More than a Licence campaign to celebrate the

first 100 years of the BBC as the bedrock of British culture, and ensure it plays a leading role in the next 100 years of our cultural lives.

The licence fee model is crucial to its success. Its opponents have completely failed to put forward an alternative that would enable the BBC to continue delivering its mission to inform, educate, and entertain us. Some politicians who have supported the licence fee are now criticising the BBC for having to implement the very cuts they have caused. Their actions have consequences and we must make this clear as a formal review into the BBC's funding model is expected in the Autumn. The Bectu sector of Prospect will be fighting for the licence fee model and a sustainable funding settlement that keeps pace with inflation, enables long-term planning, and ensures that independence and world-leading status of the BBC is here to stay. Congress, please stand with us and support the composite. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Composite 20 is in front of you. I remind you the General Council's position is to support the Composite. All those in favour? Hands down. All those against? Okay, that is carried.

*Composite 20 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Moving on to Composite 21, Solidarity with Ukraine. The General Council support the motion and I will call on the General Secretary to explain the position on behalf of the General Council once it has been moved by GMB, seconded by ASLEF, and supported by NUM. Other speakers in this debate will be PCS, Unite, and Community. Barbara, go ahead.

## **C21 Solidarity with Ukraine**

### **Motion 71, 72 and amendment**

Congress unequivocally condemns Russia's illegal, aggressive invasion of Ukraine.

Congress notes:

- i. the systematic repression of free trade unions under Putin and Lukashenko, and their suppression in the occupied territories of Ukraine since 2014
- ii. appeals from Ukrainian unions for moral and material aid, including the means of Ukraine's self-defence
- iii. that those who suffer most in times of war are the working class, and that the labour movement must do all it can to prevent conflict; however, that is not always possible.
- iv. the TUC's proud history of solidarity with victims of fascist, imperialist aggression including its support for arms to the Spanish Republic. As trade unionists we are inherently anti-imperialistic, and our job is to fight imperialism and tyranny at every opportunity. We recognise that a victory for Putin in Ukraine will be a success for reactionary authoritarian politics across the world
- v. the horrendous human and environmental cost of the Ukraine conflict. Millions of people have been forced to abandon their homes and flee, while many others have lost their lives
- vi. the Russian programme of ethnic cleansing
- vii. that trade unions across Ukraine have shown true solidarity and support by offering shelter and food to refugees. ASLEF has worked closely with Ukrainian rail unions and seen the tremendous work that they have done to support workers in these times of conflict.

Congress affirms:

- a. its support for civil and labour rights in Russia and Belarus and the immediate release of trade union prisoners
- b. its belief that there can be no just or enduring peace while the Russian state continues its denial of Ukrainian sovereignty

- c. its solidarity with the Ukrainian people, including refugees whose sanctuary has been delayed or denied by the UK government
- d. that re-construction of Ukraine must have labour and union values at its centre.

Congress supports:

1. the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from all Ukrainian territories occupied since 2014
2. Ukrainian unions' calls for financial and practical aid from the UK to Ukraine
3. a peaceful end to the conflict that secures the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the support and self-determination of the Ukrainian people
4. the full restoration of labour rights in Ukraine and a socially-just reconstruction and re development programme that embeds collective bargaining and rejects deregulation and privatisation
5. TUC work, and facilitation of affiliates' engagement, with the main Ukrainian trade union centres (FPU/KVPU) and acknowledges the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign.

Congress therefore instructs the General Council to:

- I. send solidarity to all Ukrainian trade unionists who are fighting for workers' rights and against imperialism every day
- II. engage with Ukrainian trade unions from both trade union centres, and a wide range of union members and ideas
- III. stand with Ukrainian people in the UK and support them in whatever means available until they can safely return home.

**Mover: GMB**

**Seconder: ASLEF**

**Supporter: NUM**

**Barbara Plant (GMB):** Proud to be moving this motion of solidarity with Ukraine.

First of all, I would like to thank ASLEF and NUM for being part of this composite and for their constructive approach in those discussions. (*Applause*) Congress, life changed for millions of people on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine was an appalling violation of international law that has left a trail of war crimes in its wake. The atrocities in Bucha and Iziun shocked the world. More than 700,000 children have been deported from Ukraine to Russia. Trade union activists have disappeared in the occupied territories as Russian forces advanced. Congress, our policies and the principles of our movement demand that we work to secure

peace. (*Applause*) They also demand that we stand with the oppressed and the attacked in their hour of need. As internationalists we should set out a strong collective response to the injustice and injury that is being inflicted upon the Ukrainian people. Congress, our solidarity must know no borders.

For decades the Putin and Lukashenka regime have subverted and suppressed trade unions. The leadership of the Belarus Congress of Democratic Trade Unions were imprisoned earlier this year. Just last week the Russian state declared the International Transport Workers Federation to be an undesirable organisation with potentially severe consequences for the workers covered by the ITF Agreements. Free trade unions are suppressed in the occupied regions of Ukraine.

Congress, we demand the release of all trade union prisoners and we stand with all free trade unionists in their struggle to protect and advance workers' rights.

(*Applause*) We also cannot ignore failings at home. For too long oligarch's money has been spent unhindered in the UK. In the City of London and in our politics, and our own government shamefully advised on how workers' rights could be weakened in Ukraine. That is why the motion calls for the full restoration of workers' rights in Ukraine which are restricted by the Ukrainian government under marshal law. This must be accompanied by a reconstruction programme that rejects privatisation and deregulation. For Ukrainian workers justice must follow the suffering of them all. The motion echoes United Nations' call for the withdrawal of Russian forces from all illegally occupied territories.



In bringing this motion we listened carefully to the Ukrainian unions. They are struggling to support their members many of whom are critical health and infrastructure workers, who are targeted during Russian attacks. Many trade union members are now here in the UK, they need our support, and many trade union members are now serving on the front lines: that is why we are calling for aid. Our Ukrainian union siblings did not choose conflict, they want peace, but Putin intends to extinguish democracy and fundamental labour rights. He denies even the idea of a separate free Ukrainian nation. They are fighting for their survival. As Oleksandra Matviichuk, the Ukrainian Nobel Peace Laureate said, “Peace cannot be reached by a country under attack laying down its arms, that would not be peace but occupation.”

One of the inspiring trade unionists I have met is Ivanna Khrapko, she is the Chair of the Youth Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine. Earlier this week in a message to TUC delegates she asked: “How can we negotiate with someone who just wants to kill us, to destroy us as a nation. Of course we want peace, more than anything, but we want a just peace without occupiers in our country.”

Congress, we want peace and there will be no just or enduring peace if Ukraine is forced to a settlement on Putin’s terms. The motion in front of you is a serious and practical statement of solidarity. I am proud that it is supported by Ukrainian trade unionists. Eighty-five years ago this Congress sent a message to the Spanish people of a further practical expression of sympathy, hope, and encouragement, in the dark hours of their struggle to carry on until their fight for democracy and liberty had been overwhelmingly won. Let us send a message in that same spirit today. Stand with Ukraine, stay with Ukraine, and solidarity, solidarity with our Ukrainian trade union

sisters and brothers, solidarity in their struggle for freedom, and solidarity until that day of peace when all workers are free. Please support. (*Applause*)

**The President:** ASLEF to second.

**Simon Weller** (*ASLEF, Asst. General Secretary*): Thank you, Congress. To be honest, I do not think I could add any more to those powerful words from Barbara but I just want to reinforce two points that she made. One is that the labour reform legislation that predates the invasion, the briefing documents that we have copies of bear the logo of the British Embassy in Kiev. Let it be no surprise that the neo-liberal British government has been advising the neo liberal government in Ukraine on labour reform, and we all know what reform means. The trade unions in Ukraine need our solidarity. They are facing the same issues that we face in terms of the attacks by the neo-liberals. But let's make one thing very clear, trade unions are not banned in Ukraine, many, many trade unionists are fighting on the front lines, and those trade unions the FPU, and the KVPU, are supporting their members through really difficult times.

What Barbara did say is the International Transport Workers Federation, which represents transport workers and many of the transport unions in this room are affiliated to it, they have been banned by the Putin government, which is going to affect a lot of seafarers. The ITF have been backing both seafarers from the Russian nation and the Ukrainian nation. They did not discriminate on grounds of religion or race, or nationality, or what their government was, they were there to support trade unionists in the way that we all do.

I think that is the message that I am going to take from that, we have relationships with the Ukrainian rail unions, we have relationships with the Ukrainian trade union centres, and we have listened to what they want and that is our solidarity and our practical assistance. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

**The President:** As Chris from the NUM is coming up to support I make it clear I am also calling an additional speaker in this debate, which is the FBU.

**Chris Kitchen** (*NUM, General Secretary*): Speaking in support of Composite 21. Delegates, I have been surprised by the amount of misinterpretation placed on this composite. It is not the intention of this composite to prolong the war in Ukraine. We all wish to see an end to the war as soon as possible but it has to be an end on the terms that the Ukrainian people accept. It should be their choice what happens in their country. The last delegation I went on to the Ukraine was in February 2022 to Kiev, returning the day before the illegal invasion by Russia. When speaking to workers trade unionists and local officials I expected the mass of Russian forces on the Ukrainian borders to be their main concern. It was not. Their main concerns were the same as ours, defending terms, conditions, and wages, defending against privatisation and the casualisation of work, a Covid recovery that was to be paid for by the workers.

Speaking to the miners union officials they informed me that they mainly organised in the Donbas region mines, and they had very few members still working in the mines, something the NUM can relate to. The reason for that was since the illegal

annexation of Crimea in 2014 Russia has been supporting and supplying weapons to keep a conflict in the East of the Donbas going, which had resulted in most of the mines being too dangerous to work. Most of its members had found other jobs, were unemployed, or had taken up arms to defend their homes. Thousands have lost their lives in this conflict before the latest illegal invasion by Russia. Workers and trade unionists in the Ukraine are asking for our support. Congress, please support the composite. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Thanks, Chris. I now bring in the General Secretary to explain the position on behalf of the General Council.

**The General Secretary (TUC):** Thank you, President. Congress, the General Council supports the motion with this explanation. The motion condemns Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and its terrible consequences for the Ukrainian people. It rightly offers strong support for Ukrainian workers, their unions, and Ukrainian refugees in the UK. In condemning the actions of the Russian government in Ukraine the reference to war crimes is phrased as "the Russian programme of ethnic cleansing". This term has contested definitions. However, a warrant for the arrest of President Putin by the International Criminal Court notes that "there are reasonable grounds to believe that he bears responsibility for the war crime of unlawful deportation of population and that of unlawful transfer of population from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation in prejudice of Ukrainian children." The motion calls for the withdrawal of all Russian forces from the territories occupied since 2014, that is, the internationally recognised borders of Ukraine. That is in line with demands of international law and the UN General Assembly call in February that

Russia should immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw all its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, but it should not be read as a precondition for negotiations aimed at concluding a just peace which must be a priority. With that explanation, Congress, we ask you to support. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Congress, I am going to be calling Unite, FBU, PCS, and Community, to speak in this debate. Unite.

**Gail Cartmail** (*Unite*): Speaking in support of Composite 21. Our union has had many thoughtful and lengthy debates about the dreadful conflict in Ukraine. In March 2022 we debated for hours and our branches across the United Kingdom responded most generously to the humanitarian appeal. We debated again at our policy conference in 2023 and reiterated our stance. So, therefore, we do unreservedly condemn Putin's invasion of Ukraine and stand in full solidarity with the millions who are victims of that attack.

It was reported in July the UN General Secretary's report on children in armed conflict names Russia among the worst violators of rights. We heard that among the growing civilian death toll in July were 550 children, 550 futures never realised. Unicef reported in August that nearly 1,000 children have now either been killed or seriously injured. This carnage is a humanitarian disaster which is why Unite reiterates its call for an immediate ceasefire and a withdrawal of all Russian forces from Ukraine, and in line with the oldest traditions of international trade union movement Unite believes wars are never in the interests of working people. The

motion refers to the Spanish Civil War. We are not convinced of this comparison. However, we know it is always working people and their families who pay the highest price and suffer most when conflicts erupt that are led by elite with fully different interests to their own. It is important to say Unite has stood for peace throughout the history of our union but we are not pacifists. The defence of internationally recognised borders is and must always be a just cause. Unite rejects any and all attempts by the UK government to use this conflict as a cover for its own failings, or indeed as an excuse to introduce unpopular and unacceptable policies.

So we continue to stand in solidarity with the people in unions of Ukraine, we reiterate our call for all efforts to be exerted to achieve peace based on common security justice, and for the full respect of human rights and international law, and for negotiations to be supported by governments at the highest of levels. Finally, let us agree, Congress, to seek to strengthen links with Ukrainian trade unions and support their rights to organise freely and especially recognise their role in building a more just and democratic post-war reconstruction. Congress, I am sure you will support this composite and I am sure you will send your solidarity and your heartfelt condolences to the families torn apart and terrorised by this war. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause)*

**The President:** FBU.

**Jamie Hill (FBU):** The invasion by Russia was a crime in pursuit of narrow interests of the Putin regime and we condemn it. We speak as the union which brought the first ever motion to Congress on Palestinian rights, the first union to affiliate to the

anti-apartheid movement, and a founding union of Justice for Colombia. There have been some powerful words in the debate so far but let's not distract ourselves from the original motion and the undertones of this composite, which is one of UK military intervention. We are proud of our history of internationalism and we oppose this composite. The space for workers to debate this is being shut down and I am proud that our union creates a space to discuss the context of the war, the role of NATO, and who is guiding this war.

Whilst we support elements of the composite, indeed FBU members have delivered practical aid by a convoy supporting those suffering in this conflict, but we do not believe that the escalation of war offers anything to the working class in Russia or Ukraine. Whilst the motion mentions opposition to imperialism and imperialist interests they exist on both sides of this conflict. Anyone who reviews the military interventions of the past 20 years must recognise that, you only have to look at Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. Those wars have turned their worlds into a never ending spiral of conflict, destroying societies, and victims later being blamed for becoming refugees.

During this year's Congress we have heard about the rise of the Far Right. These elements exist in both Russia and Ukraine. We oppose these groups and we do not support them now only to become a threat in the future, and yet the composite stays silent on this issue. This composite talks of the opposition to imperialism so the first duty of any anti-imperialist is to oppose the imperialism of your own government. That does not mean endorsing NATO, the escalation of war with NATO weapons, NATO funds, or NATO advisers. This composite will only serve to line us up with

the Tory government who are waging class warfare against our people at home as we have been discussing this week. We do not trust the government at home and we do not trust them abroad.

Now, I am surprised again at the General Council for opening Congress with a commitment to world peace and then supporting a composite that ultimately is predicated on expanding UK military efforts and the proliferation of UK arms, which will only lead to the deaths of civilians for the next 20 years, the largest victims now and in every war since World War II. The common interests of Ukrainian and Russian people are not served by our country providing military and practical aid.

Now, as the son of a paratrooper I would say this again, remember the 179 and the 454, the number of the UK military personnel lost in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Remember that a bayonet is a weapon with a worker at both ends. Remember that there is no lasting peace through superior fire power. Congress, we cannot simply support a motion that is predicated by an expansion of UK arms to others. If your union does oppose this composite, sit up straight and put your hand up high.

Remember the millions of nameless victims of past imperialist endeavours, the 179 and the 454, only the dead have seen the end of war, but it does not have to be that way, and another world is possible. Congress, I implore you to oppose Composite 21.

*(Applause)*

**The President: PCS.**



**Mark Serwotka** (*PCS, General Secretary*): and last time delegate, it will be the last time I will be here addressing the TUC Congress. (*Applause*) Can I say that I could not be prouder that the last speech I will make will be to call for unequivocal support and solidarity for the people of Ukraine, the trade unions of Ukraine, and those people who are currently suffering occupation, oppression, brutalisation, mass murder, targeting of their infrastructure, in a brutal Russian invasion. Congress, if our movement stands for anything we stand for international solidarity and that means we must stand with the people and unions of Ukraine.

We are not the government. We are an independent British labour and trade union movement and it is therefore essential that we send our unequivocal support to those people who are watching. Congress, we heard earlier of the mention of Ivanna, someone who has addressed my own union's executive on a number of occasions, an incredibly brave woman who addressed our Congress when bombs were raining down in Kiev and sirens were going on in the background. Therefore, not a single delegate here should have any hesitation in calling unequivocally without any conditions for the Russian military aggression to stop, for the immediate removal of all Russian occupying forces from the land of Ukraine.

When we vote, Congress, let's remember these people are watching, these people who have suffered indiscriminate bombings, mass graves, civilians being targeted and tortured, water and electricity supplies being bombed, a country sent into the freezing winter without the basics that we take for granted. Who could hesitate in condemning all of that. Whatever the interests of NATO and whatever the debate about the interests of Biden, and Sunak, it is Russia that has invaded Ukraine, it is Russia that is

murdering Ukrainian men, women, and children, and to do anything other than send our solidarity to them today I think would be a major mistake. (*Applause*)

Congress, we have to say this, for those who argue this is a proxy war and its competing imperialist powers are the main issue you make a very basic mistake. The main issue is the occupied people and trade unions of Ukraine and we should stand with them first and foremost and not relegate them to the international games that people mentioned. (*Applause*) However, Congress, I do want to say this, we do believe the composite is flawed. We do believe the reference to the Spanish Civil War is wrong and we did have some reservations about the original motion. We think it is important to recognise that Biden and Sunak, and the rest, do have interests that are not in the interests of Ukrainian workers. They will seek to profiteer, they will seek to open up the country to privatisation and make massive profits. They will seek to impose crippling debts on the people of Ukraine so, Congress, I finish with this, our independent labour movement message should be loud and clear: we are with the Ukrainian people, we are with the Ukrainian trade unions, we want Russia out, only the people of Ukraine should decide what the settlement looks like, not Biden, not Putin, and not Rishi Sunak. We condemn the erosion of trade union rights in Ukraine and we call for Western powers to write off all the debts accumulated by the Ukrainian people and, finally, let us say this, hopefully unanimously, when workers and when people are oppressed, when they are invaded and when they are brutalised, the British trade union movement stands with you. Support the composite. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Community.

**Dean Cox** (*Community*): Proud to support this composite. At the core of our movement has always been the guiding principle of international solidarity with our brothers and sisters across the world. We stand shoulder to shoulder with them in their struggle against tyranny and against oppression. When brave republicans in the Spanish Civil War fought against the brutalising force of fascism within their own country we stood with them. When the German fascists marched across Europe questioning the very existence of millions in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and even Russia, we stood in defiance, united with one voice. So I ask Congress, when once again we see the spectre of authoritarianism march across Europe, when we see our brothers and sisters in Ukraine brutalised, their lands taken, and the very idea of their existence as individual people questioned, do we shy away from the mantle that has passed to us by other trade unionists of the past? Do we break our bonds of solidarity with those who ask merely for the affirmation of their right to exist? The answer to these questions must be a resounding and clear no.

The Russian state under Putin is a force that oppresses its own people with the baton, and now seeks to oppress Ukraine with the barrel of a gun. You do not compromise with a state like this. So hand Ukraine lands to Russia sends a message to dictators across the world that this is not morality, not solidarity, not compassion that makes the right, but the strength of your arm and your will to dominate. Congress, we cannot cast down the mantle that is passed to us. We cannot ignore the call for solidarity. We must support this motion and support our Ukrainian brothers and sisters in full liberation of their lands, to do anything less betrays the very foundations

of the movement. Support the tradition, the tradition of Internationalism solidarity, support the Ukrainian people, and please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** GMB to exercise their right of reply.

**Barbara Plant (GMB):** President, Congress, exercising the right of reply. Thank you to the delegates who have spoken in favour of the composite. A reply to points made during this discussion on this important issue, we are not seeking to limit debate. We welcome it. We are only calling for the aid that our Ukrainian counterparts are requesting and a reply to the delegate from the FBU who said that this motion is linked to arms sales, this objection is not based on the text of the motion. I understand the opposing point of view but the alternative is to deny Ukraine the means of self-defence. (*Applause*)

Congress, we know how this policy ends, it was the policy that created the embargo on Spain in the 1930s which doomed the Spanish to the republic and condemned the Spanish people to 40 years of fascism. We must not repeat that mistake. Finally, Congress, before and during this debate there has been online abuse against those unions that spoke in support of this motion. I am sure that all delegates would agree that this is unacceptable and I would like to thank colleagues in the hall for a dignified debate. (*Applause*) Congress, I ask you to send a strong statement of solidarity from this Congress. Please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

**The President:** Okay. Congress, Composite 21, Solidarity with Ukraine, is in front of you. Will all those in favour please show? Put your hands down. All those against? That is clearly carried. (*Applause*)

*Composite 21 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Congress, we are behind still. What I intend to do is take Composite 22 as the last item of business. Unfortunately, I will not be able to take other than the mover and the seconder and the General Council explanation. I hope people will be okay about that. We really do not have a lot of time. So, I will call paragraphs 4.9 to 4.14, Composite 22, The Right to Boycott. The General Council support the motion and I will be bringing in the General Secretary to explain the position on behalf of the General Council and apologies for delegates unable to be called in this debate. It is to be moved by NEU, seconded by Unison.

### **C22 Right to boycott**

#### **Motion 73 and amendments**

The current right-wing Israeli Government, having launched its biggest military incursion in the West Bank in two decades, is announcing new illegal settlements, expelling Palestinians from East Jerusalem and Masafer Yatta, demolishing homes and schools, and failing to prevent armed settlers from rampaging through villages killing and attacking Palestinians, destroying homes and agricultural lands.

The Israeli military has this year killed more than 180 Palestinians.

Congress further notes:

i. the government's Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill would undermine ethical investment and procurement by public bodies by restricting the consideration of human and workers' rights, international law and environmental

concerns, linked to the behaviour of a foreign state. It damages freedom of speech, local democracy, devolution and pension scheme members' rights ii. the legislation would shield the Israeli government from accountability, alongside companies complicit in its occupation, by legislating to silence those trying to achieve change.

Congress believes:

- a. any attempt to delegitimise the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions and to suggest that Palestinians should be denied the right to appeal to people of conscience for support, must be rejected
- b. the ability of public authorities, including public sector pension funds, to divest from companies responsible for violations of human rights should be defended
- c. such legislation could have blocked the boycott of goods and companies complicit in Apartheid South Africa.

Congress resolves to:

1. reaffirm support for Palestinian rights, including our commitment to “boycott the goods of companies who profit from illegal settlements, the occupation and the construction of the wall”.
2. support the Right to Boycott coalition
3. campaign with affiliates against the Bill.

**Mover: NEU**

**Seconder: UNISON**

**Louise Regan** (*National Education Union*): Congress, we have a very proud history in the trade union movement of standing in solidarity with the Palestinians. Today, Palestinians need that solidarity more than ever. After the election of Israel's most extreme Far Right ethnonationalist government in its history, we have seen this government ramp up its system of oppression which is a consensus of the respected international human rights community now recognises as meeting the definition of apartheid. It is a government that has embarked on the annexation of the West Bank, accelerated colonisation of Palestinian land, the destruction of Palestinian homes and schools, a government that is encouraging and supporting armed settlers to conduct pogroms of Palestinian villages, 17 villages attacked by settlers in one week alone earlier this year with homes set ablaze.

Our government instead of confronting this reality continues to treat Israel as a democratic ally. Instead of subjecting it to sanctions as it did to Russia, it launches a roadmap that promises an extension of free trade, removes any principle of excluding settlements, and contains not a single mention of the word “occupation” or “apartheid”.

Rather than taking action as it has with Ukraine to encourage public bodies to introduce their own divestments and boycotts, it instead plans to introduce an anti-boycott law specifically designed to prevent public bodies from divesting in companies complicit in supporting Israel’s violations of international law. If passed, this bill would undermine ethical investment and procurement by public bodies, by restricting the consideration of human and workers’ rights, international law, and environmental concerns linked to the behaviour of a foreign state. It would disrupt a whole range of legitimate campaigns to social and climate justice. That is why a coalition of more than 70 civil society groups have joined PSC to oppose the bill.

Although the bill affects core freedom the government haave made clear that the main target is the Palestinians, boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement. Congress, this bill uniquely seeks to deprive the Palestinian people the right to call for a non-violent tactic of boycott and divestment to end their oppression. Importantly, this motion calls for not only opposition to the anti-boycott bill but rejection of any attempt to delegitimise the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions or to suggest that Palestinians should be denied the right to appeal to people of conscience for support.

Finally, Congress, we must make clear to the Labour Party that in opposing the bill at its third reading they must oppose the bill in its entirety with no attempt to delegitimise the Palestinian's call for bds. Congress, as I said at the start, we have a long and proud history of supporting the Palestinian people but time is running out as more and more Palestinian land is stolen. We have to act now. As Nelson Mandela said, "We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of Palestinians." Congress, none of us are free until all of us are free. Please support the motion and continue to fight for justice and freedom for Palestine. I move.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** Unison to second.

**Liz Wheatley** (*Unison*): Seconding the composite and thanking the NEU for submitting the original motion. The Economic Activity and Public Body Overseas Matters Bill is actually really outrageous. It is unreasonable, unnecessary, and unwieldy. It will result in a catalogue of consequences that are even longer than its title. It is yet another attempt by a Tory government to play political games with our pensions and our public services and, most importantly, with Palestinian lives, and we need to stop them. Each year the UK spends about £38bn procuring goods and services and for a long time we have been calling for public sector bodies to have ethical procurement and supply chains, including workers and human rights within those.

This Bill will stop us doing that, it will make it illegal for public bodies to take a political stand against the conduct of companies or states when procuring or investing.



It will not just affect our work on Palestine but all over the world from the manufacture of solar panels using Uyghurs forced labour in China to the production of medical rubber gloves in Sri Lanka to our work around the climate emergency. The Tories are trying to say that public bodies can only invest or act in line with their foreign policy. We cannot allow in our campaigning the racism and bigotry of James Cleverley, of Suella Braverman, or Rishi Sunak. This would stop us campaigning for the local government pension scheme which is our pension, it is our deferred wages, it will stop us from campaigning to divest in companies profiting from the illegal settlement in the occupied West Bank and companies that are therefore in breach of international law. This Bill will give a green light to the Israeli government to continue with its policies of apartheid and annexation.

Our class has a proud tradition of fighting for justice and that includes boycotts, from cotton to the buses in Montgomery, to apartheid in South Africa. This Bill would have prevented all of those campaigns, campaigns that were part of changing the world. Earlier this year I had the privilege of going to Palestine on a Unison delegation. Whilst there we met ordinary Palestinians forced into doing extraordinary things because of life in the occupied territories. They were trade unionists, factory workers, education workers, and there were campaigners against the detention of children. We visited Al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights organisation that had just been proscribed by the Israeli government for being terrorists. Instead of telling us what they were doing they asked what we were going to do about it, about the occupation, and about the UK investing in property from that occupation. BDS is central to our answer to Al-Haq and our answer to the Palestinians, and it is central to

our fight for a better world. Support this composite and fight for the right to boycott.

*(Applause)*

**The President:** I bring in the General Secretary to give an explanation from the General Council.

**The General Secretary (TUC):** Congress, the General Council supports the motion with an explanation. Congress, we stand united in condemning Israel's ongoing illegal occupation of Palestinian territory and in expressing our deep concern about the escalating violence in the West Bank. Congress, we also oppose the Government's Economic Activities of Public Bodies Bill, which will breach fundamental rights of freedom of expression and speech and contradicts the UK's commitment on human rights, responsible business conduct, and international law. This motion references the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement. In supporting the motion we reaffirm the policy adopted by Congress in 2021 to, "boycott the goods of companies who profit from illegal settlements, the occupation, and the construction of the wall", and with that explanation the General Council asks you to support the motion. Thank you, Congress. *(Applause)*

**The President:** Okay, Composite 22 is before you, the Right to Boycott. All those in favour please show? Hands down. All those against? That is carried.

*Composite 22 was CARRIED.*

**The President:** Congress, Composite 10 and 14 have also again fallen off the agenda. That will be rescheduled for tomorrow with some other outstanding business.

I have a couple of things before we go, a couple of important things. The first thing, there has been a request for LGBT delegates and visitors to come to the stage here immediately Congress finishes if you want to be part of a group photo, that is happening immediately Congress finishes, and also Black Worker delegates, and visitors, also if they want to take part in a photo to meet in the Congress Hall 10 minutes before Congress starts tomorrow.

Before we close, I want to announce the results of the General Council elections – do not get too excited! There are no contested elections this year, all members of the General Council and the GPC are elected unopposed. Thanks to them for all their hard work.

That concludes this afternoon's business. A reminder there are various meetings taking place this evening, some of the meetings are in the Congress Guide, the latest updates check on the TUC website, make the most of all that is available at this Congress, have a nice evening, and see you at 9.30 tomorrow.

*Congress adjourned.*