THE 158TH ANNUAL TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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Held at:

The Brighton Centre, Kings Road, Brighton BN1 2GR

on:

Sunday, 13th September 2026,

Monday, 14th September 2026,

Tuesday, 15th September 2026

and

Wednesday, 16th September 2026

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Congress President:

STEVE GILLAN

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PROCEEDINGS – DAY TWO

(Monday, 14th September 2026)

…….

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SECOND DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER 2026

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

The President: Will delegates please take their seats and would Congress come to order. Good morning, Congress. I hope you all had a lovely evening. Thank you to Holy Trinity Music Scholars, the very talented primary school choir from Dartford, who have been playing for us this morning. (*Applause*)

As at the beginning of yesterday's session we will now watch another short video celebrating union wins this year. Please cheer if you see your union and feel free to loudly cheer others. This is our opportunity to celebrate our wins.

Delegates, please note that some of today's videos may contain flashing and strobe-like effects.

Video shown to Congress.

Congress, can I remind you of our Statement of Conduct which I read out in full yesterday and was circulated to all delegates as part of the registration process. This is now on the

screen.

Congress, I now call upon Rab Donnelly, Chair of the General Purposes Committee, to report to us on the progress of business and other Congress arrangements.

Rab Donnelly (*Chair, GPC*): Good morning, Congress. The General Purposes Committee has approved a further two composite motions: Composite Motion 16 and Composite Motion 17. Both composites will be circulated to delegates this morning.

Congress, the GPC has approved three emergency motions:

- Emergency Motion 1 on the sale of DB Cargo UK, which will be moved by ASLEF and seconded by RMT
- Emergency Motion 2 on the institutional racist targeting, harassment and humiliation of Professor Jason Arday, which will be moved by UCU and seconded by NEU
- Emergency Motion 3 on Justice for Colombia, which will be moved by NASUWT and seconded by POA

I will report further to you on the progress of business and other GPC decisions when necessary throughout Congress. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much Rab. Delegates, I would like to formally welcome colleagues from the TUC Black Activist Programme to Congress. These trade union activists from 12 different unions have completed seven months of learning, development and collaboration through the London, East and South East Region Black Activists Programme. We are delighted that you joined us at Congress yesterday and today. You are all very welcome. (*Applause*)

SECTION 2: STRONG RIGHTS AT WORK AND PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION

The President: Congress, we will continue with Section 2 of the General Council report: Strong Rights at Work and Protection from Discrimination, from page 22. Please can I remind speakers to scan their badge before they get on stage and of the importance of keeping to time so we can get through the business of Congress.

Congress, in relation to that time, we will be doing one on a stopwatch as well as the limit timer just so you also know that the limit timer is accurate. But just so you also know, the General Secretaries have been told in their delegations this morning to tell delegates when their time is up when the red light comes on that means you stop. That is fair to all unions and there are no exceptions. Thank you, Congress.

I now call paragraph 3.12, Motion 39, School support staff and the government. The General Council supports the motion moved by the GMB and seconded by UNISON.

School support staff and the government

Pushpa Makwana (*GMB*) moved Motion 39. *She said:* Good morning all. I am a first-time speaker at the TUC. (*Applause*) In this motion we talk about fighting so our members' voices are heard. Our school support staff have been doing just that. I have worked as a school support staff for over 25 years. I work one-to-one with children and young people who need additional support, helping them access education, build confidence and achieve their potential.

Let me tell you about one young person I have supported, a year 3 pupil with cerebral palsy. Without the support I provided he would not have been able to have full access to the classroom and learn along with his classmates. I have worked along with his physiotherapist supporting him step by step as he learned to walk and become more independent and confident. Seeing his confidence grow, knowing I have played a small part in helping his self-belief is something that I will always carry with me. This is what school support staff do every single day. We do not just support children to learn. We help them believe in themselves. We build confidence. We help them achieve things that may never have been thought possible. Every child is different, with their own individual needs, and deserves the right to be supported to thrive.

Supporting them requires time, patience, skill, experience, duty of care and trust. Let me tell you absolutely clearly, we are not just an extra pair of hands: we are skilled professionals. (*Applause*) We are essential to our school support and our children's future.

Congress, workers like myself in the recognised support staff unions - GMB, UNISON and Unite - have organised to demand our own negotiating body, the SSSNB. Teaching assistants, care workers, care assistants, cooks, lunch-time assistants, office staff and many more are standing with us shoulder to shoulder. We need a genuine negotiating table where we can properly bargain over our work, our pay and our conditions. We are so close to achieving this, but, Congress, we must get this right. We need centrally funded paid professional recognition for our job evaluations. Most posts are women. Many are already facing poverty pay. If we are doing the same essential job, you deserve, we deserve to be properly recognised and properly valued. We deserve pay justice, not just promises.

Let me make this clear. We cannot allow academies to continue creating different pay and conditions because they prioritise excessive executive pay over their profits. As AI becomes more common in our classrooms, technology must support our work, not undermine us. Congress, we support staff love what we do. Now is the time for the government to value what we do. Labour must truly make work pay for support staff, not drag their feet in delivering what they promised. If we do not create standard job roles, fair evaluation at the end of this Parliament we could be back to square one. Reform and the Tories do not believe in equal pay for equal work and our voices are not heard and our support staff are once again are treated as an afterthought, even branded a mums' army by the Tories.

Congress, our members deserve better, our children deserve better, our schools deserve better. That means delivering SSSNB that GMB, UNISON and Unite have fought for. Secure women professional recognition and a real voice at the negotiating table. Let's not miss the opportunity. Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause and cheers*)

The President: Pushpa, for a first-time delegate that was excellently delivered and on time as well. Well done. I now call UNISON as the seconder.

Glen Williams (*UNISON*) seconded Motion 39. *He said*: Congress, President, I am moving the amendment to Motion 39. Can I just explain that I won't be saying School Support Staff Negotiating Body every time I want to refer to the SSSNB, or that red light and his new toy, the stopwatch, will be on quicker than Reform denying another dodgy donation.

Comrades, there are nearly 750,000 school support staff who work in England alone. More than 90% of them are women. Most of them are part time, paid term time only and earn just above the minimum wage. This should be an embarrassment to any Government. These support staff open and close our schools, they clean those schools, feed meals to the children, administer school budgets, medicate, educate and keep our children safe. This scandal of low pay exploitation of disability should have ended in 2010 with the start of the SSSNB, but in 2010 the new Tory Government brutally removed the Labour SSSNB plans,

removed by the then Secretary of State, a man who has snorted more coke than Tommy "Ten Names" Robinson - a certain Michael Gove. Please feel free to boo. (Cries of "Boo!") Pantomime!

School support staff were robbed of the chance to be properly recognised, trained and paid with a new negotiating body specifically set up for them and, as you have heard, UNISON alongside GMB and Unite have spent years making the case that school support staff deserve their own national negotiating machinery. So of course we welcome the reintroduction of the SSSNB. But Congress, like the creation of the National Care Service, like the abolition of the 50% ballot thresholds, the creation of the crucial part of the SSSNB cannot be kicked down the road, and must look at job roles and school support staff pay now, and not, as is feared, in two to three years' time.

This scandal of exploitation has to end, and if we are serious about changing it, then we must also be serious about funding it. If you want to rebuild education, invest properly in the services and support and support staff for children, young people and families rely on every single day. And to the Prime Minister we say if your plans really are to kick the SSSNB can down the road, we believe it will be really helpful to stick them on the forthcoming bonfire. In other words, it would be really 'andy to burn 'em. Do you see what I did there? (*Laughter*)

Congress, let's make re-established SSSNB more than a talking shop. We want pay justice for school support staff, pay justice for school support staff, pay justice for school support staff. Congress, please support, thank you. (*Applause)*

The President: Thank you very much, UNISON. I am now going to go to the vote. All those in favour please show? All those against please show? That is carried.

*Motion 39 was **CARRIED**.*

I now call Motion 40, Crisis in post-16 education. The General Council support the motion. Moved by UCU and seconded by ECS. UNISON have also indicated a wish to speak and I will be taking UNISON as a speaker as well.

Crisis in post-16 education

Dyfrig Jones (*President, UCU*) moved Motion 40. *He said:* It was a wonderful experience to sit in this hall yesterday and hear so many delegates talk about the importance of education. A good solid education is the foundation on which many of our working lives are built but, as we heard yesterday, education is also an essential part of our work as trade unionists, teaching us how to organise, teaching us about our rights and how to stand up for them.

Most importantly perhaps, we also heard yesterday about the social importance of education and the role that our teachers can play in building resistance to the far right.

We know that every educator in this hall is facing similar challenges of crushing workloads, fewer resources than they need to do their jobs properly, wages that simply have not kept up with inflation. The situation in post-16 education is particularly stark. Funding for adult education has been at a standstill since 2010. Some further education providers are having to dip into their general budgets in order to keep adult learning courses running, robbing Peter to pay Paul, and specialist adult education college providers are facing destructive budget cuts that raise serious questions about their futures.

In prison education it is equally stark. Prison educators have often been working under the most incredibly challenging conditions placing them at real risk to life and limb. Recently there was a change to the prison ed contract which means the work that they are deliver is not accredited fundamentally undermining the professional work that they do.

Things are no better in further education, again pay in colleges has long lagged behind equivalent pay in schools, workloads are unsustainable and they are getting worse. UCU is now preparing to ballot on industrial action for improvements that are long overdue (*Applause*) - a 10% pay rise, pay parity for teachers, a national agreement on workloads and a return to national bargaining.

And in higher education we are seeing the biggest crisis in living memory. There is nobody working in the sector today that can remember it being as bad as it is now. Tens of thousands of our members have been made redundant over the past few years. Courses have been closed up and down the country across the entire UK. And there is no light at the end of the tunnel. Every single year we are facing another round of bad news, another round of cuts. The funding model is fundamentally broken with 70% of our universities currently in deficit. And we know what happens when a university goes into deficit is they start targeting our members taking their jobs away or as some universities are doing, they have decided that the answer is to outsource, to take members away from being employed by universities and moving them out into subsidiary companies, often taking away their pensions or moving them to an inferior pension, driving their pay down even further and moving them on to inferior terms and conditions.

We need urgent government action. We need a funding settlement for the entire post-16 sector that addresses two decades of Tory austerity. We need an urgent government review of how higher and further education is funded so that we have a stable funding model for the future that puts the sector on a long-term footing and we need an end to outsourcing, whether that is in adult education, prison education, further education or in higher education. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Dyfrig. Seconded by EIS.

Mick Dolan (*EIS*) seconded Motion 40. *He said*: EIS is Scotland's largest union, representing teachers and lecturers in FE and in universities. I am pleased to be able to second this motion.

For decades, Governments of different political colours have subjected post-16 education to market forces, competition between institutions, funding driven by short-term priorities, commercialisation and the treatment of students, teachers and lecturers as a cost. When we entered over a decade of austerity, funding was cut, staffing was squeezed and expectations were increased. EIS Scotland has fought for over a decade to protect pay and jobs in the college sector.

And the university sector it is in crisis, too. The Scottish Government is already carrying out a review of sustainability of the higher education sector in conjunction with Universities Scotland. This is ongoing but there is evidence of a £200 to £300 million funding gap.

We should not be surprised that the system is now under enormous pressure but, Conference, but there is an important difference today: we now have a Labour Government. That creates political opportunity but we should be absolutely clear about what we expect. We need to change the system itself because education is not simply another government spending commitment. It is an investment in the foundations of our country. A properly funded FE and HE system gives employers the skilled workforce that they need, supports a stable economy, gives people the opportunity to change their lives and gives communities

the opportunity to prosper. Education also has a profound impact on health, improving opportunity, reducing inequality and giving people the knowledge and confidence to make informed choices about their lives. Even more fundamentally, education is essential to democracy. A healthy democracy needs citizens who can question, analyse, challenge and distinguish evidence from misinformation.

Education is one of the strongest defences democracy possesses. If we want a society that believes in evidence, reason and truth, we have to invest in the education system that creates it, and that means the people who deliver it. That does not happen by telling teachers and lecturers they must accept insecurity, excessive workloads and declining real terms rewards. We cannot build a productive economy while allowing further education to fall behind. We cannot build a democracy ---

The President: Can you finish up, please.

Mick Dolan: Please vote for the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: I now call UNISON.

Sandra Olward (*UNISON*) spoke in support of Motion 40. *She said:* Congress, the crisis in post-16 education is real. And as the largest union representing support staff in both

further and higher education, UNISON sees the consequences every day through our members working in universities, colleges and adult education. When we talk about two classes, we must remember that this is not only about the lecturers and teaching staff; it is also about those whom we represent. UNISON represents the cleaners, administrators, librarians, technicians, kitchen staff, catering workers and student support staff who make education possible. They too are paying the price for years of insecurity and a failed market-driven approach.

Congress, in higher education, institutions are making cuts, closing classes and restructuring services. Too often support staff are among the first to lose their jobs while those who remain face increasing workloads, burn-out and insecurity. Nearly half of support staff redundancies in the previous academic year were compulsory. More than 1,500 vacancies are also being held empty. This is not a strategy for recovery, Congress. It is managed decline.

The lesson of the last decade is clear - the market has failed. Through our Fund our Future campaign, UNISON is working to defend jobs, save higher education and make the case for a properly funded system that serves students, staff and communities, not market competition. At the same time, employers have stopped meeting nationally recognised terms and conditions and moved staff into subsidiary companies. This is unacceptable. No worker should see their pension rights, their terms and conditions or collective bargaining arrangements unwound through employment models designed to cut costs. We need to resource now.

In further education, chronic underfunding has creative a workforce crisis. Colleagues are struggling to recruit and retain staff because pay simply does not match the value of the work that we do. That is why UNISON is campaigning for a brighter future for further education. That means proper funding for colleges and a fully funded binding national bargaining settlement. Staff deserve fair pay, secure pay and national standards. And students deserve colleges that are properly resourced.

Congress, education is a public good so UNISON is proud to support this motion. We stand with the UCU in calling for sustainable funding, protection for jobs, a strategy for national bargaining and a post-education system that values everyone who works in it.

Congress, I want to tell you something, as a health and social care manager who also happens to be senior lecturer, I can tell you that these cuts have a significant impact on not just the staff. Think about the family members waiting at home for the staff to come home with their salary. Think about the people we support. Think about you going into hospital. Congress, please support the motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Congress, we are going to go to the vote. All those in favour please show? All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 40 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: Thank you. I will now call Motion 41, Education funding. The General Council support the motion. Moved by EIS, seconded by NASUWT and I will also be calling NAHT and NEU.

Education funding

Andrea Bradley (*EIS*) moved Motion 41. *She said:* President, Congress, my union believes fundamentally that education is a quintessential social good: good for individual citizens, good for communities, good for our whole society, both in the here and now and in the future. Over the last decade and a half, the politics of austerity and neoliberalism have waged a relentless onslaught on our public services, including education. Underinvestment in the service, underinvestment in our schools, underinvestment in our young people. Undervaluing of the teachers, support staff and fellow professionals, who work together in the collective human endeavour that is education.

Since 2010, education has been yet another public service struggling to deliver for our citizens because it has been starved of funding. And as if that were not enough of a reason to call for better investment, the EIS brings this motion to Congress today while populist and far-right politicians and activists, backed by billionaires, are stoking division and inciting violence within our communities, including in our school communities, through

misinformation and, disinformation, wilfully pitting one minoritised disadvantaged group against another, and are actively radicalising our young people, especially boys, in a dangerously wrong direction.

So, Congress, the EIS is seeking your support for this motion because we see education as an essential ingredient and an antidote to the poison of the far right. A well-funded education systems empowers young people to develop critical thinking skills, the ability to analyse information, distinguish between fact and opinion, challenge the false narratives concocted by the far right, develop informed views and participate effectively in democracy. With the threats to democracy such as they now are, the need for greater investment in education is so urgent. This motion articulates a vision for a better resourced education system as the route to a better society One that is unshakeably rooted in respect for democracy, rights and equality. One that is cemented in the understanding of how to build social cohesion, peace and collective prosperity.

Congress, the time to begin realising that vision is absolutely now. To invest much more strongly and securely in our education systems across the UK. To urgently commit to long-term strategic funding in our schools. The time is now to invest in education as one of our essential services, not only because it is the right thing to do but because it will save on spending to correct the harms that come from wilful neglect and underfunding of such a critical service later.

Congress, it seems that by the day the urgency for the need for the protection of the social contract through well-funded and quality education intensifies. This is not a “nice to have”, not a frivolity, it is an existential imperative, and we can afford it and afford to fulfil it.

The UK is the sixth biggest economy in the world. It is awash with wealth but that wealth is concentrated in the wrong places. We know that. We need to press for fairer taxation so that a much fairer share of that wealth can be invested in the public services that our citizens need and that our community cohesion depends on.

My union recently commissioned research by the Institute for Public Policy Research Scotland (IPPR). The research costed a series of our key demands and tested our hypothesis that a Scottish government meeting those demands and investing more in our schools would save Scotland money and benefit the economy in the longer term. The IPPR found that for less than a billion pounds of additional funding a year, Scotland could afford to cap all class sizes at 20, reverse a decade and a half’s worth of swingeing cuts to teacher numbers in early years education and get that vital early intervention right, employ more teachers overall, and vastly improve additional support needs provision for the almost half of children who now require it, cut teacher workloads and provide a free school meal to every single child and young person from aged three to 18 plus food over the holiday periods for the children who need that. Imagine that. Only an additional £850 million a year from a budget of about £70 billion would fund all of that in Scotland. It is not an insignificant amount of money but with political will, it is definitely doable. The IPPR research concluded that the immediate and future benefits outweigh the costs.

Needless to say, the EIS has been making the case for preventative spending to the Scottish Government and because we are cognizant of the funding arrangements between Westminster and Holyrood, we have brought the motion here. We brought it here because we believe it is that urgent.

I urge you to support this motion because the children and young people in our schools today are worth investing in and the quality of their education now will determine the quality of our future society. It is wealth, health, prosperity, social cohesion and our very democracy. It is as simple and as urgent as that. Congress, I move. Please support. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Andrea. I now call on NASUWT to second.

Dan Lister (*NASUWT*) seconded amended Motion 41. *He said*: Education funding is not simply about numbers on a spreadsheet, it is about the quality of education our children receive, the working lives of teachers and support staff and whether every child has the same opportunity to succeed.

NASUWT policy is clear that the Government should spend 6% of GDP on education. In 2009, education spending reached around 5.6% of GDP, but by 2025 it had fallen to 4.1%.

That is a substantial reduction in resources available to education. And now we are told that the core schools budget will grow by an average of just 0.9% per pupil per year, in real terms, over the spending review period from 2026 to 2029. At the same time the teachers' pay award is only partly funded, again leaving schools to fund a substantial shortfall from headroom that many schools simply do not have.

So what happens when schools cannot balance the books? They restructure, they reduce staffing, they increase in class sizes and they leave vacancies unfilled. They increase the workload for the staff who remain and they increasingly rely on temporary and supply staff. This is a vicious circle. Schools cut permanent posts because they cannot afford them, only to spend millions through profit-making agencies filling gaps and covering absence. The widespread use of profit-making agencies is just one example of the unwise use of education funding. Let's look also at CEO pay. Now there is nothing wrong with paying leaders properly, but when 88 academy trusts are paying their CEOs more than with £200,000 a year, including six receiving more than £300,000, we have to question whether this represents the best use of scarce education funding. The highest paid, the CEO of the Harris Education Federation, receives over half a million pounds a year.

Falling pupil numbers also represent an opportunity. Rather than simply allowing overall schools' budgets to decline as pupil numbers fall, government should maintain funding and use that opportunity to reduce class sizes, increase specialist staff and significantly improve provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities. We need an education system that invests in children, not one that asks school staff to do more with less. Six per

cent of GDP invested in education should not be an aspiration for some distant future. It should be the foundation of a properly funded education service. Our children deserve it, our schools deserve it and our teachers and support staff should not be expected to pay the price for chronic underfunding. Please support the motion, Congress thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Dan. NAHT please.

Jackie Bartley (*NAHT*) spoke in support of Motion 41. *She said:* NAHT supports this motion. As school leaders, we know that education funding is about whether our children have the resources, the opportunities and the environment they need to succeed and, increasingly, it is about whether our school buildings are fit for the future. For too long schools have been expected to do more with less. We are managing ageing buildings, rising maintenance costs and inadequate capital investment while at the same time facing a climate that is changing around us. Our schools are experiencing extreme heat, flooding, poor ventilation and increasingly unpredictable weather. These are not distant problems; they are affecting our classrooms, our staff and most importantly, our pupils. Children cannot learn effectively in classrooms that are dangerously hot. They cannot thrive in buildings affected by damp, poor ventilation or flooding, and school leaders should not be expected to continually fire fight these problems from already stretched budgets. We need a different approach. We need government to recognise that investing in the school estate is an investment in education itself. That means long-term properly funded investment in our buildings, investment in insulation, ventilation, heating and cooling; investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy; investment that makes our schools resilient to flooding, extreme

temperatures and the climate challenges that we know are coming. Importantly, this cannot be another short-term funding announcement. Schools need certainty. School leaders need to be able to plan for five/10/20 years ahead, not simply the next financial year.

Congress, we talk frequently about giving children the best possible start in life but we cannot deliver that ambition when the buildings in which our children learn are crumbling, unsuitable or unable to cope with the climate of the future. Our school buildings should be places that inspire children, support their well-being and enable them to learn. They should be places where teachers and school leaders can do their jobs without constantly worrying about whether the roof will hold, whether the heating will work or whether classrooms will become unbearable in extreme temperatures. This is about the legacy that we leave.

The children entering our schools today will be the adults shaping society tomorrow, so NAHT supports this motion and calls on Congress to make a clear demand of government: give our schools the long-term investment they need; invest in our buildings; invest in climate resilience; and invest in our children. Because funding education properly is not an expense. It is an investment in the future of our children, our communities and our country. Conference, I urge to you support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Jackie. Our next and final union, NEU.

Debra Beale (*NEU*) spoke in support of Motion 41. *She said:* We support this motion as it states the truth that we all know: underfunding in education is a political choice. Research by the Stop School Cuts coalition shows that since 2010, £4.5 billion has been cut from school budget. Some £300 million of that was lost in the last year. That is equivalent to 32,000 teachers, 33,000 support staff and 1.7 million laptops.

The government and media do not use the phrase "austerity" much any longer, but for those of us working in education we know that austerity has never ended in schools. The impact of successive years of underfunding is impacting every school. 74% of schools in England have less funding in real terms than in 2010. They have lost an average of £598 per pupil per year.

In February 2025, the then Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson said that head teachers needed to make efficiencies within their budgets. Unsurprisingly, this insulting phrase caused anger across the sector. I am a serving teacher and I see the impact of cuts every day. I teach in a classroom that has not been painted since 2009. I am head of a department. In 2010 my departmental budget was £4,000. In 2026 it is still £4,000. My budget has been frozen for 16 years but obviously costs have gone up. This impacts what I can do. I work with teachers who have never been on an external CPD course. They have never had any outside training. It has only been in school. My £4,000 has to cover printing and if we run out of money we cannot print the resources we need to teach. I cannot afford to buy enough textbooks for my A level classes - they have to share and cannot take them home. But I teach politics, they know why they do not have textbooks.

Underfunding in education means fewer support staff in schools. Underfunding in education puts pressure on teachers who have to teach outside their specialist subjects as it is cheaper to spread a subject around existing staff rather than employ a specialist. This particularly happens in the arts. Many schools have made cuts to their arts provision, and by this I mean cuts to the subjects of art, music and drama. Since 2010, there are 27% few teachers in these subjects and GCSE entries for arts subject have dropped 42% in the same period. Cuts and underfunding are not just impacting education day-to-day; they are limiting opportunities in later life. Education is a public good. Funding it properly is a political responsibility. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Debra. I am now going to go to the vote. All those in favour please show? All those against please show? The motion is carried.

*Motion 41 was **CARRIED**.*

I now call Composite Motion 10. The General Council support the motion. It will be moved by NASUWT, seconded by EIS and I will be taking one further speaker the AEP, in relation to this motion.

SEND reform and increased funding for ASN / SEND

(*Composing Motions 42 and Motion 43*)

Mark Dickinson (*NASUWT*) moved Composite Motion 10. *He said*: Congress, let me clear up a fundamental truth right from the start. The crisis gripping our SEND system was not created by children, it was not created by families and it certainly was not created by teachers. The crisis is a direct result of years of calculated underinvestment in our education, healthcare and local services. We are facing a perfect storm of rising demands but with ever-shrinking capacity to deliver them.

The core message of this motion is simple: inclusion without investment is not reform. It is nothing more than the Government transferring responsibility and risk away from Whitehall and on to the shoulders of schools and individual educational professionals. Funding legal rights for students and workforce capacity must be guaranteed together. Legal rights without SEND professionals and resources quickly becomes nothing more than empty promises. If we take a microscope to this issue then we find government announcements of funding often contain eye-catching headline-grabbing amounts, but when you look beneath the surface, there is still no credible fully costed plan. Moving existing money between high needs and mainstream budgets is not new investment; it is just smoke and mirrors.

To put it into perspective, the Teachers' Union NASUWT has calculated that that one heavily publicised £500 million mainstream inclusion announcement amounts to approximately £23,000 per school. £23,000 does not fund a teacher. It does not fund smaller teaching

groups. It does not fund the protection of SENCO time. It will not fund suitable buildings nor fund adequate training for teachers and neither will it fund implementation costs.

Congress, we need to redefine what real inclusion means. A child is not included simply because a placement has changed or because they have been placed in mainstream classrooms. Real inclusion means belonging. It means participating, making progress and receiving the right support in the right setting. Mainstream education will be right for many pupils but only when it is properly resourced. It will not be right for every pupil. Special schools, specialist settings and alternative provision must be protected and strengthened, not hollowed out to make cheaper models appear to work. Furthermore, any reform must improve the EHCP system. It must not weaken enforceable individual entitlements. New plans to thresholds or local arrangements must never become devices for rationing provision based on what happens to be available rather than what the child actually needs.

At the heart of a viable SEND system must be workforce rights. Training is essential, but training cannot substitute for actual teachers, support staff, specialists or manageable class sizes. One worker cannot do the work of three. Schools cannot replace educational psychologists, speech and language therapy or CAMHSs. Every new duty placed on schools must come with a workload and skills assessment, the time to perform it and absolute clarity about what existing work will no longer be required. Schools must never be held accountable for services they do not control and provision the government has not funded. Teachers, leaders and specialist practitioners are not merely a delivery mechanism to be

consulted after decisions are taken. They must help design, pilot and evaluate reform before implementation.

Composite 10 lays down a clear test for the government: long-term funding for all educational settings; stronger legal rights for children and staff; real action on workload, pay, recruitment and retention; properly integrated health and care services; transparent funding that actually reaches front-line SEND provision; a powerful education workforce voice at the heart of SEND policy. Teachers and SENCOs are not the barrier to inclusion. They are the ones holding the underfunded system together. Congress, no inclusion on the cheap. Fix our future. I move. Support Composite 10. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you Mark. I now call EIS.

Mark Smith (*EIS*) seconded Composite Motion 10. *He said*: Scotland's presumption of mainstream policy mandates that children with additional support needs should be educated in mainstream schools unless specific exemptions apply. This inclusive approach prioritises a child's right to learn in the most appropriate environment for their needs, aiming to foster social development and emotional well-being, as well as cognitive development by learning alongside their peers. The EIS fully endorses this approach. However, this is a fledging policy when austerity began and local authorities were forced to reduce spending. One of the areas targeted was the support for pupils with ASN. We saw a reduction in support staff, both teachers and pupil support assistants. There was also a

reduction in specialist provision and special schools. However, this saving was not then reinvested into schools to support pupils with ASN.

Colleagues, there is insufficient provision for additional support needs in Scotland. In 2009, 6.5% of the school population had identified additional support needs. The summary statistics for schools in Scotland 225 states: “43% of all pupils had an additional support need, an increase of 2.5% from the previous year. The issues arising from the increased numbers of pupils with ASN is exacerbated by increasing class sizes, reduced numbers of ASN specialist teachers and reduced numbers of classroom assistants. Decreased access to specialist services, including child and adult mental health services at a time when mental health issues are increasing. With the cost-of-living crisis, we are also seeing a rising need related to the impact of poverty and hunger. On average, one in four children in Scotland live in poverty.

Under-resourcing for additional support for learning can impact learners’ well-being. It can lead to reduced morale and low self-esteem, higher levels of generalised anxiety, greater risk of challenging behaviour and stress caused by disrupted learning and a reduction in attainment and achievement. It is also negatively impacting on staff safety, health and well-being. Increased stress and anxiety, increased risk of personal injury, reduced morale and feeling unsupported and blamed for repeated difficulties in the class. As part of a national member survey 2025, almost half of all respondents had a poor or very poor level of well-being in their jobs and two-thirds of members believed that improved support for inclusion would have the greatest impact on their well-being.

As part of the EIS manifesto, we called on the Scottish Government to put in place the requisite additional staffing and resources to fully implement the relevant legal duties. We are asking for ring-fenced funding to support genuine inclusion in our schools across the UK and to fill the gap between the promise of legislation and the reality of under-delivery for pupils with additional learning needs. This would improve the quality of education for all pupils (those with and without additional support needs) and would improve the working conditions, health, safety and well-being of teachers and support staff. Congress, I second. Support the motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Mark. I now call AEP.

Donna Wiggett (*General Secretary, AEP*): spoke in support of Composite Motion 10. *She said:* Second-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) On behalf of the AEP, I am proud to support this motion. Every day educational psychologists say that the consequences of a system that is struggling to meet the needs of children and young people with ASN and SEND. We work with families, schools and local authorities who are doing their best but are being asked to deliver more and more with fewer and fewer resources. Let us be clear, what is too often described as "challenging behaviour" is frequently the result of unmet needs. When children do not receive the support they require their learning suffers, their well-being suffers and the well-being of the staff supporting them suffers too. The cost of failing to invest in ASN and SEND provision is paid not only by the pupils but entire school communities.

Congress is right to call for increased ring-fenced funding. Schools need the resources to provide genuinely inclusive education. Local authorities need the capacity to fulfil their legal duties and children and families need confidence that support will be available when it is needed, not after months or even years of delay.

To date we are still awaiting government funding approval for the 2027 cohort of trainee educational psychologies that was committed to as part of the SEND reforms. I have 1,700 aspiring EPs willing to apply for 204 places. Educational psychologists want to be out from behind their desks and in schools. We want to spend less time battling paperwork and more time working directly alongside teachers, support staff, children and families. Educational psychologists are experts in child development, learning, well-being and inclusion. We want to be hands-on experts that schools, parents and settings are asking for and desperately need. We support fully funded mainstream inclusion alongside high quality special school provision where that is the right placement for a child. Inclusion is not achieved through aspiration alone. It requires investment, expertise and sustained support.

Congress, this motion recognises the underfunding of ASN and SEND provision is harming children, families and staff alike. It is time for governments across the UK to provide the resources necessary to turn rights into reality. Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Donna, and well delivered. We are now going to vote on Composite 10. Will all those in favour please show? Will all those against please show. Thank you. Motion carried.

*Composite Motion 10 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Motion 44, Music education. The General Council support the motion, moved by the Musicians' Union and seconded by Prospect.

Music Education

Xenia Horne (*Musicians' Union*) moved Motion 44. *She said:* First-time delegate, first-time speaker (*Applause*) and a committed supporter of this motion. Last year, the refreshed National Plan for Music Education (subtitled "The Power of Music to Change Lives") set out the expectations for state-funded schools and music hubs in England to deliver high quality inclusive music education. In February of last year, Music Mark published a report which concluded that music hubs face an annual funding gap of £32.3 million if they are to deliver the ambitions set out in the National Plan for Music Education. In the context of overall education spending, this is a relatively modest amount but can make a transformative difference to young people 's access to instrumental and vocal music making across the country. All young people should be able to access and explore ways of making music which resonate with them both as individuals and collectively. As Sarah Kilpatrick from the NEU

reminded us yesterday, the austerity measures and cuts instigated by the Coalition Government in 2010 overseen and signed off by Michael Gove, marked the beginning of a rapid and relentless erosion of music and the creative arts from education at primary and secondary levels. These are also subjects which encourage critical thinking, reflection and help with development of interpersonal skills. They offer alternative qualification pathways which are really valuable. Music hubs are increasingly struggling to recruit the teachers they so desperately need. The situation is made worse due to the lack of music training which was routinely made available to trainee teachers in the past. Newly qualified primary teachers are telling us that now they are receiving either no music input at all in their training or maybe a couple of hours if they are lucky. The cuts to training bursaries, together with incurred in becoming qualified have intensified the current crisis in music education.

Music is not a luxury yet, in many cases, sustained instrumental and vocal tuition is effectively restricted to those who can afford it. Too often funding pressures exclude these activities altogether. Despite it still being part of a broad and balanced curriculum on paper, classroom music has disappeared altogether from some schools, along with singing assemblies, school bands, orchestras, lunchtime and after school clubs. All of these groups offer young people the opportunity to experience social interaction through making music at a time when we know young people are experiencing isolation, feeling increasingly vulnerable and are more susceptible to social anxiety. This is an inequality that we cannot accept. It is becoming increasing common for young people to go through their entire school life without ever experience singing together, without ever having a go at playing any

instrument at all, making music of any kind, without experiencing the sense of connection and belonging these opportunities can bring.

In the east of England our local music club is part of a partnership called the Little Beats project which brings together the National Literacy Trust, local arts organisations, freelance musicians, primary schools and libraries with the YMCA family hubs. The Little Beats project reaches out to the youngest children in our communities with their families at places where they can meet and access the activities, working together to make positive change, highlighting the power of music to change lives. Unity works. Let's make sure the Government acts on the vision outlined in the National Plan for Music Education: music education for the many not the few. I move. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Xenia. I call on Prospect to second.

John Rogers (BECTU sector of Prospect) seconded Motion 44. *He said*: This is my first time here at Congress. (*Applause*) We are proud to support this motion and we second it, commending the Musicians' Union for bringing it to us.

The motion calls on the TUC to stand up for the educators and teachers who do the vital work teaching music in our schools in our land. Music education is not an extracurricular luxury. It is the talent pipeline for one of Britain's most economically and culturally significant industries. The UK's live music industry contributed more than £6.68 billion to

the economy in 2024. That supported more than 234,000 jobs; jobs which include members of BECTU, of which I am both a representative and a worker. Roles such as audio, lighting, even video technicians, the rigging crew who hang these systems safely above audiences all over the country and all over the world, production and tour managers, venue staff, corporate events staff, festival workers, merchandisers, caterers. All of these people and more working in areas of live events, including concert venues, theatres, festival sites and conference centres like the one we find ourselves in today. Thank you, Alastair, Dave and Dean and the rest of the team for your work. (*Applause*)

These are the workers who form the foundations of our world-leading industry and, though the UK is a global leader, the economic gains are seen at a local level. Every pound invested generates wider economic benefits through hospitality, transport, hotels, retail, local businesses. If we value that success we must invest in the futures of those that make it possible, and that means investing in music education, as the motion states, because the future success of the sector depends on today's young musicians. That is why the Government must invest in music education to support one of the country's most successful creative exports.

Many of the artists who go on to headline festivals and fill arenas and generate revenue from tourism, begin their musical journeys through state-funded education and without local youth clubs, we may not have heard Stormzy. Without state-funded tuition, we may not have heard Adele, and without public instrument loan schemes we may not have heard Shaker animation play. Without access to instruments, tuition and support, the music

sector risks becoming less diverse and more boring, drawing talent only from those who can afford private lessons, reducing opportunities for young working-class people. Moreover, if teaching becomes increasingly precarious and underpaid fewer professional musicians will enter education roles, damaging recruitment, retention and long-term development.

If we want a thriving creative economy, we must value support and properly invest in the future of the workforce that makes it possible. Congress, support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, John. I now call on the final union, NAHT.

Nazma Jassat (*NAHT*) spoke in support of Motion 44. *She said:* Congress, access to music is not an optional extra, nor should it be a privilege reserved for families who can afford it. It is an essential component of a rich, broad and balanced curriculum. Yet over a decade of under investment has brought state music education in England to a breaking point, placing intolerable pressure on school budgets, educators and school leaders alike. As school leaders, the NAHT have consistently pointed out severe real-term budget cuts and rising costs force schools into impossible choices. When overall school funding is squeezed to the limit, broader curriculum opportunities are invariably the first to suffer. Sustained instrumental tuition is increasingly restricted to pupils whose parents can afford it, systematically excluding children from socially and economically deprived communities. To survive our frozen budgets, hubs have passed the strain directly on to schools. Music teaching in the state sector has become an unviable long-term career, leading directly the

severe recruitment crisis we see today. Meanwhile classroom music is under equal strain, compounded by the short-sighted removal of teacher training bursaries from music specialists. School leaders cannot deliver a world-class creative education when the workforce is depleted and funding is inadequate. Papering over the cracks is no longer an option.

By calling on the TUC General Council to press the Secretary of State for Education on these vital points, we stand up for both educational equity for all our children and fair working conditions for educators. NAHT is proud to support this motion, Congress. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Nazma, for that. I will now take the vote on Motion 44. All those in favour please show? All those against please show? The motion is carried.

*Motion 44 was **CARRIED**.*

I now call Motion 45, Investing in early years: giving our children the best start in life. The General Council supports the motion moved by AEP, seconded by NEU. Other supporting unions are NAHT, NASUWT and EIS. Thank you.

Investing in early years: giving our children the best start in life

Lisa O'Connor (*AEP*) moved Motion 45. *She said:* I move this motion on behalf of the Association of Educational Psychologists. A child's need for support does not begin on their first day at school. Our responsibility to provide it must begin much earlier. The evidence is overwhelming. The early years are critical to lifelong health, well-being and educational outcomes. They shape how children communicate, build relationships and learn. Yet too many children start school with delayed language, communication and social development. Too many children with additional and special educational needs and disabilities have their needs identified too late to receive appropriate support. For a parent worried about their child's development, being told to wait can mean months of uncertainty and for that child, it can mean struggling to communicate, join in or make themselves understood. Educational psychologists and other specialist health and educational professionals can help families and practitioners understand those difficulties. We support changes to a child's environment, advise on approaches that help them learn and build the confidence of the adults around them. That work should be available when concerns first emerge. We need capacity to help children before difficulties escalate.

Congress, one in three children under five in the UK lives in poverty. We cannot separate children's development from the conditions in which they grow up. Financial insecurity, poor housing and pressure on families must be part of this debate.

And we cannot ask early years workers to overcome these inequalities while denying them the resources to do their jobs. Spending on early intervention has fallen substantially over the last decade. Services continue to face the effects of ongoing austerity, workforce

shortages, fragmentation and the Covid-19 pandemic. We welcome the Best Start in Life strategy and the Best Start family hubs, but funding remains significantly below previous levels of investment through Sure Start. The ambition must be matched by sustained resources.

This motion calls on government to rebuild. It calls on the Government to introduce a national minimum guarantee of high quality, inclusive early years publicly funded services that every family can access in their local community. It calls on the Government to invest in rebuilding the workforce including educational psychologists, health and education professionals and therapists and other qualified early years practitioners.

Proper investment in this workforce is essential to improving children's outcomes and reducing inequalities. That means fair pay, manageable workloads and professional development. To ensure children with emerging developmental needs, including additional and special educational needs and disabilities receive timely identification, assessment and intervention before they start school. They call on the Government to extend the Experts at Hand programme proposed in the Schools White Paper to include all early years settings. Children from birth, their families and early years practitioners must have access to specialist advice and support.

Congress, this is about the kind of childhood we want every child to have, the chance to play, communicate, learn and belong and for parents to feel that when they ask for help

they are supported. For our movement that means standing up for children and for the publicly funded education, health and social care workforce on whom they depend. Every child deserves the best start. Our task is to make that promise real. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Lisa. I call on NEU to second.

Lucy Coleman (*NEU*) seconded Motion 45. *She said:* National Education Union and an early years teacher and delighted to be able to second this motion on behalf of the NEU. Congress, I want to tell you about a child. Let's call him Billy. Billy started nursery with poor language skills, separation anxiety and struggled to interact with the other children in his class. His parents were unaware that Billy needed extra support. When Billy was in nursery he was part of a language intervention group but due to low staffing levels and a high level of needs in his nursery cohort, the intervention group was cut short. Billy found the transition from nursery to reception tough. He cried every day. His class teacher was told there was not enough money in the budget for a full-time teaching assistant. There was only an additional adult for 50% of the day. There were at least five other children in that class who needed extra support. Billy is in year two now and is waiting for an educational healthcare plan to get the additional support he needs. At break time Billy plays on his own. In lessons he cries because he cannot access the work. And at each stage in schooling Billy has been let down. Let down because there is simply not enough funding to go round to meet the needs of children in early years. Let down because, despite the best efforts of dedicated early years practitioners, it took too long to get the help that he needed. The

thing is Billy is just one of thousands of children affected by cuts and underfunding in our schools and our nurseries.

But Congress, the solution is not that complicated. It is about investment in high quality early years education, investment in the professionals who change the entire course of a child's life. Professionals who make the difference between a child having a successful start to their schooling or a child like Billy who struggles at each stage. An early years workforce that is properly qualified and who receive the pay and recognition for the vital work they do. We know that investing in early years has a high economic return and improves children's outcomes, contributes to brain development, better health and higher earnings. But it takes a government with foresight to make it happen. The Best Start in Life programme is a welcome initiative but to have the desired long-term impact it must be properly funded. We know it can be done. Other countries do invest. It is wonderful that we are joined here by the General Secretary of the CTUC, Cuba's Trade Union Confederation. Cuba sees the value of investing in early years. They manage to do this despite the blockade. As this motion says we must invest in early years so we can give children the best possible start in life, and if they can do it in Cuba then why not here? (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Lucy. I now call the NAHT.

Angi Gibson (*NAHT*) seconded Motion 45. *She said:* I am the immediate past National President of NAHT, but also, more importantly also a current serving head teacher of a

primary school. NAHT, the School Leaders' Union, is proud to support Motion 45. I want to speak not only from the a policy perspective today but from what I see every single day in school, because by the time some of our children arrive at the school gates, we are already trying to close gaps that should never been allowed to be open in the first place. We are seeing children starting school with significant delays in speech, language, communication and social development. We are seeing children with increasingly complex SEND needs and too often without those needs having been identified early enough and without the specialist support they need already wrapped around them. At the same time, one in three children under five is living in poverty.

Congress, early intervention cannot mean waiting until a child reaches school. The clue is in the word – "early". NAHT believes that high quality early education is fundamental to giving every child the best possible start in life. It cannot simple be viewed as childcare or as an economic mechanism to enable parents to return to work. It is a professionally delivered education at one of the most important and rapid developmental stages of a child's life.

The economics make sense too. For every £1 invested in early years education, the return to society is estimated to be at least £7. Investment here is not just morally right, it is sensible, but we cannot deliver early years provision on goodwill. Our early years workforce is exhausted. Settings are struggling to recruit and retain qualified staff. Pay is simply not good enough. Career progression is limited, status is low and too many talented individuals are leaving for better paid jobs elsewhere. Those who remain are increasingly expected to and having to fill the gap left by overstretched health, SEND and family support services.

Our educators cannot simultaneously be teachers, health visitors, educational psychologists, social workers and family support workers. We need those services around the child working together.

Congress, if the Government is serious about giving children the best start in life then ambition must be matched by investment: investment in early identification, investment in SEND, investment in integrated services, and, crucially, investment in the people doing this extraordinary work, with proper pay, proper recognition and a career pathway that reflects and rewards their expertise because this is an expenditure we should begrudge. It is investment in childhood, investment in opportunity and investment in our country's future. Please support Motion 45. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Angi. I will now call the NASUWT.

Kathy Duggan (*NASUWT*) spoke in support of Motion 45. *She said*: Every child should have the right to high-quality education in their early years at school. Education regardless of their individual situations. Early years education must not be demoted to a child-minding service. Children deserve professional well-trained teachers, delivering excellence in all early years settings: specialists in early years education, properly trained, working with support staff colleagues who are well paid and trained appropriately. Young children's education has been dramatically affected by a series of negative impacts: austerity, Covid, the eradication of Sure Start (now partially replaced by a less than adequate new situation).

Government cannot promise high standards in early years education in the absence of excellent or even "good enough" funding. Our children's success depends on early assessment and identification of barriers to learning. The only way to achieve this is (1), professionally trained teachers and support staff; and (2), proper levels of funding.

NASUWT, the Teachers' Union (the clue is in the name) want to see a qualified teacher in every early years setting. Until recently in inner London where I work, this was the case. However, the situation is deteriorating due to a lack of funding. It is crucial to re-build early years education. We cannot build a quality service in any sphere of education on the cheap. Fix our future. Congress, support the motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Kathy. EIS next.

Paula McEwan (*EIS*) spoke in support of Motion 45. *She said:* President, colleagues, the first sentence of this motion says it all. Preventative investment in early years pays long-term generational dividends. Investment that builds capacity across early years teachers, early learning and child practitioners and educational support services, our educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, mental health support and more, brings forward the assessment and identification of need, brings forward the planned interventions and provides early and ongoing support as a preventative measure.

It seems fundamental and yet here we are. The Scottish Government commits to an unspecified level of access to a GTCS-registered teacher, but in a system where an entitlement of 1,140 hours of early learning and childcare can be spread across one or more settings, the Scottish Government's own figures show a diminishing picture of what that teacher access is in reality. There has been an almost 54% decrease in teacher numbers in the past 15 years in that sector and the distribution of the remaining teachers is patchy. There are local authorities where all settings have a teacher and some local authorities where there is a handful of peripatetic early years teachers. It is inequity writ large and it is impacting on our youngest and most vulnerable learners.

As part of the EIS's Stand Up for Quality Education campaign, a recent Holyrood election manifesto costed increasing the number of GTCS-registered teachers in early learning settings. Our independently committed IPPR model concludes that restoring teacher ratios in the early years sector to 2012 levels would need around 80% more teachers in that sector, at a cost of around £50 million a year. That is a £50 million investment for long term recurring gains. Investment in the foundational experiences and learning of our youngest citizens brings savings on justice, on health, on adult social care, on welfare, as they move through the school system and into adulthood. We need to spend on our wee-est ones now to reduce the spend they will need in the future. Our Governments must value our early years teachers, our early learning and child practitioners and the support systems around them. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Paula. I will now go to the vote on Motion 45. Will all those in favour please show? All those against please show. That motion is carried.

*Motion 45 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Motion 46, Accountability and safe contracting in the NHS. The General Council support the motion. Moved by the Society of Radiographers and seconded by FDA.

Accountability and safe contracting in the NHS

Dean Rogers (*SoR*) moved Motion 46. *He said*: I have been asked if I will name names and companies in this motion but I won't do that, at least not at this stage, because I have a duty to the vulnerable members working in these companies I will be describing. But we have told the DHSE who the worst suspects are and some progress is being made, which is welcomed but it is still not enough.

The NHS is akin to the nation's favourite child. No one ever likes to see it challenged and criticised even when it does not behave itself. Over decades this has helped give rise to a complacency around accountability and a defensiveness especially on the left where we found ourselves defending its very existence from Thatcher's acolytes opposed to the

egalitarian model and from the medical aristocracy more often than not maintain local control. This accountability void is now being exposed. Such is the desperate need and political drive to reduce diagnostic waiting lists, NHS establishments, from hospital trusts to GP surgeries and health boards, have been referring patients to anyone with a scanner, sometimes at extraordinarily inflated prices and rarely with any accountability trail.

This is especially acute in sonography and ultrasound. A third of England's waiting lists now involve non-obstetric ultrasound, in the UK an advanced branch of radiography only very recently opened pathways allowing direct entry routes. Because of its status in the UK as an advanced branch of radiography, sonographers are not recognised or registered by the HCPC in their own right, and where there is a loophole some unscrupulous opportunists will look to exploit it. Anyone can call themselves a sonographer but not many can do it safely. So you would think, especially if you or your family member were a patient, that there would be stringent checks and high levels of accountability before any patient could be referred to a private company who could be employing someone who is not actually qualified. You would be wrong - very dangerously wrong. The SoR found numerous cases around England and Wales where companies had been hiring sonographers and exploiting them in horrible unscrupulous ways. We have seen multiple examples of vulnerable women brought from the UK, sometimes directly recruited from red list countries, and earning two-thirds or less than NHS sonographers' pay, being expected to work in excess of the Working Time regulations with no overtime pay. That is just the start. Their contracts will often include clauses where if they resign the employer can demand thousands in training fees for courses they never accessed, visa fees the employer cannot legally seek to recover and a

professional indemnity transfer on to the employee. If you resign and serve your notice, you will be dismissed for spurious reasons including not repaying the money the employers claim you owe them. We had one case where the employer charged for cover for when somebody was ill. I would like to be able to tell you exactly how common and widespread this is but that is the point - no one really knows because there is no evident or obvious accountability back to the NHS body referring the patients. There is no obvious due diligence and no obvious consequence.

I am pleased to say since submitting this motion the DHSE has been responding positively to our intelligence and do appear to be seeking to identify and challenge the culprits when we identify them. We will keep you posted on that but that is still not enough. Patients and professionals need to be protected and to feel safe. All NHS providers must be responsible for maintaining clear records of all work outsourced and the due diligence they have taken for making sure that patients are safe when they are referred outside the NHS. The new staffing standards must unlock these barriers to accountability. The Government must also close the sonography registration loophole without further delay as we have been calling for since the HCPC first started regulating radiography members. Unions, employers and the Home Office must continue to prioritise protecting vulnerable professionals caught up in these insidious contracts, with a pause on visa withdrawals on whistle-blowing cases and support for easier transfers into the NHS for internationally recruited professionals. We have got the PFA sat directly behind us. It is remarkable that an internationally recruited footballer can transfer from Man United to Arsenal in hours on transfer deadline day but an allied health professional seeking to transfer from an unscrupulous employer into the NHS

has to take months for their paperwork to go through when their job is saving people's lives. Friends, we must do better. The NHS must be more accountable.

The President: Red light. I am going to give a VAR decision and give you another five seconds.

Dean Rogers: I am done.

The President: Thank you. And to be seconded by the FDA.

Cleo Lunt (*FDA*) seconded Motion 46. *They said:* This is my first Congress and my first time speaking so hello everyone. (*Applause*) We second this motion. I hope that we can all agree that it is a benefit to everybody that NHS contractors have protection, have employment rights and are looked after. As I say, it is my first time here and I am going to over share with you all now. I have Crohn's disease so my digestive system has been poked, prodded, imaged, looked at and explored by many people who I have always trusted are professionals who are being looked after, have proper employment rights. I am putting myself in a vulnerable position when they are performing scans and doing things. I assume they are looked after as well. The professionals that are doing this sort of work are doing a lot of very complicated work and a lot of emotional labour as well. There is a lot of extra work that goes into the work they do for the NHS and I have always trusted they are being

looked after in that work, and, if they are not, I think that is something we need to challenge and something we need to change.

I am also speaking to the amendment that the FDA has suggested, which is managers within the NHS need to make sure the people they are contracting have the rights and protections they should have. But those managers also need to be supported in order to do that job properly. We cannot just move the onus from the employer to the individual manager. Everybody needs to be fully supported and have the tools they need to do this difficult work in the best way possible. So support the motion please. That is all I have got to say. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

The President:. Thank you very much, Cleo. I am now going to go to the vote on Motion 46. All those in favour, please show. All those against? Thank you. The motion is carried.

*Motion 45 was **CARRIED**.*

General Secretary's Address

The President: Congress, it is now my absolute pleasure to ask TUC General Secretary to address Congress and here is a short video to introduce his remarks.

Video shown to Congress

Paul Nowak (*General Secretary, TUC*): Two months ago, I met Dorian, Said, Mohammed and their colleagues at Chase Farm – an NHS hospital. Outsourced workers delivering vital public services. And I have stood alongside countless workers like them in so many other unions: feeding patients, protecting the public, cleaning our trains. And everywhere, everywhere the same raw deal. Bounced from one private company to another. Insecure contracts. No proper sick pay. Bare-minimum pensions A lack of basic respect on the job.

So today, I want to start by paying tribute to Dorian, Said, and Mohammed, and to every other outsourced worker in this country. Our movement will not tolerate hundreds of thousands of vital workers being treated as second-class citizens. We will not accept a two-tier workforce. And we won't stand by while the chief executives and the shareholders of the outsourcing giants rake it in at the expense of workers, service users and taxpayers. (*Applause*)

Congress, It is time to end the outsourcing rip-off. It is time for real public services not private profit. And time for the Government to deliver what they promised – the biggest ever wave of public sector insourcing. (*Applause*)

And Congress, it can be done. In June, thanks to the efforts of PCS, the then Chancellor announced plans to insource 2,000 Whitehall staff. After years, and in some cases, decades

of insecure employment finally: A civil service job. A decent pension. The right to take time off to look after your kids.

That's the difference a union makes, sticking together and winning together, because unity works. (*Applause*) Just look what we have achieved in the past year:

• The Employment Rights Act - the biggest upgrade to workers' rights in a generation.

• Eight million workers getting sick pay from day one.

• Anti-union legislation – repealed.

• The two-child benefit cap – scrapped.

• British Steel – nationalised.

• Railways – back in public ownership.

• Jobs in chemicals and ceramics – secured.

• Pay rises, back-pay, and equal pay compensation – won.

• Durham Pride – defunded by Reform – saved by unions.

• And union membership – up. Not by a few thousand, or 10,000, but by 192,000. The biggest increase since records began. (*Applause*)

So let's say it loud and proud.

• We are a movement fighting for workers.

• Organising for workers.

• And winning for workers. (*Applause*)

Unity works because when people, their communities and their unions come together we change this country for the better. And that change is desperately needed. I will never talk this country down. It is a place I'm proud of, where I grew up and raised my kids. But if we're being honest, we know that for far too many and for far too long, Britain has felt broken.

• Pay packets stretched thin.

• High streets boarded up

• Young people priced out of housing.

• Public services under constant strain.

And all too often, politicians whose only answer is to stir up division, fear and hatred. To blame someone else. To look for convenient scapegoats.

So, my starting point is simply this. We are better than that. Working people are better than that. And Britain is better than that. (*Applause*)

The new Prime Minister has already started to give breathing space to families and businesses. But to deliver the circuit breaker he has promised the British public, Andy Burnham is going to have to be prepared to face down vested interests. The vested interests for whom the status quo is working just fine. When interest rates shot up, the Tories slashed taxes for the banks. And now Britain's big four banks are making over £1 billion a week, while the City had its best year for bonuses since the crash. So, you will excuse me if I don't get out the world's smallest violin for the likes of Jamie Dimon, of JP Morgan, who claim banks can't afford to pay their fair share of tax. Jamie, I say this with all due respect, working people bailed out the banks in 2008 – now it's time to return the favour. (*Applause*)

Prime Minister, you've said you want to go further to cut people's energy bills. This is how to pay for it - tax the banks. (*Applause*) Yes, we want a growing economy. But we want it to benefit everybody, not just the uber rich. The number of billionaires in this country has doubled since 2010, and the FTSE 100 has hit record highs. But in the real world, our world, one in four people are skipping meals to make ends meet. What is the point of GDP going up, share prices going up, and dividends going up if wages are not going up too?

So, Prime Minister, be clear: if union busting tech billionaires can blast their pop star mates into space, then they can pay more tax. (*Applause*) And if water companies can't provide basic services because they have paid out huge dividends for decades, then bring them back into public ownership. (*Applause*) And Prime Minister, make good on another promise. Because if dodgy bosses undercut decent employers by using casualised labour, then be

clear: Your Government will end zero-hour contracts once and for all. It is time to give everyone the right to a guaranteed hours contract. (*Applause*)

Now of course vested interests, their political puppets on the right, and the fake patriots, will warn about the perils of guaranteed hours. Or raising the minimum wage. Or giving workers sick pay. Or tightening the law on fire and rehire. I simply say this to the Prime Minister: Ignore every single one of them. They don't care about British workers. They don't care about public services. They only care about themselves and their bottom line.

Want proof? Why else would Amazon, in one year alone, spend over $26 million on union-busting consultants? I'll tell you why. Because they are absolutely terrified of workers coming together to demand a fair deal.

So, we are going to use that Employment Rights Act to access and organise thousands of new workplaces. If you are exploiting workers, if you are treating your staff like disposable labour, then we are putting you on notice. Jeff Bezos – we are coming for you and every other dodgy boss. (*Applause*)

I just want to take a moment to talk about that self-proclaimed "workers' champion" Nigel Farage. (*Laughter*) Who better to take on the establishment than a privately educated, ex-banker, multi-millionaire? Who better to rattle the cages of Westminster complacency, than a 30-year career politician leading a party of Tory has-beens? And who better to clean

up politics than the man who sips champagne and eats oysters while taking dodgy donations from foreign funders?

So let's be clear: Reform do not, never have and never will represent the interests of working people. (*Applause*) Tell me, why is it that two crypto billionaires have donated £72 million to Reform in just two days? The evidence is clear: Reform UK is a party for sale. Nigel Farage is a politician for sale. And given half the chance, they'd sell our country down the river. (*Applause*)

This is a crisis for our democracy. We cannot allow our political system to be captured by corporate interests. And Congress, let no one tell you there is any similarity - any similarity - between care workers chipping in a few quid a year through their union and a party bought and paid for by billionaires.

So, we need a proper conversation about how we clean up our politics, one that does not push workers to the margins, but does stop the super-rich corrupting our politics. And here is a starting point: Don't live in Britain? Don't pay your taxes in Britain? Then don't meddle in British politics. Christopher Harborne and the other dodgy overseas donors should be told clearly – no representation without taxation! (*Applause*) Want to donate to a political party? Then show us where the money is coming from. No hiding behind Bitcoin, Tether, or any other cryptocurrency. It is time to ban crypto donations once and for all. (*Applause*) And want to campaign in our elections? Then no more disinformation, and no more foreign

funding for political ads. Elon Musk, keep your grubby hands out of British politics.

(*Applause*)

In June, I was in Minneapolis with the AFL-CIO and US trade unionists. That city knows the dangers of right-wing populism. Donald Trump sending ICE thugs onto the streets. Mums and dads separated from their kids and deported. And two people – Renee Goode, a mother and activist, and Alex Pretti, a nurse and trade unionist – gunned down by agents of the state in cold blood. Is that seriously the kind of country we want to be?

Congress, - there is a direct political thread, a nasty politics, that links Nigel Farage, Rupert Lowe, and Tommy Robinson, with Donald Trump, MAGA and the US white supremacist movement. It starts with demonising migrants. It flies flags, not as an expression of national pride, but to intimidate. It fans the literal flames that set fire to hostels and libraries. And it ends up with pro-fascist mobs roaming our streets in balaclavas, targeting brave volunteers in lifeboats.

That is not the sort of Britain that decent, fair-minded people want to live in. (*Applause*) So I'll say it again. We are better than that. Working people are better than that. And Britain is better than that. (*Applause*) A Britain at ease with itself is a Britain that can help stand up for workers here and around the globe. Against Putin's ongoing war of aggression in Ukraine. Against the devastating blockade of Cuba, and threats against Greenland. Against genocide in Gaza and the illegal occupation of the West Bank.

And on that, let me just say how proud I was to see our Prime Minister, Andy Burnham, Ed Miliband, and the whole government do the right thing and call out the illegal occupation of the West Bank, to name the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people and end the trade in illegal settlement goods. That's a Labour Government standing for international law and a system of world trade that says labour rights and human rights matter.

And that should be reflected in the way that we do business here in the UK as well. Our economic and national security relies on us not being agnostic about where we make stuff. That doesn't mean splendid isolation. It means taking the Prime Minister at his word and working with him to re-industrialise Britain.

I grew up in Merseyside in the 1980s, and I saw for myself the devastating impact of the Tories' factory closures. So I think we have a choice. Continue down the road of 40 years of neoliberalism that has failed working people. Or invest in our workers, in our industry and in our relationship with Europe.

So today, let's send a clear message from this Congress. To workers in oil and gas, in nuclear and renewables, in steel, in ceramics, in automotive, aerospace, defence and chemicals. While Nigel Farage cheers on his mate in the White House whose tariffs are destroying jobs in the UK. We will stand with you to save British industry. (*Applause*)

Saving British industry, and securing a future for workers in oil and gas, in steel, in automotive, goes hand in hand with tackling climate change. We are at the end of the hottest summer on record, a summer that scorched our landscape. Now, the flat earthers in Reform and the Tory Party might pretend it has nothing to do with climate change. And Richard Tice might say we should just "enjoy the heat". But I dare him – dare him – to say that to the firefighters battling wildfires, to railway workers and passengers injured when tracks buckle in the heat, to nurses fainting in hospitals, to bus drivers trying not to pass out behind the wheel.

So let me say it clearly. Climate change is real and we need to act. That means bold climate action, underpinned by good, unionised jobs. And it means keeping our workplaces safe. It is time for a maximum legal working temperature. (*Applause*)

Winning that or anything else, Congress, the only way we can win change is by organising together. Because if there is one thing we've learned throughout our history, then it's this: Unity works.

One hundred years ago, this Congress met in Bournemouth, in the aftermath of the great General Strike of 1926. Four months earlier, two million workers had answered the call to support mineworkers brutalised and impoverished by the pit owners. It was a singular moment of solidarity. A moment when men and women across this country, many of whom had never set foot in a coalfield, took the decision to stand with their fellow workers. Not

for personal gain. Not because of ideology. But because they believed in the basic adage that an injury to one, is an injury to all. Now that strike ended in defeat, but it was an incredible demonstration of working-class unity. And it paved the way for a bold Labour Government that established the NHS, the welfare state, and built hundreds of thousands of council homes, alongside half a century of rising union membership.

A hundred years on, we are still here and we are still fighting for working people every day. So, to everyone in this room, And to every union member and rep out there in workplaces, keep doing what you do to win for workers every day.

To politicians and employers, work with us to make Britain a country where growth is felt by everybody, in every region and nation, in every postcode. And to those who aren't yet a union member, if your employer is giving you a rotten deal, if you are being treated unfairly, if your pay packet doesn't reflect the hard work you put in, it doesn't have to be that way. Come together, with your colleagues, fight for a better deal and JOIN A UNION. (*Applause*)

Together, workplace by workplace, campaign by campaign, community by community, we'll build a better, fairer Britain.

Solidarity, Congress, thank you. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

The President: Congress, just before we move on, I would like to thank Paul, but rather than just thank him, I think you will all agree that was an inspirational speech from him. He is a great leader of the TUC. I am very proud to have worked with him this year but I have known Paul for many years and he is a man who has never forgotten his roots. I can honestly say the TUC is in very safe hands with this brilliant General Secretary. Let's hear it for Paul. (*Applause*)

I now call paragraph 1.8 and 3.10 to 3.13 and Motion 47, NHS Pay. The General Council supports the motion. Moved by the Royal College of Podiatry, seconded by the GMB and I will be calling UNISON as well, as they have indicated a wish to speak.

NHS pay

Paul Robinson (*College of Podiatry*) moved Motion 47. *He said*: I am a first-time delegate, first-time speaker (*Applause*) moving Motion 47. It feels a bit like a first date, Congress. Look at me - nervous, not meeting your eye and here I am about to make it twice as bad and talk about pay and politics! I am proud to work in the NHS. As a teenager, my daughter Emily was supported by staff across many NHS services when she suffered with the terrible affliction anorexia. Without their help I truly believe she would not be with us the strong woman that she is now. Right about this time last year my brother had a kidney transplant. It has transformed his quality of life. And my mother had a stroke but with the support of doctors and physios, she continues to live independently, now in her 80s.

I am sure we all have similar stories we could share, but years of austerity, below inflation pay increases and repeated failures by government to deliver on commitments have left NHS staff facing a sustained decline in the value of their pay. This has contributed to growing staffing shortages. It has damaged morale and it has made it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain the skilled workforce that the NHS depends upon. This is not sustainable for our members or for the future of the NHS.

The system for setting pay levels in the NHS is not working for our members. The effects of this are real. NHS workers are losing out and we hear stories of how families are missing meals, using food banks or not having holidays because they do not have enough money. I almost left that bit out holidays because it sound very flippant but it is important, holidays are not a luxury holidays; they are a necessity. The NHS trade unions work collectively but are hampered by a system that is rooted in the past. The combined strength of the unions is the only thing preventing a complete collapse of the pay system. Something has to be done. We cannot continue with a pay system that no longer works and where the outcomes are just ignored by the government. NHS workers deserve better. We believe that NHS staff deserve a pay system that is transparent and properly funded. We call on the General Council to work with the NHS trade unions to ensure that Governments across the UK recognise the need for change; work with the unions to develop systems that are fair and fit for purpose and capable of delivering fair and decent pay; restore pay to pre-austerity levels; deliver pay based on the needs of the workforce not based on central government

policy and fund this please without reducing the NHS trust budgets. Congress, I move this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Paul, for a first-time speaker that was delivered very well and thanks for sharing your very personal story as well. GMB to second.

Gareth Bromhall (*GMB*) seconded Motion 47. *He said*: I am a rep within the Welsh Ambulance Service and seconding Motion 47 on NHS pay. How can we ask NHS workers to care for our health when they struggle to afford their own lives? They are working through exhaustion, missed time with their families to care for us when we are at our most vulnerable. NHS workers should not be having to access food banks set up by their employer or be relying on overtime just to make ends meet. They deserve more than thanks. They deserve a wage they can live on. They deserve pay reform. One NHS worker told us, "I don't work for the NHS because I expect to get rich; I work because I care. But caring doesn't mean struggling to pay the bills. The impact of pay falling behind inflation and the rising cost of living it has become increasingly difficult to manage and affects my overall well-being."

There was a deliberate dismantling of the NHS by successive Governments between 2010 and 2024 when privatisation accelerated, vital services were cut and workers saw their pay stagnate and working conditions degrade. The NHS is not on its knees; it is on its face. This

is the current Government's assessment of the NHS after years of austerity, and one which many of our members agree with.

The GMB has been clear in discussions with government across the UK that our NHS members are not happy for the continuation of pay austerity. GMB members voted in the vast majority that the imposed 3.3% pay award is not enough and we call upon the TUC to hold the Government to account on NHS pay reform. The Government should commit to restoring real terms value on NHS pay to pre-austerity levels. Pay settlements should be fully funded through additional central investments rather than being absorbed by trust budgets. Funding for the NHS in the devolved nations should be strengthened to ensure fair and sustainable healthcare provision in the UK. Finally, pay negotiations should take place with NHS unions, and should be guided by the workforce requirements, recruitment and retention pressures and service needs rather than by centrally imposed pay policy. Support this motion: respect NHS workers; reform NHS pay; stop NHS pay poverty. Thank you. I second. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Gareth, very well done. I will now call UNISON.

Tanya Pretswell (*UNISON*) spoke in support of Motion 47. *She said:* Congress, as this motion points out, the current system has failed miserably to deliver decent pay rises for Agenda for Change NHS staff. The impact is felt not just by health workers but also by the patients who find their hospitals and health centres increasingly short of staff, with workers

voting with their feet and moving to better paid jobs elsewhere. Most NHS workers feel they are getting second-class treatment, with pay awards consistently well below those given to doctors and dentists.

Congress, UNISON is proud to have led the way in seeking change in the way that NHS pay is set, and now, virtually all health unions agree on the need to move away from the deeply discredited pay review body process and to ditch the old Tory approach of delivering imposed pay awards.

In Scotland, the Government has ditched the review body and negotiates directly with unions. Scottish staff now earn considerably more than colleagues elsewhere in the UK for doing the same job. Congress, the Government first promised to negotiate on structural reform in 2024 but failed to follow through with talks. And almost exactly the same thing happened in 2025. So, we were delighted earlier this year when they finally agreed to come to the table, but we urgently need momentum to be restored to the current pay talks.

Congress, clear political leadership is desperately needed. Ministers have to concentrate on bringing negotiations to a conclusion rather than diverting time and effort into the PRB process. Ministers say they are committed to prioritising action for the low-paid and to ensuring the NHS can attract and retain graduate professionals, so we must have an agreement on setting NHS pay rates above the real living wage, to end the cycle of fall behind and catch-up with the minimum wage. But we also need action on the resulting

issues of wage compression and agreement on a clear direction of travel for staff in graduate level roles so that any increases in responsibilities or skill are matched with increases in pay.

Congress, a Government that says it cares about efficiency and better industrial relations cannot continue to put its faith in a pay review system that belongs to a bygone era and staff have had enough of broken promises to fix fair pay. Ministers must now inject pay, pace and serious cash into the talks so that unions and employers can reach a settlement. Please support. (*Applause*)

The President: Congress, I am now going to move to the vote on Motion 47. Will all those in favour please show? All those against please show? That motion is carried.

*Motion 47 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Composite Motion 11, Student loan forgiveness, anchor employers, graduate guarantees and the NHS workforce. The General Council support this motion. It is moved by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and seconded by the Society of Radiographers.

Student loan forgiveness, anchor employers, graduate guarantees and the NHS workforce

(*Composing Motion 48 plus amendment and Motion 49*)

Christina Ryan (CSP) moved Composite Motion 11. *She said:* There is a workforce crisis in NHS. Workloads are increasing. Complexity of care is worsening. Physiotherapy staff regularly report the impact on patient care and their own health and well-being. The never-ending budget cuts, reorganisations and recruitment freezes, which have risen to 65% of services, have compounded these issues. In addition, 7% of physiotherapy staff leave the NHS annually and a similar number of other NHS professionals are making the same decision. This is not only a healthcare issue though. We see the same pattern in education and local government. At the same time, physiotherapy graduates are struggling to find jobs. Current graduates are more likely to still be job hunting six months after qualifying. This is longer than any of their predecessors. Other healthcare professionals face the same issues.

The NHS has a 10-year plan to build an NHS for the future. However, if this is to succeed in serving an ageing population living with more complex conditions, the workforce crisis cannot continue. We need investment in the NHS that focuses on prevention, not reactive treatment: investment that moves care out of hospitals and into communities but, even more importantly, investment in the workforce, our colleagues, our members and their futures.

NHS organisations are often one of the biggest employers in towns, cities and local communities. As anchor employers, they are rooted in local communities and can widen

participation while improving local health and well-being. There is a strong case that supporting youngers with early career opportunities and well-unionised workplaces provides them stability, guidance and fair working conditions but it also strengthens the wider communities around them.

In the context of the NHS, this approach can contribute to building a more progressive responsive healthcare system, one that is better equipped to meet the needs of a diverse population and adapt to future challenges. So why are there so many healthcare graduates struggling to find work? The Government has acknowledged NHS workforce and recruitment issues by guaranteeing jobs for nursing and midwifery graduates. This is a welcome step but it does not go far enough. It will not meet the needs of the NHS or the public. This guarantee needs to also apply to newly qualified physiotherapists and other allied health professionals. Only then will the NHS strengthen their role as an anchor institution for youth employment.

But we also need to keep our skilled workers in the NHS and the wider public sectors. Many workers graduating since 2023 will pay a projected £30,000 more for their student loans due to the changes in repayment requirements, effectively acting as a regressive graduate tax. This is going to cause financial hardship and give skilled public sector workers another reason to look elsewhere for jobs. It is time the Government acted to implement a service linked forgiveness scheme to help our NHS workers stay in the NHS.

Congress, we all care about public services, we call care about our NHS, none more so than the workers who dedicate their careers to it, often at a detriment to themselves. But we cannot rely on that goodwill forever. We cannot rely on that to deliver patient care. The pressures are only getting harder and we need to make sure our NHS has the people, resources and opportunities it needs to thrive.

Supporting this motion means supporting our local communities and creating employment opportunities for young people across all four nations, whether that is in a clinical pathway or in support worker roles. It means investing in the future of our public services, because if we want an NHS that is stronger, more resilient and fit for the future, we must invest in the people and communities that make that possible and we must stand together to do this. Congress, I move this motion, please support. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much and very well delivered. Seconded by the Society of Radiographers.

Sarah Burn (*Vice-President, SoR*) seconded Composite Motion 11. *She said:* I am a first-time speaker and I am speaking this morning to add our amendment and second this motion. There is so much I would like to say here but three minutes is not a lot of time so I will try to be concise. As my colleague from the SoP has so eloquently stressed, recruitment freezes are having a significant impact on the healthcare workforce. In diagnostic radiography, we

are being pressed, and rightly so, to deliver vital imaging examinations as quickly as possible. We are conducting more tests than ever before but it is still not enough. In July 2026, over 23% of our patients were waiting for more than six weeks for their tests. The national standard is for less than 1% to be waiting for this long. While nine out of 10 patients see a radiographer as part of their treatment pathway that is an awful lot of patients waiting. As a manager and radiographer with well over 20 years' experience, the solution appears simple: we need more scanners, we also need more radiographers to run the scanners.

However, the dire state of NHS finances have resulted in widespread recruitment freezes when we need to increase our workforce more than ever before. We are training more radiographers, but they cannot get a job in the very hospitals and services that are crying out for them. This is not only demoralising but it also means we risk harming our patients by delaying their care and destroying the reputation of the NHS. Patients lose their faith in us and trainees and students lose their faith in us, and our workforce lose their faith in us. The recruitment freeze is biting just as hard in the devolved nations. Our newly qualified colleagues in Wales are hit even harder. They are tied into working in Wales due to the NHS Wales bursary scheme so they are unable to find employment or work elsewhere in the United Kingdom without financial penalty.

Our amendment was about fair and devolved funding and reflected accountability, ensuring the devolved Governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland cannot hide behind Westminster. They must continue to invest in safe staffing levels and training and ensure

patient safety is paramount. If our new Prime Minister is serious about devolution, we need closer co-operation and fairer funding for the devolved nations.

My final words are on student loans. They are not like loans the rest of us would recognise. No bank would issue a loan and charge interest before the loanee has had any opportunity to pay anything. Nor would they increase the interest rate without consultation or giving loanees the opportunity to take their loan elsewhere. This is not a loan. It is a tax on the very people we are crying out for to keep our patients cared for. Loan forgiveness would be a tangible incentive to OHPs, to keep them in a profession they have spent years training for and so desperately needed, and help reduce the pressure of unsafe workload, burn-out and help get those working lists down - provided they get a job of course. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Sarah. I now move to the vote on Composite Motion 11. Will all those in favour please show? All those against please show? That motion is carried.

*Composite Motion 11 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Motion 50, Safe staffing equals safe care**.** The General Council support the motion. Moved by the RCN and seconded by Royal College of Podiatry and I have one indication from one other union POA and I will take it in that order.

Safe staffing equals safe care.

Zahra Ahmadian-Moghadam (*RCM)* moved Motion 50. *She said:* Good morning. I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker at TUC. (*Applause*)

President, Congress, I am proud to speak today on behalf of the Royal College of Midwives in support of safer staffing in maternity services. Safer staffing is not an aspiration; it is a patient safety requirement. Every day, midwives, maternity support workers and student midwives go to work aiming to provide the safest possible care to babies, women and families, but too often they are working in services where there are not enough staff to meet the needs. Based on the Royal College of Midwives' recent survey, 77% of maternity staff reported that their unit was not safely staffed and 93% said staffing levels directly affected the quality of the care they provide. These are not just statistics. Behind every number is a midwife trying to care for two women at the same time. Behind every number is a midwife often caring for a high number of women and babies on the post-natal ward because babies are not recognised in our patient numbers. It is a maternity support worker being asked to cover another area when their own workload is already overwhelming. It is a student midwife who should be learning but instead sees their mentor pulled away to cover another unit due to shortage of staffing. And most importantly, it is a woman in labour and her partner who may not be able to give birth in the setting or hospital they wished for or receive the care, support and compassion they need and deserve.

We cannot continue to rely on the goodwill of maternity staff to keep the system running. Midwives are already working beyond their limits, extra hours, missing breaks and carrying the emotional burden of knowing that, despite their best efforts, a staffing shortage can affect the care they provide. Forty-five per cent of midwives reported experiencing burn-out often or always.

Unsafe staffing is not simply a workforce problem: it is a patient safety issue, a women's health issue and a workers' rights issues. It is also an equality issue. Women from black and Asian communities and women living in the most deprived areas already experience poorer maternity outcomes. When services are under constant pressure, there is even less capacity to recognise and address these inequalities. The RCM is calling for sustained investment in maternity staffing, proper workplace planning, protected time for education and supervision and workplaces that allow staff to deliver safe and compassionate care. But this is bigger than maternity. This is a trade union issue. When healthcare workers are over worked patients are put at risk. When staff are exhausted retention suffers. When experienced workers leave we lose skills, knowledge and investment and when services are understaffed, the pressure moves from one part of the NHS to another.

So today, I am asking Congress to stand with the Royal College of Midwives. Stand with midwives, stand with maternity support workers, stand with student midwives, and, most importantly, stand with every woman, every baby and every family who depends on

maternity services. Government and employers need to stop treating safer staffing as something that can be managed through goodwill with temporary fixes. We need the right number of staff with the right skills in the right place with the time and resources to provide safe care. Because when we protect maternity staff we protect women and babies. When we invest in the workforce we invest in our NHS and when we demand safer staffing we are not asking for more than patients and workers deserve. We are asking for safe care.

Congress, I urge you to support this motion of the Royal College of Midwives: Safer staffing equals safe care. Thank you very much. (*Applause)*

The President: Zahra, that was brilliantly delivered as a first-time delegate, very well done. Calling the Royal College of Podiatry now to second.

Martin Furlong (*RCPoD*) seconded Motion 50. *He said*: I am very happy to second Motion 50. Congress, the title of this motion says it all: Safe staffing equals safe care. And while the motion rightly focuses on the very serious pressures facing maternity services, its message will be recognised by health workers in every part of our NHS. When there are not enough staff, something has to give and too often it is the worker who gives. They miss their breaks, they stay behind at the end of their shift, they take on one more patient, one more task, one more responsibility, because the alternative is to leave a colleague struggling or a patient waiting. Healthcare workers do that because they care but their goodwill should not be the staffing strategy of our NHS. The figures in this motion should concern every single one of

us. As mentioned, 45% of midwives reporting burn-out often or always and 93% of maternity staff saying staffing levels affect the quality of care.

Congress, those are not just statistics, they are warning signs, and you would get the same statistics looking at all professions within the NHS including our own. As trade unionists, we must reject the idea that working without breaks, routinely staying late or constantly working under intolerable pressure is simply part of the job. It is not. Staff have a right to be safe at work and patients have a right to receive care from staff who have the time, resources and support to provide it safely. We need governments and employers to understand that protecting the well-being of healthcare workers is not separate from protecting patients.

Congress, safe staffing is a workers' rights issue, it is a patient safety issue, and in maternity services it is a fundamental to the safety of women, babies and families. The Royal College of Podiatry is very proud to stand alongside our colleagues in the Royal College of Midwives and I urge you to support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Martin. I call the POA.

Angela (?) (*POA*) spoke in support of Motion 50. *She said:* President, Congress and all our visitors, my sister union the RCM has quite rightly highlighted this as a workforce issue, a patient safety issue and a women's health issue. Maternity services, as we all know, have

suffered significant staffing issues. The outcry nationally about the deaths of both mothers and babies is known to you all. It is so important that women get a decent healthcare service. The statistics are clear that women's health is undervalued and, actually, in terms of resourcing is under-resourced. This makes patient safety a key issue. All of us can and will be patients, unless you are very, very fortunate, and what you expect is decent patient care when you walk into a hospital or a community nurse comes out to you. It does not help you if there is a staff shortage. You will not get the care that you rightly pay for and deserve.

Finally, in terms of the issue of workers' rights, all workers deserve to go to work not worrying that they could cause the death of a patient. I urge Congress to support this motion and to support women's care in the NHS. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Angela. I am now going to go to the vote on Motion 50. Will all those in favour please show? Will all those against please show? That motion is carried.

*Motion 50 is **CARRIED**.*

The President: Just a gentle reminder for delegates when you get up to speak to scan your badge. I now call Motion 51, Tackling racism in maternity services. The General Council support the motion. Moved by RCM and seconded by the Society of Radiographers. Thank you.

Tackling racism in maternity services

Janet Ballentyne (*RCM*) moved Motion 51. *She said:* President, Congress, I move this motion because racism in maternity services is both a public health crisis and a workplace crisis. It affects the care women receive, the outcome they experience and the working lives of our members who provide that care. The recent report by Baroness Amos could not have made it clearer. It exposes systemic racism, discrimination, unsafe staffing, poor workplace cultures and a lack of accountability across maternity and neonatal services. These are not just isolated incidents. They are not just the actions of a few individuals. They are a structural problem that requires structural solutions from the Government, NHS leaders and employers. And the consequences are stark. Black women in this society remain almost three times more likely to die during pregnancy or shortly after giving birth than white women. Behind that statistic are women whose concerns were not taken seriously, whose pain was not believed, whose symptoms were overlooked; women who were not given truly personalised and compassionate care. Every woman should be listened to, treated with dignity, able to trust she will receive safe care. A women's ethnicity must never determine the quality of care of service that she receives.

These inequalities are not inevitable, they are not acceptable and they have been documented for years. But progress is slow. And, Congress, racism also harms our members. Black and minority ethnic staff in maternity services experience discrimination,

bullying and barriers to progression: a working culture where they do not feel safe or supported to speak out.

No worker should fear being ignored, blamed or disadvantaged for raising concerns about racism and unsafe staffing. Racism damages the trust between staff and patients. It undermines teams. It stops maternity services delivering high-quality care to every family. This is not about blaming individual midwives, doctors or nurses. They are working under immense pressure. This is about the government and employers taking responsibility for policies, practices and cultures that allow inequality to continue. Warm words, short-term initiatives and yet another review are not enough. We need a fully funded programme of action with clear leadership and measurable accountability. This means mandatory meaningful anti-racism and cultural competence training for everyone in maternity services, not just a tick-box exercise, but training that changes behaviour, challenges poor practice and is backed by senior leaders.

This means safe working levels for staff to actually have the time to listen and provide personalised care. It means stronger accountability when racism is an unequal treatment is identified. It means leadership that reflects and includes the experience of black women, families and staff. It means better national data collection and transparency reporting so progress can be measured and it means meaningful engagement. Black women, families and staff must be involved in designing the solutions, not just consulted after decisions have been made. Trade unions have a vital role where we must challenge racism wherever it

exists, support members who experience or witness it and hold employers and government to account.

Congress, support this motion. Let us send a clear message that racism has no place in our NHS. Every woman, every baby, every family has a right to maternity care that is safe equitable, compassionate and respectful. (*Applause*)

The President: Janet, very well said and identifying those shocking statistics. Seconded by the Society of Radiographers, thank you.

Katy Thompson (*SoR*) seconded Motion 51. *She said:* The mover has already outlined the stark reality facing black women in maternity services. The evidence is clear. The inequalities are well documented and the findings of the Baroness Amos review remind us that racism remains embedded within parts of our healthcare system. The question before Congress today is not whether these inequalities exist. The question is whether we are prepared to do what is necessary to eliminate them.

As trade unionists, we believe in fairness, dignity and equality. We believe that every patient matters, and deserves safe compassionate care, and that every healthcare worker deserves to work in an environment free from discrimination.

This motion is about both. Racism in maternity services is not simply about individual acts of prejudice. It is about systems, cultures and structures that result in unequal experiences and unequal outcomes. It is about whether concerns are listened to, whether voices are heard and whether organisations are willing to be accountable when they fail. As healthcare professionals we know that trust is fundamental to safe care. When people feel unheard, dismissed or treated differently because of the colour of their skin that trust is damaged.

The Society of Radiographers has made tackling racism a priority through its anti-racism work and wider equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging initiatives. The experience shared by our members demonstrates that racism continues to affect healthcare staff as well as patients. Colleagues have reported racist abuse, exclusion, discriminatory behaviour in the workplace, experiences which damage well-being, undermine confidence and contribute to staff leaving the profession. This matters because the experience of black patients and the experience of black staff are connected. If we want equitable care we must also create equitable workplaces. That means meaningful anti-racism training. It means safe staffing levels that allow personal care. Trade unions need to use the recently produced NHS staffing standards, particularly Tackling Racism.

Trade unions have always been at their strongest when we stand together against injustice. We understand that equality is not achieved through good intentions alone. It requires action, investment and sustained commitment.

Congress, every woman deserve safe and respectful maternity care. Every baby deserves the best possible start in life and every member of NHS staff deserves to work in an environment where they are valued, respected and protected from racism. This motion is a call for action. It is necessary, it is achievable and it is long overdue. I urge Congress to support. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Katy. I am now going to go to the vote on Motion 51. Will all those in favour please show? All those against please show? That motion is carried.

*Motion 51 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: We have made good progress this morning so my plan is to bring forward Motion 3 on family friendly rights from this afternoon's business and all being well (although I am not becoming complacent) we will take it after Motion 54.

I now call Motion 52, Supporting effective management in the NHS. The General Council support the motion moved by FDA, seconded by Society of Radiographers, and the union CSoP has indicated the wish to speak as well.

Supporting effective management in the NHS

Sajidah Ahmad (*FDA*) moved Motion 51. *She said:* President, Congress, I am a first-time speaker at TUC (*Applause*) and I am proud to move Motion 52, Supporting effective management in the NHS on behalf of the FDA. And why do we need this motion, Congress? Because for too long NHS managers have been an easy target. Too often the debate about NHS efficiency has been focused on cutting bureaucracy and so-called pen pushers. And while it makes for an easy headline, it fundamentally misunderstands how the NHS works because behind every hospital ward, community service and major NHS programme are people making sure those services function: the people who manage staffing, budgets and suppliers, or someone who oversees patient safety, complaints, infection control and the operational pressure that arise every day. That work is essential to safe patient care. If we remove the people doing it, who is going to pick it up? Do we want nurses spending more time sorting out rotas and staffing problems? Do we want doctors dealing with operational issues instead of treating patients?

Cutting management capacity does not remove work; it simply moves it elsewhere. Good healthcare depends on clinical leadership and effective management working together. Lead clinical leaders bring professional expertise and experience of patient care that managers do not have. But managers organise those services, manage resource and risk and help turn that expertise into services that work for everybody. We saw this during Covid when hospitals re-organised almost overnight. Wards were repurposed, staff redeployed, equipment sourced and vaccination centres established. And clinical staff rightly received enormous recognition but managers and programme teams worked

alongside them to keep those services running. That is NHS management and that is what NHS managers do.

The NHS 10-year plan sets out significant goals for the service. The NHS is expected to reduce waiting lists, move more care into communities and improve productivity by making better use of technology. And let's take that digital transformation. It is not simply about buying software and switching it on. It needs clinical input, safety checks and process redesign and careful implementation. Technology does not transform healthcare on its own, people do, and it works best when clinical management and expertise come together. As trade unionists, we should also remember that managers are workers in their own right. They face restructures, job insecurity and workload pressures and constant organisational change just like other NHS staff. And good management means working in partnership with staff and their trade unions, listening to the workforce and resolving problems and involving the people delivering services in decisions about how these services are run.

Congress, we also know that restructuring is not experienced equally. The people who already face barriers in our organisations are often the people who lose out most when jobs are cut and structures changed. Black and minority ethnic staff continue to face barriers to senior leadership. Women who make up most of the NHS workforce remain under-represented at the top. That is why this motion calls for an equality assessed, credible and properly resourced plan for NHS management. The NHS cannot deliver safer care, reform and digital transformation by stripping out the very people expected to organise and lead that work.

So, let's reject the idea that cutting managers automatically cuts waste and let us oppose targets rather than evidence. Let us invest in leadership and management capability the NHS needs. Good management is not a distraction from patient care. Working alongside strong clinical leadership it enables safer better care. Congress, I move. Please support Motion 52. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Sajidah. I now call the Society of Radiographers.

Dean Rogers (*Society of Radiographers*) seconded Motion 52. *He said*: A few years ago we launched a managers and leaders network and over 600 signed up in a few days. In a survey, over a third of them said that they had no training in anything specifically related to managing people at work. Our networks become their safe space. They told us that they regularly have more than 20 direct line management reports, when CIPD, for example, would never recommend more than 10, if that. First-line managers are expected to support and encourage vital professional colleagues, directing and implementing policies and practices to manage and maintain high patient standards and yet way too often they are overwhelmed, under supported and of course poorly rewarded. In the NHS first-line managers lose the right to paid overtime on promotion and usually end up earning less than they did before they took on extra responsibility.

This year we worked with the DHSE and NHS employers to establish a set of staffing standards where the accountability to empower a positive safe working culture is being pushed up to board level. This could be a huge positive breakthrough, but only if unions stand firmly behind and with our leader members and make sure these standards are not used as another stick to beat them with. We must be the place where first-line managers look for help and support just like any other worker. Please support. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Dean. The colleague from CSP.

Emilie Anekwu (*CSP*) spoke in support of Motion 52. *He said*: Funding - that is all we have been hearing about. Some 74% of the motions being addressed here are about funding. One service that works for every one of us, whether you are rich, whether you are poor, whether you are middle class is the NHS and the NHS is the envy of every nation of the world. If you have paid out of your own pocket for a health service, you will know what I am talking about. As workers, I think it is very important that we protect the NHS. My friends will say that we are just one serious health condition away from poverty. Just think about it.

The closure of NHS England has caused lots of uncertainty among workers, especially the first-line managers. We call them managers because they tend to look after front-line workers but they are specialists they are clinicians as well. For us in the CSP, we have been arguing about retention, we have been arguing about expansion ideally, especially among the allied health professionals, and we have been arguing for additional services. It is one

thing to for instance, have a fracture and get it fixed in hospital but it is getting back to the functions you enjoy which is the most important thing to most people. The narrative has been if there are cuts to managerial roles there will be reduced costs and improved efficiency. I do not know how that adds up but that is how it is sold to us. We the physiotherapists and physio support staff know that management is not an optional extra. Good managers create the conducive conditions for clinicians to thrive, for patient safety to be optimal and for us to deliver our service. In any restructure, the test should not be what is labelled a managerial role; it should be whether it is effective and it delivers effective patient care. Management is not separate from patient care. It is an integral part of patient care. Please support this motion, thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Emilie. I will now go to the vote for Motion 52. Would all those in favour please show? All those against please show? The motion is carried.

*Motion 52 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Motion 53, Improving working conditions and recognition for dietetic support workforce. The General Council support the motion. Moved by the BDA and seconded by the Society of Radiographers.

Improving working conditions and recognition for dietetic support workforce

Sonila Ellahi (*Director, British Dietetic Association*) moved Motion 53. *She said:* I am moving Motion 53 on behalf of Sam McConkey. Congress notes that recent research undertaken by King's College London, "The Cavendish Review: Ten Years On" (Griffin et al, 2024) found that the AHP support workforce, including dietetic support workers and dietetic assistant practitioners, continues to feel undervalued. The majority of the AHP support workforce feel they are underpaid for the work that they undertake and could contribute more if they had greater access to learning and development.

Other barriers included lack of information about career progression, limited manager support, poor-quality appraisals and personal development plans. Almost a third strongly aspired to become registered professionals but needed more support.

Congress believes that the dietetic support workforce is an essential part of the NHS workforce and must be properly funded, supported and fairly rewarded. Congress calls on the TUC to work with health unions and professional bodies to campaign for NHS organisations across the four nations to:

1. Remove barriers to career progression by improving access to career planning and implementing UK-wide career development frameworks for the AHP support workforce.

2. Promote fair pay for all AHPs using existing Agenda for Change pathways, including job evaluation, and ensure equal pay for work of equal value in line with legal and contractual requirements.

3. Ensure the AHP support workforce is recognised in workforce planning, supported by robust workforce data to better understand their deployment, contribution and impact.

Finally, invest in career progression pathways for the dietetic support workforce and other allied health professions, including routes into allied professional roles, through apprenticeships and other higher education opportunities. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Sonila. Society of Radiographers to second.

Katie Thompson (*Society of Radiographers*) seconded amended Motion 53. *She said:* Support workers and assistant practitioners are essential members of our teams: the bricks and mortar. They provide high-quality care, specialist skills and continuity for patients every day yet too often they remain undervalued and overlooked. Across the NHS, support workers tell us they want to develop their skills and progress their careers. The challenge is not lack of ambition but lack of opportunities, clear pathways and support.

Congress, talent exists through the workforce. It should not be limited by lack of access to education and development.

In radiography, I have seen first-hand what can be achieved when those opportunities are available. Currently, I work alongside two colleagues who began their careers as healthcare support workers. They progressed to assistant practitioner roles and are now nearing the completion of their degree apprenticeships to become band 5 radiographers.

Their journey demonstrates exactly why this motion matters. Without clear progression routes our profession might have lost two talented future radiographers. Instead they are about to join the registered workforce, with years of experience, commitment and knowledge already behind them. While this motion focuses on the dietetic support workforce, the same principles apply to all allied health professions. Support workers should have access to apprenticeships, education and career pathways that enable them to progress into registered professional roles if they choose.

The Society of Radiographers' Education and Career Framework is a live document that gives guidance on career progression at all levels in radiography practice, from support workers to consultant radiographers, and includes the educational standards related to them. This is not just about career development. It is about retention, workforce sustainability and creating opportunities for people from all backgrounds to succeed. As trade unionists, we believe in fairness, opportunity and valuing every member of the workforce. Congress if we truly value support workers, we must invest in them, support them and create the opportunities they deserve. I urge Congress to support this motion.

The President: Thank you very much, Katie. I am now going to go to the vote on Motion 53. Will all those in favour please show? All those against please show? That motion is carried.

*Motion 53 was **CARRIED.***

The President: I now call Motion 54, Review of the Civil Service. The General Council support the motion and it will be moved by FDA, seconded by PCS and then Prospect have indicated they wish to speak, which I will be taking.

Review of the Civil Service

Dave Penman (*General Secretary, FDA*) moved Motion 54. *He said*: Congress, the Civil Service uniquely impacts on all of our lives every day. The Civil Service supports the elected Government of the day in formulating policy and providing impartial evidence-based advice. Despite the attention given to those who work at the heart of government, though, most civil servants are not in Whitehall, they are out in communities up and down the country delivering public services, collecting the tax that pays for schools, hospitals and roads, delivering benefits and helping people back into work, running courts and yes, Mr President, prisons, prosecuting criminals, securing our borders, supporting industry, driving up standards in education and representing the UK's interests abroad to protect our country and grow our economy. The list is endless. Almost every aspect of your life is impacted by the Civil Service, even in policy development, funding and regulating of services, or directly

delivering those public services. There is no NHS or Armed Forces without the core departments that support them. It is the Civil Service which helped turn Labour's Make Work Pay agenda in the Employment Rights Act and it will be civil servants tasked with enforcing it. That is why it is in everyone's interests, not just those of civil servants themselves, that the Civil Service is the best it can be. Effective and efficient; at the cutting edge of policy development and implementation; thinking about the challenges of tomorrow and helping Ministers to help meet them regardless of which party is elected to government. It is also why the review into the organisation, performance and transformation of the permanent Civil Service which was announced by the Government earlier this year and due to report in 2027 is critical to everyone in this room. Of course, it will have an impact on civil servants themselves and those civil servants will want to influence the review through their trade unions. But every member represented in this room should have an interest in the review, which is why our motion calls on the TUC, as the only legitimate voice of working people in the country, to engage with government and contribute to the review.

The review itself is not taking place in a vacuum. For more than a decade, politicians from across the political spectrum have found it politically expedient to attack the service: too woke, too efficient, too Remain. It is stuffed full of soya latte loving millennials who never want to work in an office but are at the same time Machiavellian political geniuses undermining the elected Government of the day. From Jacob Rees-Mogg's infamous Post-It notes on the back of chairs in the Cabinet Office, to Starmer's tepid bath of managed decline, the Civil Service has become the convenient go-to excuse for political failure.

The Civil Service is far from perfect. Ask anyone who works there. It is half a million public servants in hundreds of organisations. It will be slow, bureaucratic and inefficient while at the same time being brilliant, innovative and transformative to people's lives. Those years of constant political attacks have taken their toll. Across the political spectrum there is doubt the current model is the right one. An impartial permanent Civil Service is obligated under the Civil Service Code to provide the best evidence-based advice to Ministers and then implement the decisions of an elected Government. Ministers also have obligation under their Code to consider that advice. It makes for better government while retaining rightly the power of Ministers to make the final decision. But for many it is an inconvenience. When your policies do not add up, when the rhetoric meets reality, it is easier to just surround yourself with political appointees who are only there because they already agree with the Minister in the first place.

Congress, we are just over two years into this Labour Government and yet most civil servants will be on their third Secretary of State. Many have had more than a dozen over the last decade. It is a permanent Civil Service which ensures that regardless of political turmoil, that the lights stay on. So whilst this review is looking at innovation, productivity and the delivery in the Civil Service, it is also looking at how to safeguard its impartiality and core values. That Congress is in all our interests and why the TUC as the voice of working people should be a major contributor to the review. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Dave. Seconded by PCS.

Dave Semple (*PCS*) seconded Motion 54. *He said*: Dave Penman has spoken eloquently about the universal importance of the Civil Service and, as a civil servant, I can wholeheartedly concur. I think the key thing for me, however, is whilst an impartial Civil Service is a foundational pillar of our democracy, so are fully funded public services, and in the Civil Service that means fair pay, not low pay. It means a 10% pay rise and not people surviving off a rise in the national minimum wage. It means job security, not job cuts. We have survived the cuts by the Osborne and Cameron Governments. We have survived cuts since but whenever Brexit arrived, it was the Civil Service they turned to. Our staff numbers began to recover and whenever Covid arrived, they turned further to the Civil Service. It was the Civil Service that was a core part of what kept Britain moving during the pandemic.

We stand with all those across public services demanding job security and we deserve it too. It is also a question of workloads. We stood with our teacher colleagues, we stood with our health service colleagues to demand fair workloads and safety. That is also true in the Civil Service. Any review of the Civil Service must include these demands as well.

As well as being a pillar of our democracy, there is another aspect to this. The Civil Service and public services generally are a window into the nation's soul, so whilst we are reviewing the Civil Service, we must also be looking for the equality, diversity and inclusion which we should treat as sacrosanct in this country. That means not going back to the bad old days of

outdated putative performance management and widget counting in ways that are wildly discriminatory, and which government departments right now are trying to go back to. It also means an end to the attack on our trans colleagues, the attempts to remove special leave for those who are transitioning. It also means world-class protection against sexual harassment. It means as well, because this is a diversity, equality and inclusion issue as much as it is anything else, an end to outsourcing.

The Civil Service and public services are a window to our soul and an impartial Civil Service is a pillar to democracy but there is another pillar to democracy worth talking about whilst I am up here, which is free collective bargaining. The other aspect of this review should include the restoration of national collective bargaining across the entire UK Civil Service, something we do not have to wait for a second Employment Rights Act to do, something which Andy Burnham could announce from this podium if he is addressing us shortly.

Congress, support Motion 54, support the PCS amendment and support free trade unions and free collective bargaining in our country. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Dave, very well put. Now calling Prospect.

Eadwine Brown (*Prospect*) spoke in support of Motion 54. *He said*: And my device has also broken. Bear with me. It will be worth it, I promise.

The President: I will give you some more time as well.

Eadwine Brown: No, don't worry. I would like to start by commending the FDA and all other Civil Service unions for standing up for our public servants at a time of growing hostility from all angles. Prospect's members in the Civil Service are proud of the jobs they do and Prospect is proud to represent them. As many of you here will know, every day, all of us rely on these public servants for the quality of our public services, the strength of our economy and, as the last speaker noted, the stability of our democracy. But today the Civil Service remains in a state of profound crisis. Workers are having to carry out vital public functions against years of budget cuts and job losses, real-terms salary cuts and a recruitment and retention crisis. And compounding all these issues, politicians from across the political spectrum are increasingly resorting to cheap rhetoric that denigrates their work and scapegoats them for ministerial policy failures. Reform in particular attacks civil servants week after week knowing that they are unable to answer back.

Congress, it falls to this movement, the trade union movement, to defend and speak up for our civil servants. That is what our motion works towards, by instructing the TUC to lobby and engage with the Cabinet Secretary as they undertake a review into the organisation and performance of the permanent Civil Service. We must hope that the new Prime Minister takes the opportunity for a re-set, but, as other speakers have noted, hope alone is not enough. We must also do all we can to use the Cabinet Office Civil Service review to shine a

light on the challenges civil servants face and to identify ways of strengthening the Civil Service in an enduring way which can withstand the failings of any government it serves. This should include clearer lines of transparency and accountability, more rigorous and robust workforce planning and stronger constitutional protections.

Congress, I urge you to support this motion not only for our fellow trade union members who work in the Civil Service but also for every trade union member, including everyone in this hall, who relies on them. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Eadwine. I now go to the vote on Motion 54. All those in favour please show? All those against? The motion is carried.

*Motion 54 was **CARRIED.***

The President: I now call Motion 3, Family friendly rights. The General Council support the motion and it will be moved by USDAW, seconded by CSP and there is an indication from NEU which I will be taking. Thank you, USDAW.

Family friendly rights

Joanne Thomas (*General Secretary, USDAW*) moved Motion 3. *She said:* Congress, now is the time for the Labour Government to make bold changes to our system of paid leave and rights for parents; to remodel it so that it actually reflects the changing face of today's labour market and the diversity of today's families. The UK is almost the worst country in Europe when it comes to offering decent paid maternity leave. Add the continuing cost-of-living crisis into the mix and the result is that many parents are either in the middle of or on the brink of a financial crisis. While concerns over increases in the cost of energy and food have been widely reported, what has received less attention is the shocking rise in the things that are essential for looking after a new baby. Our members in supermarkets see it with their own eyes. The cost of formula, baby wipes and nappies have all rocketed.

Congress, of course the rewards of parenting cannot be counted but the costs of raising a baby certainly can, and they add up very quickly. It is estimated that parents have to pay out at least £6,000 on essential items for a baby in their first year but a retail worker would lose this amount and more just by taking her full 52 weeks' maternity leave. And of course it is not just about the extra costs relating to having a child because when you are on your maternity leave, we know that your rent still needs to be paid, your family still needs to eat and of course you still need to heat your home. So, for low-paid workers, there is no spare capacity to cope when their income drops and the system is failing new mothers. It is failing to give them enough time to protect their physical and mental health and it is also failing fathers and co-parents. The strict government entitlement excludes many fathers and co-parents from taking paternal and shared parental leave. The complete absence of a separate well-paid period of leave reserved especially for fathers and co-parents together

with very low rates of pay means that many are denied any meaningful time with their baby in the first year of its life. This is bad for fathers and for co-parents. It is bad for mothers and it is bad for babies and of course young children. But it is bad for gender equality as well.

And what about those with parental responsibilities who are currently locked out of leave and pay rises altogether, including tens of thousands of kinship carers who step into care often at short notice to raise children whose parents cannot, and yet they are expected to be back at work the following day like nothing has happened? Without any right to paid leave, kinship carers are at high risk of dropping out of the labour market altogether or often are compelled to reduce their hours at a time when they can least afford to do so. So, making paid leave available to kinship carers is long overdue. This review provides the Government with an opportunity to plug this gap and it is an opportunity that the Government must not throw away.

Congress, we all recognise that reforming the parental leave system will not happen overnight. We recognise that fixing our current system so that it works for today's families needs time and investment, but doing nothing, or just tweaking it around the edges has a far greater cost. With families and parents, the future of our economy is paying the highest price and we cannot and will not stand by and let this happen. So Congress, please support this motion. Thank you and I am on time. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Joanne, and she was bang on time! Well, with time to spare. Seconded by CSP.

Zoe Aspinall (*CSP*) seconded Motion 3. *She said:* Conference, we welcome the progress that has been made on family-friendly rights. Day one rights to paternity and parental leave, stronger protections for pregnant and new mothers, improved flexible working rights and a new right to bereavement leave are important steps forward. They recognise something that trade unionists have understood for generations.

We should also be clear that progress is not the same as having finished the job. For too many working families the current statutory framework still is not fit for purpose. It does not reflect the way families live in 2026. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has repeatedly highlighted the importance of affordable childcare, parental leave and policies that enable parents especially women to remain at work. When people are forced to reduce their hours, turn down promotion or leave work altogether because the system does not support caring responsibilities, it is a failure of our labour market. We also know that pregnancy and maternity discrimination remains a serious problem.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission's research has prudently estimated that tens of thousands of women at work each year experience discrimination. When we are talking about family-friendly rights, we are discussing women's economic stability and equality in the workplace and the right to have a family without it having a professional disadvantage.

Congress, imagine being told that a child in your family needs you to become their primary carer and then discovering, amongst the emotion of it all, that the law does not recognise you as having the same rights as a parent who became a parent through birth or adoption. More than 140,000 children are growing up in kinship care. These range from grandparents to family friends, who often step forward at short notice when a child cannot be cared for by their parents. We are asking for full recognition of kinship carers with special guardianship orders ensuring they receive equal entitlements in line with birth and adoptive parents, including financial support, parental leave and access to specialist services. The Government's review with its outcome due in January gives us a chance to reshape the system around the realities of working people's lives rather than expecting working people to reshape their lives around an undated system.

As trade unions, we are asking for individual periods of well-paid parental leave, paid leave for kinship carers, full recognition and support for guardianship carers and access to parental leave and pay for those that are currently excluded. This type of support will help tackle discrimination, work to close the ever ongoing gender pay gap and retain skilled workers.

Let us deliver a clear message: working people cannot wait. Conference, I believe that every child deserves a safe and stable home and have an opportunity to thrive. Conference, please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Well done, Zoe, thank you. I will now call on the NEU.

Lily Joyce (*NEU*) spoke in support of Motion 3. *She said:* As an education union, the NEU is deeply invested in the well-being of our students and their families, as well as of education workers. We are acutely aware of the financial difficulties families face up and down the country. Our No Child Left Behind and Free School Meals For All campaigns focus on ending child poverty and removing financial barriers to education.

It seems ironic then that workers in our union, who give so much for other people's children, are not able to take the time for their own. Education starts at home. Children need to be supported and nurtured, to feel loved and safe. There are families who cannot afford for any adult to take leave to care for them so much of the childcare falls to older siblings, and, Congress, I am sure I do not need to explain to you the difficulties we see faced by young carers. Improved parental leave and kinship leave will allow our children to stay children for longer. The situation in schools is especially difficult. Flexible working is hard to come by around a teaching timetable and for support staff on term-time only contracts it is even worse.

Many people, especially woman, choose support staff jobs to fit around their childcare responsibilities. They have holidays. They finish at the end of the school day. And look at how they are rewarded for that when they need maternity leave. Added stress and an

appalling deal for low-paid women workers. My own mother found herself in this position and after many years of these conditions, her advice to me was not to work in a school. Sorry mum. Her other advice which I will leave you with was never to marry a Tory, and I am proud to say I have only disappointed her on one of those! (*Applause*) Congress, please support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks for that, Lily. We will now move to the vote on Motion 3. Will all those in favour please show? All those against? That is carried.

*Motion 3 was **CARRIED.***

The President: Congress, that concludes this morning's business. Can I remind delegates that there are fringe meetings taking place this lunch time. Details of these meetings can be found from page 26 of the Congress Guide. For the latest updates do check the fringe listings on the TUC website. This hall will be closed between now and 1.45. Please make sure you take everything you need with you when you leave. You will not be able to access the hall before 2 pm. Please be back promptly for this afternoon's session. Congress is now adjourned until 2.15. Thank you.

Congress adjourned for lunch.

Congress reassembled at 2.15 p.m.

The President: Will delegates please take their seats and will Congress please come to order. Thank you.

Video shown to Congress

The President: As at the beginning of this morning's session**,** we will now see another short video celebrating union wins this year. Please cheer if you see your union and feel free to loudly cheer others. Delegates, please note that some of today's videos may contain flashing and strobe-like effects.

Video shown to Congress

The President: Thank you again to Holy Trinity Music Scholars who have been playing for us this afternoon.

SECTION 2 CONTINUED OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT - STRONGER RIGHTS AT WORK AND PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION

The President: Congress - we move to Section 2 of the General Council report: Stronger Rights at Work and Protection from Discrimination, from page 22.

I now call paragraph 1.2, 2.1, 3.5 and Composite Motion 2, Strengthening and protecting hard-won employment rights for all workers. The General Council support the composite motion. It is moved by NASUWT and seconded by POA and supported by RCoP, RMT, Equity and two other unions I will be taking, CSP and the Bakers' Union. NASUWT.

Strengthening and protecting hard-won employment rights for all workers
(*Composing Motion 4, Motion 5 and Motion 6*)

Matt Wrack (*NASUWT, The Teachers' Union*) moved Composite 2. *He said*: Yesterday Congress, we debated the narratives and rhetoric which bring division and hatred to our communities. We see the role of the ultra-rich in funding and promoting such ideas. A section of the billionaire class is prepared to fund populist and right-wing politicians and even fascist and black-shirted thugs. It is the old strategy of divide and rule. They are feeding on fear and uncertainty, the cost-of-living crisis, the lack of homes and jobs. And despite their own obscene riches, they feed off sickening levels of inequality in our society.

Our movement, when it has been at its best, has been a force for progress, for equality and for improved living standards and conditions of life. During the 20th century, despite

setbacks and defeats, our movement, the labour movement, won a transformation in the world of work and in the lives of working-class people through better wages, holidays, pensions and safety provision. Trade unions helped to deliver a reduction in levels of economic and social inequality alongside significant reforms in education, health and social services. But these gains came under sustained attack from the 1970s and our movement, the trade union movement, came under attack too. From 1979, we have seen more than four decades of attacks on our rights as organised working people. The results today are seen in the levels of abuse and exploitation in many workplaces. The results are seen in a young generation worried for the future, exploited at work and ripped off by spiv landlords at home.

The attacks on union rights have been central to delivering the agenda of the banks, the bosses, billionaires, the agenda of privatisation, inequality and of shifting power to those at the top. That is why we welcomed Labour's pledges before the last election. At last we could have a Government willing to start to turn the tide on workers' rights. We do indeed welcome the changes that have been introduced. They can begin to turn the tide if we collectively seize the time and take full advantage.

But the composite also draws attention to significant failings in delivery. The ballot thresholds we face to take industrial action were introduced under the Trade Union Act 2016. If those thresholds applied in public elections, many in the current Cabinet would not even be in the current Parliament. We were promised that the legislation to abolish that Act would be introduced within 100 days of the general election so why, Congress, two

years down the line is the 50% threshold still in place? (*Applause*) It is linked without any logic or justification to the introduction of electronic balloting and, most significantly, there is no actual timetable for its removal. I do not know how Ministers count 100 days but by any standard of arithmetic, two years is significantly beyond the timescale set out in promises to voters.

So Congress, let's tell the Government: no more delays, deliver the election pledges and abolish the thresholds immediately! (*Applause*) The composite also makes the case for further changes to strengthen our rights for new systems of collective bargaining - genuine collective bargaining. It is scandalous that in the UK we are in breach of various ILO Conventions. It is scandalous that in the UK workers do not enjoy a positive right to strike, including the right to take solidarity action. This lack of rights exacerbates all the factors which create such an unequal, bleak and dystopian world offering no future to millions. Demanding our rights in full is part and parcel of fighting for a better world. Allowing workers to organise themselves in their own interests is crucial to creating hope for the future. Let's seize the time, organise and build that hope. I move. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Matt. It is seconded by POA. Oh, it is POA - you can speak for as long as you want! That is a joke by the way - three minutes.

Mark Fairhurst (*National Chair, POA*) seconded Motion 3. *He said*: This is a very important motion for the POA and let me tell you why. This Government came into power with a

pledge and a promise to rescind anti-trade union legislation but conveniently forgot about the most draconian pernicious restrictive bit of trade union legislation that has ever been introduced into this country by a Tory Government. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, section 127, bars prison officers from taking any form of industrial action, backed up by a permanent High Court injunction that stops me instructing my members to take any form of industrial action at all. I know there are many Labour politicians in senior positions throughout their movement because I have seen the letters to their constituents and my members, who disagree that we should have our right to strike restored. I say to those Labour politicians - shame on you! (*Applause*)

Just think about it. Just put yourself in my position. Many of you out there when your members are aggrieved can say to them, "If you feel that aggrieved by how you are getting treated at work, tell you what, for the next couple of weeks let's have an overtime ban." I can't. I can get imprisoned because I am breaching a High Court injunction. What about if I tell my members to work to rule? I am in breach of a permanent High Court injunction and I could get imprisoned. What about telling them not to volunteer for business-critical tasks that the employer refuses to pay them extra for? That is in breach of a permanent High Court injunction and I could get imprisoned. We have been threatened with imprisonment. The last time we backed our members because they were fed up getting used as human punch bags and managers wanted them to just carry on as normal, it cost us £210,000. They said the next time you do it, we are going to imprison you. Well, bring it on. Who's going to bang me up? Most of my members will be outside on strike and you will have to catch me first! (*Applause*)

So I say to you Congress, help restore the rights of prison officers. Help us get our industrial rights back and our human rights because the European Social Rights Committee have made a ruling on it and told this Government, "You are breaching the human rights of prison officers by not allowing them the right to strike and not allowing them to take any form of industrial action." That is wrong. This Government is keen on giving human rights to everyone else but what about us? Support this motion. Solidarity to you all. (*Applause and cheers*)

The President: Thank you, Mark. Supported by RCPoD.

Jodie Lucas (*RCPoD*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 2. *She said:* Good afternoon, Congress, I am a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Thomas Payne said: "Whatever is my right is as a man is also a right of another; it becomes my duty to guarantee as well as to possess."

Congress notes and applauds the hard work, organising and commitment over many years in fighting for these rights. This has helped create legislation around equalities, health and safety in employment that has given us the rights we have today. It is our duty as trade unions to possess and fight for the rights of us all. These are not optional extras or a perk of the job. They are fundamental workers' rights. The 2025 Employment Rights Act has already made great strides in increasing employees' rights to day one rights legislation.

Paternity leave and unpaid parental leave are now a day one right. Statutory sick pay is now paid from the first day of sickness and the lower earnings limit has been removed. Congress has estimated that the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act has prevented 114 industrial related deaths. To put this into context, that is just under the population of Tunbridge Wells and a little over of our next door neighbour's, Worthing. These are not insignificant figures. This is the size of a large UK town. These rights have been hard won and have helped to build the trade union movement we have today. We recognise the commitment and dedication of trade unionists who over the years have shaped this landscape.

We always want more and we will always fight for greater rights. Future changes in legislation are still to come under the Employment Act, including protection from unfair dismissal, legislation around dismissal and re-hire and increased pregnancy and maternity rights.

The Equality Act is the cornerstone of UK equality legislation. It is designed to protect individuals from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. All of us in this room will have at least one protected characteristic under the Equality Act. Certain political parties will try to remove or remove the scope of this Act, which would undo decades of hard-won progress. We will not accept any Government of any persuasion that tries to ban or diminish these rights. Whether it is the Equality Act, health and safety or the recent Employment Rights Act, we will stand together to defend these hard-won rights.

Congress calls on the General Council to be ready to fight against any Government that wants to strip people of their rights. We must ensure that if and when these rights come under threat, there is a planned response in place, and not simply wait for it to happen. Furthermore, the employment rights of working people must continue to be highlighted as must the consequences of them being taken away. These are the rights of a man and the rights of another and, Congress, it is our duty to guarantee as well as to possess.

The President: Thank you very much, Jodie. RMT now, please.

Darren Proctor (*National Secretary, RMT*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 2. *He said*: I want to draw the emphasis on the title and underline and put in bold **all workers**, and I want to talk specifically about seafarers. I recall addressing Congress back in 2012 and three was a motion at that point on something called social dumping. It talked about the campaign we had at that time against Condor Ferries operating between Portsmouth and Jersey and they were being paid £28 a day. A lot has happened since then. A lot has happened but not all good.

When we talk about seafarers and we talk about the maritime sector as an island nation, what we have is a national disgrace. I hear the words in various forums about a proud maritime nation, but when it comes to employment conditions, let me give you the reality of that. I was on a vessel in the offshore energy sector not long back where we identified

that seafarers were being paid £4.02 an hour, working seven days a week, 12 hours a day for six months at a time. No sickness. No holiday pay. No pensions. We all recall the actions of P&O Ferries and the political waffle that we heard from Parliament at that time.

As a trade union, we have continued to ask questions on the legislation and to point us to the legislation where it prevents a seafarer from being paid 10 pence per day in UK legislation, which could not be found. We have had to campaign to overturn that. We are seeing strides in the right way but that is not enough. That is far from enough.

Recently on Merchant Navy Day, we saw everyone waving flags and banners. The Red Duster was flying proudly; proudly from organisations that don't pay seafarers proper wages, that don't pay seafarers pensions, that don't pay seafarers sick pay. It is about time we saw investment in seafarers and every single worker covered by the Employment Act. (*Applause*)

We have asked for a number of things for the DfT to consult on in a mandatory charter because at present it is only seafarers between the UK and France or the Channel Islands. Let's not dismiss the thousands of other seafarers who are operating around the UK coast. The Maritime Ministers gave us a commitment around sick pay and holiday pay and pension rights. They gave us a commitment to review the full provisions of the Employment Rights Act. That has not happened. Let's see investment and let's see standards for seafarers

come up because we are an island nation. Support seafarers, support coastal communities and support the future of our communities. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Darren, spot on. Equity.

Lynda Rooke (*Equity*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 2. *She said:* Thank you to all the trade unions who are part of this composite, for bringing forward motions which call for us to protect but also to build on what the movement has already won. Equity agrees that while the Employment Rights Act is welcome (certainly the removal of some of the restrictive rights holding unions back) it does not go far enough. Our 50,000 members are almost entirely self-employed and on most performance engagements, they are classified as workers and those members will miss out on many of the changes that the Act has introduced. On many issues, Equity's collective agreements provide members with the rights that legislation does not. From unfair dismissal to paternity, maternity rights and redundancy rights, to new protections around AI, which we are now starting to secure. Our agreements cover sectors such as TV, film and theatre where we have nearly 90% coverage, provide a flow of minimum rights that workers moving from engagement to engagement can rely on. They are proof of what sectoral collective bargaining can achieve. (*Applause*)

But it is the sectors where Equity is still fighting to gain collective agreements such as video games, commercials and audio. It is what we call the Wild West of our industry and that is

where the failure of the ERA to strengthen protections for all workers will be most keenly felt.

So we need a second Employment Rights Bill that strengthens rights for all workers with the repeal of all anti-trade union laws and the introduction of genuine sectoral collective bargaining. This was outlined as an objective in the New Deal from which the Labour Government has subsequently backtracked. That is not good enough. Let's build on what this movement has already achieved and demand what was promised and more. In solidarity! Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Lynda. I now call on CSoP.

Helen Fitzgerald (*CSP*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 2. *She said:* Hello, Congress. We have heard a lot about rights we have already, but these rights we enjoy at work today were not gifted by any employer or government; they were hard won through decades of trade union organising, campaigning and collective action.

The rights we have are things such as protection from unfair dismissal, equality and anti-discrimination rights, health and safety protections, pay and working time rights, trade union and collective rights, family friendly and flexible working rights. Every one of these rights was hard won. You need no reminding of that. We as physiotherapists and physio support workers use these rights to speak up for our patients, support our colleagues and

challenge unfair treatment in the workplace. They help our members and reps raise concerns, challenge discrimination and hold employers to account.

This composite rightly calls on to our movement to be ready to defend these hard-won rights. And we know what readiness looks like action. It means recruiting and organising the workers, developing the workplace reps and activists, union education, winning improvements in our workplaces, demonstrating the value of collective action, building alliances and making the case for workers' rights in our communities. Every union in this room is doing this work day in and day out.

But we know there is more to do. We know that there are places where workers are not organised (I should say only some) and members are disengaged from their unions and unaware of the rights they rely on. Communities where support for values that underpin these protections cannot be taken for granted. We know that rights are strongest when people understand not just why they exist but why they matter and how they were won.

Congress, we have faced periods in the past before when our rights have come under pressure. These rights we enjoy today survive because trade unionists organised, campaigned, recruited and persuaded and built their support far beyond our own memberships. If we want generations of the future to enjoy the same protections we have (or some of us have) we must do the same today with the urgency that this composite requires. Congress, I urge you to support. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Helen. Finally the Bakers' Union.

Sarah Woolley (*BFAWU*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 2. *She said:* Congress, as we know, every employment right we have today was fought for. They were won by trade unionists like every single one of us in the room who organised, campaigned, took action and refused to accept that exploitation was simply the way things should be. So, we should recognise the hard work and commitment of those who came before us because we definitely stand on their shoulders and that is why as a movement, we welcome the Employment Rights Act 2025.

It is an important step forward after years of attacks on working-class people and our trade unions. We have an opportunity to begin re-setting the balance of power in the workplace, but we cannot mistake a step forward for the end of the journey. The ERA does not deliver everything working people need. It does not restore the collective bargaining structures that we need to stop the race to the bottom or give us genuine sectoral collective bargaining. It does not give us a single status of worker, which will bring millions of working people rights they do not currently enjoy, including members in our SALT branch and our sex worker branch.

For many years, organisations including the Institute for Employment Rights, the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom and more recently, Strike Map have been making a case for a

fundamental change to employment and industrial relations law. They kept the pressure on when Governments have failed to act. They have helped build the arguments, evidence and campaigning movement for a better system and we should listen to that. We should be saying clearly today that the Employment Rights Act should be the beginning, not the conclusion and we absolutely, as has been previously mentioned, need an Employment Rights Bill II. One that goes further, that delivers genuine sectoral bargaining, a bill that strengthens rights for every single worker, no matter what job they do, closes the gaps in protection and enforcement and gives trade unions the freedom to organise and fight for our members.

Crucially, we need a second Bill that finally brings our industrial action laws into compliance with the international employment obligations this country has ratified, because workers should not have to jump through unnecessary legal hoops simply to exercise a fundamental democratic right. The 50% ballot threshold is one of those barriers and it has to be removed. We should not allow its removal thought to be held hostage to the introduction of electronic balloting, as positive as that is.

Congress, we know that rights on paper are not enough. They have to be enforceable, they have to be understood and workers have to be organised to use them. That means proper enforcement - properly resourced enforcement bodies and genuine involvement of trade unions in implementation. But it also means something else. We have got to be ready to defend these right because we know that rights won over generations can be taken away the remarkably quickly if we are not prepared to fight for them. So let's welcome the

progress that has been made and recognise those who fought to get us here but let us also be ambitious about where we go next. We need an Employment Rights Bill II. Please support the composite. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Sarah. We are going to go to the vote on Composite Motion 2. Please show all those in favour? All those against? The motion is carried.

*Composite Motion 2 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Composite Motion 3, Support for fully self-employed workers. The General Council support the motion. Moved by Equity, seconded by Prospect, supported by Community and the Royal College of Podiatry. I will also be calling the NUJ.

Support for fully self-employed workers
(*Composing Motion 7 and amendments*)

Lynda Rooke (*Equity*) moved Composite Motion 3. *She said:* Congress, as well as performers classified as workers on engagement, Equity represents fully self-employed workers across diverse sectors in the entertainment industry. They include variety performers who work in pubs, clubs, on cruise ships, and include drag performers, burlesque performers, opera, chorus and concert singers, dancers and choreographers, wrestlers and creative team

members such as directors and designers. And we are told that the benefit of self-employment is the ability to negotiate your own terms and conditions. Yeah, whatever!

For lots of self-employed workers across different sectors, that is not the reality, and in the case of our industry, it might work for the high-profile members but not for the vast majority. It is usually a take it or leave it offer, as with all other employees and workers, but without the protection and the rights.

So, what does this translate to in practice? Our fully self-employed members regularly experience a lack of written terms, late payments as well as unsafe working conditions. Without access to statutory sick pay, they are forced to work when unwell, potentially making their health worse. The situation facing fully self-employed parents or parents-to-be is similarly dire. Once a child is born, self-employed mothers may qualify for maternity allowance but it is derisory and deducted from universal credit as a benefit, and self-employed fathers get nothing, just when they need it the most, and as a result, many of our members have been robbed of the time to be at home bonding with their newborn child and caring for their partner, forced to juggle their work around their responsibilities at home in this critical period. It happened to my husband. He had to return to work as a theatre director the next day after each of our three children were born. That was 30 years ago and nothing has changed.

As I mentioned in supporting the previous motion, union agreements can make a significant difference. Take sick pay, Equity's collective agreements for the genuinely self-employed in theatre mean that if you are unable to complete an engagement due to ill-health then the producer needs to pay them the next third of the fee. However, the leverage of genuinely self-employed workers is limited by the fact they lack protection from detriment. This is despite it being lawful to ballot some genuinely self-employed workers where a legitimate trade dispute exists due to a wider definition of "worker" in TULRCA 1992. And in August 2024 with Make Work Pay, Labour declared itself as the party of the self-employed to support and champion the self-employed and recognising their significant contribution to the UK economy. In October 2024, they then promised to consult on how to implement strengthened protections through a right to work contract, with the extension of health and safety and black-listing protections all within the single worker status. It is now 2026 and there is still no time-line for that consultation and meanwhile the plight of the self-employed worker continues. So much for a significant contribution to the UK, eh?

Congress, genuinely self-employed workers need proper protection and rights and they need it now. Please support this motion. I move, thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Lynda. I now call Prospect to second.

Alice Black (*Prospect*) seconded Composite Motion 3. *She said:* Prospect seconds this motion and we propose amendments to strengthen the language even further, which we

are grateful to Equity for accepting. This motion calls on the TUC to campaign and lobby for vital support for fully self-employed workers. As the motion sets out, the Employment Rights Act has brought landmark improvements to workers' rights. However, genuinely self-employed workers remain excluded from many of the basic rights and protections despite promises from the Government to do more. This is especially important for members in our BECTU sector, where we represent 40,000 professionals in the creative industries, many of whom are self-employed.

Self-employed workers in the creative industries and across the economy contribute significantly to economic and cultural life yet they continue to face greater insecurity, weaker protections and poorer access to social security than other working people. I know personally what that lack of protection can mean. When I had my first child I was self-employed. Around that time a close family member became seriously ill and subsequently died, meaning I had to take significant time away from work. That time off fell within the qualifying period for maternity allowance which ultimately led to me not being entitled to maternity allowance at all. So, 12 weeks after having my first baby, I had to go back to work. For me that shows how these gaps in protection can compound one another. I had no paid bereavement leave and taking the time I needed to care for a sick relative and following bereavement led to me having no maternity pay either.

These are not abstract gaps in employment law. They have real consequences for people's families, their work and their lives. My experience is not unique. Last year, BECTU surveyed almost 6,000 members and found that one-third of freelances expect to leave the creative

industries within the next five years. We cannot build sustainable industries if talented people simply cannot afford to stay in them.

Therefore, Prospect welcomes the motion's call to campaign for the extension of rights for the self-employed and other workers without employee status. Prospect calls on the TUC to work for the new freelance champions and the Government to deliver on their existing commitments on written contracts, health and safety and black-listing protections. But we also need to go further: on sick pay, income protection, parental rights, pensions and retirement security. Self-employed workers often experience irregular earnings and periods without work, but these workers are still expected to navigate systems designed around permanent employment, leaving them worse off. Genuine self-employment should offer people independence and flexibility. It should not mean giving up the basic safety net working people need when they get sick, have a family, suffer a bereavement or retire. Congress, support the motion, thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Alice. I will now call Community.

Dean Cox (*Community Trade Union*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 3. *He said:* Congress, Community Trade Union is proud to represent self-employed members and we are proud to have obtained key wins from government in recent months to improve their working lives, such as strengthening the role of the Small Business Commissioner and

implementing tougher rules on late invoice payments that ensure our members can count on reliable income for the work that they do.

But Congress, there is still more work to do. First, the current tax system does not work for the self-employed. We have seen many of our self-employed members impacted by the burdens of the IR35 tax system where genuine self-employed workers are taxed like employees, and yet they receive none of the same benefit rights that would afford. It is taxation without rights. It is unfair and it is something that should and must be stopped.

Another concern affecting our self-employed workers is a significant gender pay gap that continues to persist. It is of course an issue that is faced across many sectors but it is particularly prevalent with the self-employed sector. For self-employed workers there is often little to none reporting or support when there is disparity in pay between workers based on gender. We cannot let this inequality continue to fester within a sector that continues to grow and make up a greater part of the UK's economic workforce. It must be tackled now in the self-employed sector as it should be tackled in all other sectors represented here today.

Finally, many of the self-employed sector do not have the rights that they deserve. The Fabian Society's "Ill-prepared" report, supported by Community, Prospect and BECTU, clearly demonstrates the vast gaps in the rights available to self-employed workers. For example, self-employed workers still do not have access to statutory sick pay. This forces

many of our members to continue to work through sickness, ignoring their own health needs by not taking the necessary time to recover, leading to even greater health problems, all of which could have been prevented with the access to statutory sick pay.

Congress, while we face these challenges, there are opportunities to improve. The Employment Rights Act is a genuine change in the rights for workers across our country. We need to build on it, use it and improve it, and improve the rights of self-employed workers across our country. Congress, I call on you wholeheartedly to support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Dean. I will now call on the Royal College of Podiatry.

Martin Furlong (*RCPod*) spoke in support of Composite 3. *He said*: Congress, we really welcome the original motion from Equity, as it is important to us and our members. The other day I saw a quote from our old friend Mick Lynch and it said, "If you have to get up when the alarm clock rings and you go out and do a job, and you depend on your earnings rather than your assets, you're working class." A very large proportion of our members are self-employed and they are people who need this protection, as every other working-class worker does. All of them are woken up by their alarm and all of them depend on their earnings. We need to bring them with us on our journey for a fairer society and equality at work.

The gains we made as a movement with the introduction of the Employment Rights Act we talked about in the last motion must be shared widely with self-employed workers. They are taxpayers like other workers and funding societies yet have little protection.

The composite motion we have in front of us lays out in detail where genuinely self-employed workers are losing out, and, Congress, it is just not fair. I would like to pick up the point in the composite about education and providing materials, which is part of our amendment. Like lots of self-employed people, our members sometimes have longstanding arrangements with the same company to provide services and they are not always one-off or short-term assignments. They can be quite longstanding engagements. In our profession of podiatry, our members have choices to make about how they work. Do they take the path of permanent employment, the path of being self-employed, or, as some of them do, a bit of both? Many make that decision without really knowing what the differences are but also what they need to be to be genuinely self-employed. We are calling for the information they need to be provided by the unions and within the movement by the TUC. We can see from unions such as Equity that organising the self-employed is possible if you give them the support and guidance, so we are calling for materials to be produced so that our union movement can help them. To be clear, I am not talking about tax, we are not experts on that but their rights at work.

Conference, let's make sure that we look after our self-employed members and give them the dignity and support at work that other working-class people deserve. Please support the composite. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Martin. Finally, I call the NUJ.

Pennie Quinton (*Chair, NUJ*) spoke in support of Composite 3. *She said:* I am Chair of the National Union of Journalists, London Freelance Branch, which supports around 4,000 freelance NUJ members, so, I am pleased that this motion asks that we recognise issues such as unfair taxation that some freelance workers face without any of the associated employment rights.

I was concerned to learn that HMRC held a consultation between June and August of this year on timely payments in income tax self-assessment. The government consultation sought views on whether freelance and self-employed workers might submit their tax returns on a monthly basis to prevent a tax bill payment shock. Filing monthly tax returns will not work for freelance journalists. Why? Freelance journalists often work on short-term contracts and are engaged to perform project- based roles and often manage multiple concurrent income streams. Freelance journalists frequently move between PAYE and self-employment, limited company arrangements and periods without work, often several times within a single year. Freelance earnings are often unpredictable and unevenly distributed. Periods of intensive work can be followed by weeks or months without income and many of our members experience significant delays in receiving payment. For these reasons, any move towards a timelier payment of income tax self-assessment must be designed with an understanding of how journalists and other creative workers are paid and

engaged. Tax reforms must recognise income volatility, protect workers from hardship during periods without work, allow forecasts to be updated easily when circumstances change and provide taxpayers with a meaningful choice on how payments are made. Tax systems designed around stable and predictable employment patterns risk creating unintended consequences for the large number of workers whose careers depend upon irregular freelance work. Our members have expressed concerns of what this might mean in terms of their having to take time to administer tax each month during periods of intense deadline-focused work such as reporting in conflict zones or working on travel-based assignments. For freelance workers, filing 12 tax returns a year is time consuming and money unearned. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Pennie. I will now go to the vote. All those in favour please show? All those against please show? The motion is carried.

*Composite Motion 3 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: Now we move on to the group debate on housing. Delegates, we continue with section 2 of the General Council report: Strong rights at Work and Protection from Discrimination, from page 22. I will now explain how I intend to take the debate, I will take Motion 28 and Motion 29 together as a single debate along with paragraphs 1.10 and 5.9 of the General Council report. First, I will call the mover and seconder of Motion 28. I will then call the mover and seconder of Motion 29. I will then open the debate to other speakers. We will then vote on Motion 28 and Motion 29 in that order. I now call paragraphs 1.10, 5.9

and Motion 28. The General Council support the motion, moved by Unite and seconded by GMB.

Britain's housing crisis is a national emergency

David Oladele *(Unite)* moved Motion 28. *He said*: President, I have 22 years' experience working with single homeless men and some of them have had to stay in a single room for over 10 years because there is no accommodation available for them through local government. My union has long argued that investing in housing is a win/win for us all. In Unite we have construction workers including those who are hit particularly hard being directly employed by local authorities, who want to see their industry grow by providing social housing that local communities desperately need. We have those working in housing associations, campaigning and advice organisations in local authorities who in their jobs help those who are made homeless, those who suffer damp and mould at the hands of poorly regulated private landlords or who are wrongly evicted.

At the same time, we hear across our membership, especially our young members, how so many are struggling with their housing and the impact it has on their lives. I am sure that that is something common across all of our unions and us here today. Housing is the prime example of how the market left to its own devices absolutely does not deliver for the common good. It is wrong that during times of a housing crisis a decade in the making, construction as an industry has also experienced periods of contraction. Government after

government has been urged to use housing as the driver it can be to create economic growth that we all truly share in. We will all benefit from improvements in our homes and being able to welcome those who can put down roots on the part of local communities rather than moving from insecure tenancy to insecure tenancy. Building and improving homes in every local authority also means the creation of proper apprenticeships that lead to decent work, pay and conditions in every local community. This unifying positive vision is an example of how public investment can deliver with the maximum benefit wrung out of every single pound spent to benefit all of us. If this Government is truly going to start afresh and turn its back on 40 years of failure of economic policy, finally tackling the housing crisis in the way it demands, not with more half-baked market mechanisms is a good place to start. Congress, please I move. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, David. I now call the GMB to second.

Lewis Parminter (*GMB*) seconded Motion 28. *He said*: Congress, my name is Lewis Parminter. I am a brickyard worker, a dad and GMB representative fighting to save my job and the jobs of those I work with. My best friends are some of the 1.3 million people waiting for social housing. They waited for nearly two years in a hotel with their two young children. So, yes the housing crisis is a national emergency but it is also a very personal one for those who want a home to live in. It is completely avoidable if the Government has a proper industrial strategy that maximises the use of materials made here in Britain.

I work for a company called Wienerberger. We make the bricks and the products to build the homes our country needs to fix this housing crisis. Right now, there are 500 million bricks sat unused in the UK. Yes, you heard it right – 500 million bricks just sitting there rotting away. That is enough bricks to build 50,000 average-sized houses - or ten small towns. Enough to provide homes for hundreds of thousands of people. But without spades in the ground to build the homes we need, our industry will collapse and 8,000 jobs will go: including mine.

An industrial strategy for housing is not complicated. If we don't build the homes, then the bricks don't get sold. They just sit there in the yards. And we can't make more bricks if the current stocks aren't being bought. The factory I work in has had six shutdowns in the last three years and another factory has just been mothballed for a minimum of two years.

Congress, what happens if those jobs go? I will tell you, the towns go with them. My home town of Kidderminster was once the king of carpets, making carpets for the Houses of Parliament and the White House. But those days have gone. Deindustrialisation has left us with unemployment, crime and instead of carpet factories, we are now left with a museum about carpets. 500 million bricks could build two new towns the size of Kidderminster. It was a Labour Government that built the last new towns. We demand that Labour match the same ambition. It is simple. We should build the homes we need with the bricks and products that are made here in Britain. Please support this amendment. Thank you.

(*Applause*)

The President: Thank you Lewis, and some very excellent points made there. I now call Motion 29, The severe housing crisis affecting young workers. The General Council supports the Motion moved by Dara Basketfield on behalf of the TUC Young Workers' Conference and seconded by NASUWT.

The severe housing crisis affecting young workers

Dara Basketfield (*Unite*) moved Motion 29 on behalf of the TUC Young Workers' Conference. *He said*: Congress, I am here to speak about an issue that is absolutely not unique to young people but it is one that has a disproportionate impact on us. That issue is the current housing crisis that we face. Housing, whether that be renting or trying to buy a house, is completely unaffordable and for many it is a pipe dream that may never actually come to fruition.

Long gone are the days where the average person could afford a house on one person's salary. Instead we have couples both working 40+ hour weeks often with other jobs on the side with no prospect of owning their own homes any time soon. This is wrong but it is the devastating reality that we fact.

Studies show that in 2023, 54% of 20-30 year olds still live with their parents and, for the vast majority, this is not through choice; it is through necessity. Many of my peers have had no choice but to put their lives on hold, postponing things such as starting their own families because they can simply not afford to buy their own homes or to rent. Private rents have hit extortionate levels all over the UK and Ireland. If we go way back to the 1960s rent on average equated to approximately 8% of the average person's wages. Fast forward to 2026 and we are looking at an average of over 35% of the average person's salary going towards rent. Over here in Britain, there are 446 homes for every 1,000 people. That is the second lowest rate in all of Europe. In the south of Ireland we see vulture funds forcing families out of their homes and profiting off the misery and the struggles of the working class. In the north of Ireland we have seen a 30% surge in those on social housing waiting lists in the last 10 years. Even those of us who are able to move out of our family homes are left moving into some of the most horrific places you can imagine.

In the Holylands area of Belfast, which for those of you who are not familiar is the largest concentration of housing for young people and students in all of the north of Ireland, we are seeing students and young workers move into overcrowded and sub-par housing, sometimes being rented illegally without HMO status, without adequate basic facilities and amenities. They often accept these conditions because they have no other choice if they want to move out of their parents' home. Their houses are falling apart from years and years of neglect and lack of investment from slumlords. People are getting sick from the damp and mouldy conditions, all the while the pockets of these slumlords renting these

houses out to students and young people are getting fuller and fuller. It is a merry-go-round of exploitation.

In London, the average house price is well over half a million whereas the average annual salary of someone under 30 in London is roughly £35,000. That is over 14 years of someone's full salary pre tax to simply put a roof over their heads they can call their own. This is before we even consider the interest they will have to pay on any mortgage they manage to obtain.

We hear people bizarrely blaming young people for not being able to afford their homes because, apparently, we spend too much on things like Netflix, avocados and coffee. And to be fair, if we bought our coffees from this conference centre on a regular basis they might have a point. In all seriousness, we are a generation that just wants to progress and get on with our lives like the generations before us. We cannot afford homes because our governments have failed us, and it is as simple as that. I speak for most of us when we say we want to build our careers, we want to start families and we want to be able to have homes of our own.

The British and Irish governments have until now absolutely failed our generation in not building anywhere near enough new homes, and in not regulating private landlords and stopping their greed in profiteering from the housing crisis. As fellow trade unionists, regardless of your age, it is the duty of every one of you to support this motion and to call

on the TUC to campaign for nationwide rent controls, to hold slumlords to account by enforcing hefty penalties on them, to call for urgent and immediate investment in adequate affordable homes and all of the other points that the motion calls for that can be seen in the agenda.

My generation has been failed by years of neglect around housing policies. This must change now and this motion is a vital step towards this change. It is fighting for need over greed and we need affordable housing. *Go raibh maith agat*. And I move this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Dara, very well done. It just demonstrates how young people have been left behind. Seconded by NASUWT.

Precious Nelson (*NASUWT*) seconded Motion 29. *She said:* As a first-time delegate and first-time speaker at Congress (*Applause*) I am proud to second this motion on the housing crisis affecting young workers. I speak today on behalf of young teachers whose careers, well-being and future are being threatened by a housing crisis that is getting worse year after year. I am a young teacher in Manchester. I love the city, I love my students and I love my school, but every month I watch the cost of housing rise faster than my pay. Like many young workers, I am caught in an impossible position. Rents keep increasing yet buying a home feels further out of reach than ever. What should be a basic foundation for a stable life has become a source of constant stress. And this is not just my story. Some 71% of

teachers aged 30 and under say housing costs have made them consider leaving the profession. More than half believe buying a home is unachievable on a teacher's salary. One in five young teachers are living with their parents because they cannot afford independent housing. These are not just statistics. They are colleagues struggling with rising rents, long commutes and housing insecurity. They are committed professionals wondering whether they can afford to remain in the career they love.

Congress, this crisis is also a recruitment and retention crisis. How can we attract and keep talented teachers when they cannot afford to live near the schools they serve? How can we talk about improving education when so many early-career teachers are burdened by financial and housing insecurity. NASUWT, the Teachers' Union, has called for affordable housing initiatives, support for renters and stronger protections for key workers. These are practical measures that can make a real difference. Young teachers are not asking for a lottery. We are asking for fairness, we are asking for stability and the ability to build a future. Congress, I urge you to support this motion. Stand with young workers, stand with young teachers and stand with those being priced out of the communities they serve. (*Applause*)

The President: Precious, very well done there. I will now call the other unions, first, NHBC SA to speak.

Julia Georgiou (*NHBC SA*) spoke in support of Motion 29. *She said:* Congress, President, we are proud to support these motions and amendments, as our members work at the heart of the new homes sector. We know Britain needs more homes, better homes and the workforce with the skills to build them. This motion makes a simple but powerful point - housing policy is industrial policy. Britain needs new homes and at the same time millions of existing homes need upgrading if we are serious about warmer, healthier and more affordable places to live.

We welcome the Government's 10-year commitment to social and affordable housing, and that funding certainly matters, but skilled workers turn it into homes. Building new social homes and delivering a new national retrofit programme would improve living standards but if it is done properly, it could also create thousands of skilled and unionised jobs, strengthening local economies and opening doors for the next generation. That generation matters because ambition without skills will remain just that: ambition. More than a third of construction workers are over 50 and hundreds of thousands are expected to retire in the years ahead. If we are serious about building and retrofitting at scale, we need workforce plans to match. That is why we welcome the motion's commitment to bona fide apprenticeships. It means upskilling existing workers so that public investment delivers decent jobs as well as new homes.

At NHBC SA we are already seeing what investment in skills can achieve. Our employer NHBC has committed up to £100 million to build a network of apprenticeship training hubs which will be training 900 workers every year by the end of this year, and up to three times

that when all of the hubs are online. This training delivers results: 93% pass rates with 90% of those trainees retained in the industry. These are workers gaining skills, building careers and helping Britain build the homes it needs. That scale of commitment is needed but NHBC are just one employer, others need to step up and, as we said to our motion to Congress in 2024, it is vital that businesses, governments, skills providers and unions work together to deliver on this ambition. Where public money is invested, the benefits should be felt here at home and across British manufacturing. Maximising British-made bricks, ceramics and aggregates will support decent jobs, as we have heard, strengthen domestic supply chains and keep investment in our communities. But we know that public money has not always been used effectively before. Retrofit schemes have been poorly delivered, leaving people worse off. We support the amendment's call to learn from the past successes which prove that, with government leadership, employer commitment and trade union involvement, Britain can deliver major national change successfully and at scale. Please support the motion. (*Applause)*

The President: Thank you very much, Julia. And finally UNISON.

Zahira Choudry (*UNISON*) spoke in support of Motion 29. *She said:* Congress, this motion shines a light on the severe housing crisis gripping the UK, a crisis that hits young, low paid, black and disabled workers the hardest. Decades of chronic underinvestment in council and general affordable housing, combined with the devastating legacy of Right to Buy, have gutted our social housing supply. Since Right to Buy was introduced under Thatcher,

millions of council homes have been sold off without anything close to enough being built to replace them.

Congress, we did not simply run out of social housing. Political choices depleted it and now another generation of workers is paying the price for it. Today's average house prices stand at nearly nine times the average salary, with private rented property far out-stripping wage growth. Workers are forced into agonising choices between paying rent or putting food on the table. Congress, let us be clear, without homes we have no workforce and without a workforce, our public services will collapse.

Congress, we welcome the Labour Government's focus on social housing and ambition to build 1.5 million homes. But solving a housing crisis requires more than just bricks and mortar. Congress, it is not enough to simply count how many houses we build. We have to ask where they are being built and are they genuinely affordable and are they the right homes for the people who actually need them. When we build new housing we have to build communities alongside it, with schools, GPs and public services as well as green spaces, because 1.5 million homes means very little to a young worker who still cannot afford one or to a family being offered a home in a community without the services they need and rely on.

Congress, a massive investment in new builds must go hand-in-hand with substantial investment in the social housing workforce itself, rebuilding the internal capacity required

to deliver these homes and enforcing new rental rules in the private rented sector. And Congress, we welcome the Government's action to finally ban no-fault evictions and end the constant threat of families being turfed out at short notice. But ending insecurity is only half the battle. The Government must go further and directly tackle affordability, ensuring a dedicated programme of new homes is set aside for young workers whilst supporting them with deposits and targeted social housing.

Congress, we need to be bold. We need bold decisive action. We need investment in our social housing workforce and, above all, we need safe, secure and genuinely affordable housing to achieve what it truly is: a basic human right. Thank you, Congress, and please support the motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you Zahira, that was very well delivered. I will now take the votes on each motion in turn. Motion 28, will all those in favour please show? All those against please show? Motion 29, all those in favour please show? And all those against please show? The motions are carried.

*Motion 28 was **CARRIED.***

*Motion 29 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I will now call Motion 30, Defend regulators, oppose deregulation. The General Council support the motion. Moved by Prospect, seconded by FDA.

Defend regulators, oppose deregulation

Eamonn Guilfoyle (*Prospect*) moved Motion 30. *He said*: As you can hear, Congress, I am losing my voice but as I look around, I can see that one may falter but this movement will never be silenced. (*Applause*) And I resolve to get through this. The motion commends the work of regulators, but it notes our dismay at the recent and persistent attacks on regulators by consecutive Governments.

Regulators are trade union members - I am both - and they play a key role in upholding safety in many workplaces. This motion gives three clear instructions to the General Council: to promote the work of regulators, to challenge the underfunding and understaffing of regulatory bodies, and to campaign against further cuts to the regulation of businesses.

I want to start by noting that my union Prospect is proud to represent members working regulatory organisations that keep us safe, that protect the environment, protect consumers and protect workers. Regulators do not work alone. It is a collaborative enterprise that relies on engaged responsible employees and trade unionists in every workplace who uphold standards.

That is why this motion, as its first instruction, instructs the TUC to positively promote the work of those in regulatory bodies and the value placed on all those working in regulated industries. Regulators keep us safe. They also support innovation, they provide certainty and they help bring infrastructure projects for life. In fact, they are vital to the projects which drive economic growth. Prospect campaigns in defence of regulators not only because many of our members work in regulatory bodies but because we also represent the members working across safety-critical industries who depend on the work of regulators to keep them and their families safe.

The second instruction of the motion calls on the TUC to expose and challenge the underfunding and understaffing of regulators in recent years. For well over a decade, most UK regulators have been struggling with chronic underfunding and uncompetitive pay. This started with the Conservatives. Didn't everything start with the Conservatives? But it hasn't been solved by this Labour Government. Prospect analysis has exposed a clear link between growing delays to processing planning applications and the worsening staff and skill shortages in the Environment Agency. Moreover, housing developments that we just heard in the previous motion have been plagued for years by delays resulting from staff and skills shortages at the Planning Inspectorate and now the Building Safety Regulator. This is why a host of independent reviews since the last election have called attention to the need for regulators to have flexibility of pay to retain expert staff. Because, Congress, if the current issues with our regulatory systems are they are understaffed and underfunded and

they cannot process their workload, then the answer is not to cut and not to reduce regulation further. It is to resource them properly and swiftly.

Finally, the motion instructs the TUC to campaign against the targets set by the current Government to cut regulation on business by 25%. This is a meaningless arbitrary figure that has no basis in reality. The idea that regulation is a cost to the economy and businesses is also wholly wrong-headed. There is nothing more damaging to the economy than the industrial, environmental and public health disasters that can result from weak and ineffective regulation. We will hear about one in the very next motion. Prospect members in bodies, far from being blockers, are committed to enabling and supporting innovation and investment by working with businesses and others to ensure its safety and sustainability.

Congress, the economy and the safety of millions at work are worse off and more at risk so long as our regulators remain underfunded and under attack. Prospect are proud to move this motion. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Eamonn, for that one. Seconded by FDA.

Leila Kelly (*President, FDA*) seconded Motion 30. *She said:* I am the President of the FDA and somehow I have managed to be a first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) I am proud to stand here in support and to second the Prospect motion, and I thank them for accepting our amendments. By profession I am a lawyer. Don't judge me! I have

advised the government on regulatory policy, on the regulation of certain sectors and I have advised the Local Government Ombudsman in investigations into local authority complaints. I am well aware of the importance of evidence-based, effective and properly enforced regulation.

If we think about that evidence for a minute, I am just going to turn to HSC, which was mentioned in the Prospect motion. According to its statistics, 124 workers were killed at work in 2024/25. I can't imagine the horror of someone you love walking out the door and them never coming home because of something that happened at work. In the same year almost 700,000 workers reported injury at work. The estimated cost to the economy is £22.9 billion, the majority of which is borne by the individuals affected and by government. It is not that we cannot afford regulation. We cannot afford not to have it. Evidence-based regulation is not a burden. It is vital for safe workplaces, safe homes, safe products and services.

Congress, I urge to you support the motion and to support our members who work in regulators. (*Applause)*

The President: Thanks very much, Leila. I will now go to the vote on Motion 30. Would all those in favour please show? All those against please show? That motion is carried.

*Motion 30 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: As you will see, we have been joined on stage by Angela Rayner and it gives me great pleasure to welcome Angela to our Congress as our sororal delegate.

Angela is a long-standing friend of the trade union movement. Before entering Parliament, she worked as a care worker and served as a UNISON union rep, championing working people and public services. (*Applause*)

Angela has been a fierce champion of the Employment Rights Act and the wider Make Work Pay agenda and we are delighted that she is currently serving as the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Welcome back into the Cabinet, Angela. (*Applause*) Throughout her career, Angela has remained committed to the values of fairness, opportunity and dignity at work that unite our movement. Angela, you are most welcome. (*Applause*)

Angela Rayner (*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government*): Thank you, Congress, and thank you, Steve. And thank you to Paul and the TUC for having me speak here today.

I am proud to give today's address and I know you will want me to pass on your condolences to the Prime Minister on his loss. (*Applause*)

Conference, this isn't my first rodeo and it is a great honour to be back. I started my working life as a home carer, on casual hours. It was thanks to my union, UNISON, that I was able to improve life for myself, my family, and the fellow workers I went on to represent. But itis not just me who has benefited from the work of this movement. Millions upon millions of workers have.

From securing weekends and paid holidays, to equal pay for equal work, to the furlough scheme that kept millions afloat through the pandemic - trade unions have shown their worth time and time again. (*Applause*)

Congress, the Labour Party was not simply born out of the trade union movement. We have grown up together - side by side. Our histories are shared. And so are our futures. Together we have served working people for generations. And together we must face the fight of the future too.

It has been three years since I last had the great privilege of addressing this Congress, and what a roller coaster those last three years have been! Back then we were on the eve of an era-defining general election. We sought a mandate to change Britain - and deliver for working people. I promised an Employment Rights Bill within 100 days. I lost count of how many times I was told that was impossible. But, Congress, we did it, and I want to thank all

those in this room who helped craft it, who made the case for it - and who fought for it, so hard. Because we beat the odds together. (*Applause*)

We created new rights for working people not just individually but collectively through their trade unions. Not in theory but out there in the real world, on the shop floor and in the workplace. Statutory sick pay from day one. New rights to paternity and parental leave. The simplification of statutory recognition, which will mean more workers have the backing of a union behind them. Stronger access and recognition rights. Real protection against unfair dismissal. And safeguards from sexual harassment. A Fair Work Agency with real teeth, to tackle bad practice. And I am proud its advisory board carries proper trade union representation in Mike Clancy, Diana Holland and Dave Ward. (*Applause*)

Congress, this is just some of the difference Labour in power has made already. The labour movement has always been a family to me. I know it is not easy. Every family has its disagreements. You will always push to go further and faster for your members - because that is your job. But, Congress, like a family, we stick together. Make no mistake - Only Labour is the party of work. The clue is in the name.

Congress, I know you know that Reform are not on your side. They voted against the Employment Rights Act, and if elected, they would repeal it in a heartbeat — along with the Equality Act. Think what that means. Millions of workers, no longer protected from exploitative zero-hour contracts. Millions of workers, back to waiting three days to be paid

when they are sick. Millions of workers who could be fired and rehired on worse terms and conditions. This is about people's lives. Our members' lives. And if you needed proof of whose side they are on, they have given it to us this weekend. Nigel Farage's sugar daddies made their money in crypto, but there's nothing cryptic about their motives. They know full well that a Reform government will act in their interests, not the public interest.

When these Reform donors say they want nothing - they mean it. No workers' rights, no renters' rights, no social protections, no safety net, no regulation. Nothing to stand in their way. And if Farage will do you a Cameo for £70, just ask yourself - what would he do for £70 million? (*Applause*)

And Congress, how dare they try to compare money from a couple of crypto billionaires to union members' subs. The most highly regulated political funding we have could not be more different from a couple of off-shore billionaires trying to buy our democracy. And I tell Nigel Farage - you can't pay your way out of accountability to the people of this country.

So let me be clear. We will defend our democracy and society from any foreign dictator or fascist oligarch who seeks to divide our country and buy our politics. But we will never undermine the rights of working people to organise collectively and democratically. And, Congress, the contrast between our parties is stark too. This is a Labour Government delivering for working people. 400,000 fewer people on NHS waiting lists, 2,000 more GPs,

buses and rail back into public ownership and control. Plenty done. But so much more to do.

With Andy Burnham leading our party and Government, we are rewiring the state — and we are doing it the Labour way. Under a Prime Minister who has acknowledged that for too long our country has been heading in the wrong direction. And who is committed to turning the tide on decades of neoliberalism, of deindustrialisation, of deregulation, of privatisation and austerity. Trickle-down economics has meant that people are losing faith in our politics. A race to the bottom where people see the cost of essentials going up. And leaves vested interests to profit off back of the most vulnerable like in social care. And who is responsible? The Tories - half of them now sat on the Reform benches.

Congress, I have been glad to hear our Prime Minister talk about doing things the Labour way. Putting power back into the workplace. Supporting our young people. Putting pride back into our communities and bringing back hope.

But Congress, we will offer more than hope because people need change. That is why I wanted to serve in government. I have unfinished business. And I won't let this opportunity go to waste. Building the homes we need, tackling rough sleeping and putting power back in the hands of people and their places. A council housing revolution, breathing space in the costing of living crisis, starting with bus fare caps and cuts to energy bills, new rights for renters and leaseholders, and a rising National Minimum Wage. And we will take our plan to Make Work Pay forward in full, banning exploitative zero-hour contracts, and delivering

sector-wide agreements that promote fair pay and skills for school support staff and social care workers. New access and organising rights for unions. Action on employment status. Better rights for parents and carers, and so much more. We are pursuing a re-industrialisation strategy that protects and promotes our key industries, so they provide great jobs in every part of the country.

But, Congress, there is no clearer example of this than what we are doing in social care. I first met Andy when I was a care worker, campaigning with my union UNISON on Time to Care. And as a former care worker myself, I have waited my whole life for a Prime Minister to speak about social care the way Andy has — understanding what care workers do, and the conditions they face. I am so proud of the work this Government is doing, and so energised by Andy's commitment to do it - building on the Fair Pay Agreement framework. Because Congress, the project to Make Work Pay is well underway. We have started that work – and we will see it through in full. There is so much more to do to deliver Make Work Pay in full. But, Congress, we will do it together. Because it is how we deliver hope and it is how we make change, and, Congress, I can't wait to get back to work to do it for you. (*Applause*)

The President: Angela, thank you for your contribution and for your unwavering support for trade unions and working people. It is very refreshing. Congress, once again please show your appreciation for Angela Rayner. (*Applause*)

Congress I now call paragraph 2.12, 4.7 and Motion 31, Grenfell Tower 10th anniversary. The General Council support the motion. Moved by the Fire Brigades Union, seconded by CWU, and I will be calling PCS.

Grenfell Tower 10th anniversary

Ian Murray (*President, Fire Brigades Union*) moved Motion 31. *He said*: Congress, it is with much sadness that the FBU felt we had to bring another motion back to the TUC on the Grenfell Tower fire. In 2017, the FBU brought our first resolution to Congress just months after the worst domestic fire in living memory. Congress, 72 people tragically lost their lives in that fire. Hundreds were made homeless. The whole community was utterly devastated and remains so to this day. Since then, our union has dedicated itself to getting justice for Grenfell. Congress, next year will be a decade since that appalling fire which was a crime and an atrocity and yet here we are today with still no prosecutions. Still today nobody who put flammable cladding (which was like putting petrol on the side of a building) has been dragged before the courts or prosecuted. Nobody has gone to prison for the decisions they made which led to that fire.

Congress, let's send a message from here today. That is a travesty. Let's stand in solidarity with the community because today there is no justice for Grenfell. (*Applause*)

We have been on those silent walks every month on the 14th day when they are called to pay our respects and to keep the campaign alive and kicking and high on the agenda. We must carry on doing so until those culpable for the fire are brought to justice. The TUC must insist with all its might that justice is delivered in 2027 and that those responsible for the fire that killed 72 innocent victims are held to account. Congress, most of those who made the fateful decisions to put flammable cladding on Grenfell Tower are people - the contracting companies, the manufacturers, the architects and the like. They all need to come before the courts to be held to account, not rewarded as we have seen in the media this week.

But when we talk about justice, let us not forget the politicians who deregulated the industry for decades; those who created the environment in which profit came before safety and where the homes of working-class families could be encased in flammable materials. And let's not forget the role of the various Prime Ministers who oversaw the deregulation in the decades before the fire. And let's not forget the Ministers from all the main parties who sold off and deregulated the organisations responsible for building safety. They are the politicians who imposed austerity. They are the politicians who cut our fire and rescue service to ribbons. They are the politicians who failed to heed the warnings of the FBU and other organisations about dangerous cladding years before that fateful night. Some of them currently ennobled in the House of Lords are still wielding political influence. Most never stood before the public inquiry to explain themselves. They are all culpable and must be held to account.

I want to say a few words about fire fighters and emergency control staff who intervened at Grenfell Tower. Around 700 firefighters and emergency control staff tried to help the residents of Grenfell in the hours after the fire started. Another 700 or so went to Grenfell Tower in the weeks afterwards. Most worked for London Fire Brigade but we had control staff and some aerial ladder operators from other parts of the country. Almost all of those attending Grenfell were FBU members, trade unionists like the people in this room, and the FBU is immensely proud of their efforts in the aftermath. And because of that building's failings they were put in an impossible situation they should never have faced. They did their best to help. Many of them pushed themselves beyond their limits to get residents out. Many spoke to trapped residents and tried to reassure them in their final moments. Every single one is scarred mentally by their experience at Grenfell Tower. Many of them now have permanent injuries or ill-health arising from the fire. Some ended up in hospital on the night. Others have spent time in hospital since. Many have respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and that they will have for the rest of their days.

Therefore, Congress, it is right that we carry a motion which applauds firefighters, control staff, paramedics, local government and other workers who responded to the fire and its immediate aftermath.

Congress, in closing, it may be nearly 10 years since the Grenfell Tower fire but for the residents and the firefighters there is still much unfinished business. It is a national scandal that thousands of residents still live in high rise residential buildings with unsafe cladding and other serious fire safety failings. It is shocking that the cuts continue to be imposed on

the fire and rescue service. That is why the FBU is asking that you support our Cuts Kill campaign. We all need to oppose the ongoing drive towards deregulation and the introduction of private profiteers into the public service.

The President: It is the red light. Can you now finish off.

Ian Murray: I will do, Steve, and you know that fire fighters unlike ASLEF and RMT who have to stop at red lights we can go through them. Only kidding! (*Applause)* Congress, there is going to be a College of Fire established and what we want is a clear message. It is a public body and it must introduce national standards across the UK fire and rescue service and the FBU must be on there. Support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause and cheers*)

The President: I have got to say, Ian, that was absolutely brilliant. I got my fingers burnt on that one. Seconded by the CWU.

Andrew Mace (*CWU*) seconded Motion 31. *He said*: The CWU is immensely proud to support this motion. All of us will remember what we were doing when we woke up to the news of the Grenfell Tower fire and all of us here are still asking how on earth in the capital city of one of the richest countries in the world could so many people die in their own homes.

Congress, it was clear from the campaigning work of the FBU, the wider labour movement and the community that the fire was caused by the neoliberal deregulation agenda of over 40 years. It was Westminster politicians doing the bidding of big business who stripped away the laws and the regulations designed to protect our homes from materials such as cladding. They ignored the warnings and put cladding on the outside of buildings, which was, as Ian said, like pouring petrol over them. Congress, it is a national disgrace that those responsible for the fire have still not been brought to justice. That is why the CWU and every other union in this hall must carry on supporting the bereaved families, the survivors and the residents of the Grenfell community. It is why the courts must urgently get on with the first prosecutions before we reach the milestone of the 10th anniversary. Because, Congress, justice delayed is justice denied and working-class communities know all too well time and time again working people are wronged by the state or powerful private interests and they are forced to fight for years, sometimes decades, for the truth and justice they deserve. Look at Hillsborough. Look at Orgreave. Look at the contaminated blood scandal. Victims and their families have been forced to fight for decades and decades. Decades in which those responsible had escaped accountability, retired from public life or even died. Decades in which the victims and their families have grown old and in some cases passed away without seeing justice done. This cannot be allowed to happen with Grenfell. The truth is already clear. Government Ministers were warned about the dangers of combustible cladding and they ignored those warnings. Regulations were weakened, profit was put before safety and working-class people paid the ultimate price. Those responsible must face justice. The building safety crisis must be brought to an end so that nobody has to live in dangerous homes simply because they cannot afford to live elsewhere.

Congress, we owe it to the 72 who lost their lives. We owe it to the survivors, the bereaved families and the Grenfell community. And we owe it to every working-class community that has ever been told to wait for justice. I hope everyone in this hall will support the motion but, more importantly, I hope we continue to show our solidarity with the Grenfell community and their campaign for justice. Justice for Grenfell. I second. (*Applause)*

The President: Thank you very much, Andrew. I now call PCS.

Michele Greb (*PCS*) spoke in support of Motion 31. *She said:* President, Congress, most people will never know the horrors of a residential fire - thankfully. Our politicians obviously do not know the dangers and the horrors of a residential fire. Most people will never have to inhale an unforgettable stench of the residue of a residential fire. I am pretty certain that our fire fighters and rescue workers do not forget. You do not forget panic if you have been part of it. You wake up at night, you check your children, your partner and your pets. You check to make sure that light is still on in the ceiling and then you try to fall asleep again. I am really certain that our politicians do not do that.

When you think about the single deadliest residential fire in Europe that occurred in Grenfell almost a decade ago, where there had been warnings about the cladding in 1973, that is 56 years ago, the Government still has not done anything about it. They are still privatising. They are still cutting the fire fighters and emergency workers and controllers.

They are still cutting budgets. They are still ignoring almost a decade after a report that calls for remediation. They are ignoring it.

PCS recognises the extraordinary professionalism shown by the fire fighters, the control staff, paramedics, local authorities and other public servants who responded to the fire and its aftermath. What they went through is unforgettable. Their actions demonstrated the very best in public service in unimaginable conditions. Our comrades in fire and rescue face destructive cuts continually. Successive Governments have placed citizens' lives at risk by not prioritising those who will never be able to forget Grenfell. Nearly a decade after Grenfell, the affected families are still waiting for justice. Isn't that nice, politicians? Prosecutions have yet to begin. Fire and rescue services continue to face financial pressures and huge staffing cuts. Concerns remain regarding deregulation and the role of private contractors. Congress, PCS union supports this motion.

The President: Michele, there is a red light, can you please stop because there is no free pass for you on the red light.

Michele Greb: PCS supports you. Solidarity FBU. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much. Congress, I am now going to put this very important Motion 31 to the vote. Would all those in favour, please show? All those against?

Completely unanimous. I have got to say what a very important motion to get justice. Well done FBU, CWU and PCS. (*Applause)*

SECTION 3: A FAIRER ECONOMY AND STRONG PUBLIC SERVICES.

The President: Delegates, we continue with Section 3 of the General Council report: A fairer economy and strong public services, from page 34. I will now explain how I intend to take the debate. I will take Composite Motion 17 and Motion 24 together as a group debate, along with paragraphs 3.1 to 3.4 of the General Council report. First, I will call the mover and seconder of Composite Motion 17. I will then call the mover and seconder of Motion 24. I will then open the debate to other speakers. We will then vote on Composite Motion 17 and Motion 24 in that order. I now call paragraph 3.1 to 3.4 and Composite Motion 17: A new economic direction for the UK. Labour's political and economic strategy and action to tackle the cost of living. The General Council support the composite motion moved by UNISON, seconded by RMT and supported by NUJ, TSSA, EIS, equity and ASLEF. I now call UNISON to move the motion.

A new economic direction for the UK. Labour's political and economic strategy and action to tackle the cost of living

(*Composing Motion 23 plus amendment, Motion 25, Motion 26 and Motion 27*)

James Anthony (*President, UNISON*) moved Composite 17. *He said*: Congress, I am proud to move this motion today. I am moving this motion not just as the President of UNISON but as a nurse of over 20 years. Every day at work I see what happens when politics fails to invest in public services. Behind every NHS worker is another story of a system asking people to give more and more while giving them little in return. Behind every waiting list statistic is a person perhaps living in pain or unable to work, with many patients and families anxious because they do not know when they will get the treatment that they need.

Congress, this is what 14 years of Tory austerity has left us with: crumbling services, stagnant living standards, growing inequality and a workforce that has been pushed to its limits. So, while we recognise that there have been some gains under a Labour Government, we must be honest, they are not enough because the scale of the crisis we face is simply too great for incrementalism. We can't patch up a broken system and call it transformation. We need a bail-out for our public services and we need a new direction for our country.

The new Prime Minister has spoken about hope, and he has spoken about rejecting neoliberalism, but it is deeds not words that will determine whether people actually feel hope. Hope is not a slogan to put on a podium. Hope is seeing our public services rebuilt. Hope is seeing our community reinvigorated. And hope is people seeing real progress towards a more equal society. And that means being bold.

In this composite we are calling on the Government to genuinely tackle inequality by making the wealthy and large corporations pay their fair share. We are demanding that the Government increases wages and puts living standards and not profit at the heart of the economy. We are asking for funding for public services that we so desperately need. An emergency cash injunction followed by sustained long-term investment. And it means taking utilities like water back into public ownership and, yes, it means the largest wave of insourcing in a generation, not the trickle that we are currently seeing. We need a tsunami to wash away every insourcing company. We need insourcing now. Congress, none of this is radical when you look at the world around us. What is radical is expecting low-paid public sector workers to keep doing more for less. What is radical is asking people to accept declining living standards while the wealthy at the top continue to accumulate more and more. And what is radical is allowing public money to flow into private profits while our public services struggle to cope.

But our movement has a different answer. Make those with the broadest shoulders pay more. Invest in the services we rely on and raise wages. We have launched our We Show Up campaign which is ramping up ahead of the Budget because we know that change does not happen simply because we write good motions. It happens because working people organise. It happens because we knock on doors, fill meeting halls, lobby MPs, take our arguments into communities and make sure that politicians cannot ignore us. We are working with partners such as Cost of Living Action to support a national lobby ahead of the Budget. And I hope this movement will be there in force because we need to show them that our members are watching them.

Congress, a new Prime Minister is an opportunity to reboot what a Labour Government looks like and who we stand for. Let's give Andy Burnham a simple message: be bold, tax wealth, raise wages and invest in public services. Because, Congress, we show up for the public and our communities. We show up and we hold our services together as resources are cut and now we need you and we need our politicians to show up for us and deliver a new direction for the economy and a society that works for all. I move. (*Applause)*

The President: Thank you very much, UNISON. I now call on the RMT to second. Just so there is no confusion, after the RMT has seconded this, I will move on to Motion 24 which will be moved by Unite and seconded by PCS, and then all the supporting unions that I call will be called in. Thank you, Eddie.

Eddie Dempsey (*General Secretary, RMT*) seconded Motion 23. *He said*: I just want to say I think it is actually a bold statement of leadership from Andy Burnham, as the Prime Minister to say that the last 40 years of neoliberalism needs to be turned away from, that we made the wrong choices and that we chose the wrong path. I think that is very important and it ought to be welcomed. What neoliberalism did was privatise much of our public services offshore, our manufacturing base. It almost destroyed our labour force and the skills base in it, and it fundamentally rewired our economy.

What it has left us with today is a country in quite a bad state. Our productive real economy has collapsed. We are importing more than we are exporting. Our ability to generate wealth as a state has been destroyed because we sold off all of our assets but we kept all of the liabilities. What that means is that we find ourselves on the hook to foreign lenders. £100 billion is spent every year servicing interest payments on our national debt. That national debt is a limit on our democracy. It is a limit on you as the citizens of this country in terms of who you vote for to go into Parliament, for the policies you want to see enacted. We have given a veto to foreign capital because every time the Government here decides they want to improve public services or carry out investment in a certain part of our economy, they are looking over their shoulder, worried about what happens with the bond markets. We have got to do something about that. We have impoverished workers. We have seen the longest decline in living standards in recorded history. We have seen wages stagnating or falling. At the same time, we have seen profits increasing and we have seen the ability of the state to do the things it is supposed to do drastically reduced. Making anti-austerity arguments or talking about a little bit of wealth redistribution in these circumstances is not nearly enough. We have got to rewire our economy. We have had little investment over the past 20 years and what capital we are creating here is going straight to the City of London, share buy-backs, massive dividend payments: starving the real economy of investment and it has left our infrastructure in a crumbling state, with much of it outsourced. Outsourcing is a bad deal for the country because what it means is we fragment the labour force, we make public services worse. The public carries the risk, our members carry out the work and the contractors laugh all the way to the bank. That is why I am very pleased we have joined with UNISON to launch the Insource Now campaign

and we are hopefully seeing more people come on board because we think that is the first place Andy Burnham should start in turning this country off the path of neoliberalism.

The President: Eddie, it is the red light, can you finish up, please.

Eddie Dempsey: We need to start bringing those contracts back in house and we need to sort our economy out by getting some investment and bringing back public ownership. We do not just need spending, it is not about more spending; it is about more ownership. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Eddie. I now call Motion 24, Industrial and economic policy. The General Council support this motion. Moved by Unite, seconded by PCS.

Industrial and economic policy.

Sharon Graham (*General Secretary, Unite*) moved Motion 24. *She said:* Friends, for decades the working-class communities have borne the brunt of decline and decades of neglect. And it is worth taking a moment in this room to say what we mean by the working class, the labouring class: those who rely on the pay that they get for the labour that they sell. Those people who clean our streets, who make our steel, who transport our food and take care of the elderly. The everyday people too often at the back of the queue. Those

whom we represent. Those who make the profits. Those not getting their rightful piece of the pie.

Friends, one fact remains, and I often say this on the picket line, if the bosses went out on strike, no one would notice. It is only when workers go out that people notice because you are the ones that do the work. (*Applause*) And friends, the great and the good tell us that the working class is now better off with better wages, better opportunities, more choice, and I say absolute rubbish. The truth is the working class is now trapped in a death march of decline. Jobs offshored, public services decimated, investment slashed, energy and food prices rising and the social contract broken, barely earning enough to get by, paying for a holiday on credit, while well-paid jobs disappear. When we push for change, any change, we are all at the mercy of the markets.

Friends, over the last number of weeks, and you will have heard this too, I have heard over and over again how awful it would be to go back to the 1970s. The time when we had public ownership of energy and water. The time when we still mass produced the things we needed. The time when the market for British-made cars like the Mini led the world of innovation. And friends, the time when working-class people knew that their children would have a better life than them. Well, I do not know about you but we could do with some of that now. (*Applause)*

Friends, before the 2008 financial crash, our debt to GDP was around 35%. And after the crash it doubled to 70%. Even Covid did not cost as much to the country as bailing out the banks, and we have never recovered. In the first quarter of 2026, the four big banks reported profits of nearly £14 billion. Well now is the time for them to put their hand in their pocket and pay the country back. (*Applause and cheers*) Friends, the working class has paid for crisis after crisis not of their making. Labour now gets one shot and it is a real chance, there is no doubt they have a chance, but we cannot keep being told that we must wait for change. We cannot keep being told we cannot do anything because of the markets. Because if that is the case, what is the point of us electing politicians.

Friends, we keep being reminded all the time of a Liz Trust Budget but that Budget was a Budget of unfunded tax cuts. It cannot be an excuse to do nothing. If we have a plan to get Britain back on its fight, if it is costed, if it is kept to, the markets will adapt. If we borrow to invest, this will become an asset on our books and the markets will adapt. They will swap cuts for long-term stability. And friends, political cowardice wrapped up as sensible politics is not hope. We need immediate change. We need to end the freezing of the tax thresholds. We need a wealth tax for our public services. We need investment in British industry and we need to renationalise our energy. (*Applause*)

And friends, I just want to say that this plan must come from our movement. This story must be told by us. One built on solidarity, not division. We cannot pit worker against worker in this room. (*Applause*) The next chapter in our story must be written by us: a story of hope and a story of a new social contract.

And finally friends, I want to say again to every striking worker, they have taken their moment, let's take ours. Solidarity. See you on the picket line. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

The President: Sharon, I am pretty impressed, you were spot on. PCS to second.

Fran Heathcote (*PCS*) seconded Motion 24. *She said:* I am proud to do so. The cost-of-living crisis is about two things: incomes being too low and costs being too high. For too long, successive Governments have talked about change and talked about tackling the cost-of-living crisis but they have failed to deliver. The new Prime Minister has said he wants growth in every postcode, to get public control of essential services and to end 40 years of neoliberalism. Therefore, it is obvious to me that he would wholeheartedly back this motion. But let me tell you why PCS backs this motion. Our members know the impact of austerity. Many are earning less in real terms today than they were in 2010.

In 2024, this Congress called for a campaign of public sector wide pay restoration, and we need the Government to deliver that. We also know of the backlogs in our services and the staffing shortages in so many areas. We back the call in point 2 for a wealth tax. We need a policy to back public control of energy and water and we need to stop the profiteering that means that British households and businesses pay the highest energy bills in Europe. Our

water bills keep rising above inflation even while executive pay soars and ever more sewage keeps flowing into our rivers and seas.

From our perspective, we also need to end the wasteful outsourcing to failed companies like Capita and Serco which see hundreds of millions of pounds shovelled to private companies, who then make a mess of our services and are bailed out by dedicated public servants.

We fully endorse the call to invest to deliver Net Zero through a real workers transition.

Finally, Congress, this motion is exactly right to warn about the looming threat of the far right, which offers no solutions, just scapegoats, someone to blame.

If this Labour Government does not deliver then we are heading for some very dark times, so let's fight together now to ensure the Government does deliver the sound industrial and economic policy set out here. Congress, I second this motion and I urge you all to support it. Thank you. (*Applause)*

The President: Thank you, Fran. I now call the NUJ.

Laura Davison (*General Secretary, NUJ*) spoke in support of Motion 34. *She said*: I am speaking particularly to the elements of this motion that focus on a fundamental part of a

just thriving and democratic society, particularly access to quality trusted news and how we fund it. We are currently seeing swingeing cuts in our public service broadcaster. The BBC announced earlier this year it plans to cut one in 10 jobs. Since then there have been a series of news and programming cuts announced and there are more to come. We are seeing a systemic diminishing of scale and plurality at our public service broadcaster. In local news we are continuing to see relentless job cuts that our members have endured as employers choose this brutal approach in the face of struggling digital models. The roll-out of AI overviews on news-related search has meant a loss of links to publishers' original stories and a loss of revenue. Tech platforms have sucked up editorial content without making any contribution to its production.

So, what can we do? The Government's recently announced Local News Fund is a positive step towards recognising the urgent need for action in our sector, and we have welcomed it, but it is time and funding limited and it simply will not do enough to fundamentally re-set the sector and ensure the urgently needed social underpin of quality journalism. So, we are calling for a simple and practical step to generate funding, a 6% windfall tax on at the tech giants, to be re-invested in our sector, to protect jobs, improve conditions and increase public access to quality news and retaining editorial independence. It should promote trade union recognition, diversity and help new endeavours get off the ground.

I am proud to bring this policy forward on behalf of NUJ members and to see it become a core part of the TUC's programme. I thank the other unions represented in the composite and TUC colleagues for their support. These measures speak to current concerns. Dare I say

they will be popular. The power wielded by billionaire tech owners must be addressed. Ethical journalism, strong public service journalism and local journalism are essential to all of our work. Please support the composite. (*Applause)*

The President: Thank you, Laura. I now call TSSA.

Mary Sithole (*TSSA*) spoke in support of Composite 17. *She said*: I am a first-time TUC speaker (*Applause*) speaking on behalf of TSSA in support of Composite 17 and standing up for working people everywhere who have had enough of living pay cheque to pay cheque.

Congress, since the 2008 financial crisis, workers in the UK have been faced with attack after attack on our living standards. Tory austerity ground down our pay and public services. The Covid crisis saw wages stagnate as wealth soared. Then came an inflationary boom and the Bank of England set job-busting higher interest rates and now the Iran War has triggered fossil fuel chaos in the Strait of Hormuz and caused oil and gas prices to spiral. Households are now significantly worse off. The average energy bill has reached £1,862 per year, with further increases expected. Lenders have raised interest rates, increasing the cost of mortgages. Fuel prices have spiked at the pump and by November food is expected to have become 50% more expensive as compared to 2021. Congress, throughout all of this, there has been a continued refrain that it is the workers who should pay, even as the fossil fuel companies distribute record dividends, even as the bankers accept billions in bonuses and even as global profits surge to a record $4.85 trillion in January this year.

Congress, I have tired of hearing there is no money for pay rises, public services or crumbling infrastructure. It is time we prioritised people over profit. It is time we took on the profiteers and put money back into people's pockets and time we fix our broken economy, bringing our utilities back into public ownership, ending dependency on fossil fuels and investing in our people and public services and infrastructure, transport, housing, education, health that we need to build a country that works for all. Congress, please support Composite 17, thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Mary. I now call EIS.

Eddie Burns (*EIS*) spoke in support of Composite 17. *He said*: Big tech, the tech giants, the tech bros, these are not the titles of glossy Netflix feelgood movies, but rather, they are the looming rapacious unregulated monsters currently bleeding our public services dry. It is the systematic and ongoing nexus of wealth extraction deeply embedded in our national education infrastructure. This pattern is replicated in many other public service sectors such as health and welfare.

In Scotland, the national digital learning platform is called Glow. This platform relies on Google Microsoft 365 to operate. Long-term licensing agreements and technological deals ensure that badly needed public funds flow directly to Trump's enablers in the form of massive profits. Once local authorities are locked into these deals, the demand for

expensive add-ons and storage come rolling in. Then there is the hardware scam. We pay for the devices used by pupils in schools whether it is Google's Chromebooks, Apple's iPads or Microsoft Windows devices, we pay for these upfront and then sign up to device replacement cycles and long-term software subscriptions. The tech bros can't believe their luck. I do not have the time here to go into the current and future implications of generative AI which is integrated directly into the Glow services. Suffice to say our young people are being systematically trained at public expense to use these corporate tools which are provided at cost by the likes of Amazon Web Services. I guess it was only a matter of time before Bezos got his grasping claws into the digital Klondike.

I also don't have time to go into what the tech bros are up to with the vast quantities of data generated by big tech's devices, platforms and software, but we can be certain about one thing: it will make them money, lots of money. All of the tech giants are busily lobbying at all levels of Scottish government as well as individual councils. That is just in Scotland. The digital market is 10 times the market in Scotland in the rest of the UK. You can be certain that big bros' tentacles are reaching directly into public funding structures in every region of the UK. It is a profits bonanza for them and a wealth extraction scandal for us, and it has got to stop.

If we must be shackled to these monsters then the very least we should be doing is reversing the flow of our money to benefit our public services. It is time to tax Apple until their pips squeak. Support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Eddie. I am now going to call Equity.

Paul Fleming (*Equity*) spoke in support of Composite 17. *He said*: Comrades, President, Congress, the slogan for this year's Congress is Unity Wins, not only because we are stronger together but because we face a singularity of issues. We have seen over 40 years of asset stripping of our state and profiteering in every single corner of our economy. If I were to say that the BBC is obliged under the terms of their Charter to tender 30% of their work out into the private sector and away from the public ownership, that would sound very familiar to rail workers who fought the Common Market and UK policy over rail nationalisation. If I were to say that 55% of local authority funding for the arts has been cut since 2010 leading to 50% less work for actors in those theatres and a real terms 10% reduction in pay, that would sound pretty familiar to refuse workers and others in local authorities up and down the country. If I were to say that every £1 invested in the arts generates another £4 in the local economy, that would sound very familiar to the retail and hospitality workers who serve those audiences day in, day out when a show plays in those theatres. If I were to tell you that the end of subsidy in TV and film has led to 80% of UK production dependent on American money, that would be familiar to workers in water, post, transport and all utilities who have seen the necessities of life sold abroad and held offshore. If Labour favours a pro-growth agenda, it will favour a pro-worker agenda and it will favour reversing this trend. It is very clear that we need to get pounds into the pockets of workers who spend and away from the talons and claws of those who hoard.

So, as Composite 17 demands, let's see the biggest insourcing in a generation, start at the BBC and with London Underground cleaners. Let's see modern state aid starting with Oldham Colosseum and continuing with Scunthorpe steelworks. Let's see every TUC affiliate benefit from the same provisions as 90% of scripted TV and film, with sectoral collective bargaining. Conference, support the composite. (*Applause*)

The President: Well done, Paul, thank you. ASLEF.

Dylan Leonard (*ASLEF*) spoke in support of Composite 17. *He said*: I am a driver and representative for ASLEF and first-time delegate at conference. (*Applause*) Thank you. It is not often train drivers get clapped. ASLEF are in full support of this motion and I want to make a very simple point: if a service is essential to the public then the ownership of the assets and infrastructure needed to provide it should be held in the public interest too. Control needs to mean ownership. We welcome passenger rail services returning to public ownership, but this cannot stop with the name on the side of the train. A railway depends on its track, signalling, stations, depots, maintenance facilities, rolling stock and all the systems that keep it moving safely every day. It makes little sense for the public to run the service whilst continuing to pay private owners to use the assets it cannot operate without.

As railway workers we know the cost of fragmentation. It can mean blurred responsibility, competing priorities, duplicated management and decisions driven by contracts rather than what is safest, most reliable and best for passengers and workers. Public ownership gives us

the opportunity to do something different. We can plan for the long term, invest in safer infrastructure, modern rolling stock, properly maintained workplaces and skilled jobs and put every pound back into improving service rather than extracting profit from it. That goes beyond rail. That applies to energy, water, health, social care and all other essential services which all need secure public infrastructure and public capacity. We simply should not be renting back the things that society cannot function without.

Then the familiar question comes: how do we pay for it? Well, Congress, Britain is a wealthy country. The issue is not simply whether the money exists but who holds that wealth and who is asked to contribute. Working people pay tax on their wages before it even hits their bank accounts, so it is entirely reasonable that those with millions in accumulated wealth make a fairer contribution. A progressive wealth tax with a high threshold aimed at the very richest, alongside closing tax loopholes and taxing income from wealth more fairly could raise billions for the public services we all rely on. This is not about punishing success. It is about recognising that wealth is built on the foundations society provides: educated workers, public infrastructure, transport, healthcare, energy and the rule of law.

Congress, let's finish the job of public ownership and fund our services to succeed, not manage them to fail. You will be pleased to know that a miracle has occurred: a train driver has stuck to time. ASLEF support the motion and hopefully Congress does, too. (*Applause)*

The President: Well done, Dylan. Thank you very much. I am going to take CWU and then finally GMB.

Rob Wotherspoon (*CWU*) spoke in support of Composite 17. *He said*: We wholeheartedly support this motion. Forty years of neoliberalism, and for the first time in 40 years and a bit of my life, I wholly agree with something a British Prime Minister has said, which is slightly strange. Our members would not necessarily use the language of neoliberalism, but what they would undoubtedly recognise is the degrading of public services and the bleeding dry of national infrastructure. Who now believes in the promise of privatisation? And does anyone serious believe that the idea of treating everything as a commodity to be exploited, and that only markets can do anything, has done anything than be a cover for a massive transfer of wealth to the already wealthy?

Take Royal Mail - sold off for £3 billion. Within 10 years it had already paid out £2.4 billion in dividends. That is what you call a freebie. BT - it is even more stark £15 billion in to the Treasury, £57 billion out in dividends over the years. But Congress, 40 years of hurt never stopped us dreaming and we take hope from the renationalisation of the railways. Water must surely be next. But meanwhile workers in Royal Mail strive to maintain decent terms and conditions in the face of competitors who dictate to their workers when they work, how they work, how much they are paid, where they work and yet claim that they are self-employed. It is a nonsense and it has to come to an end.

It should be clear then that we need a massive rebalancing of power in favour of working people. It must be equally clear that the vested interests who have benefited from this system will kick against this and fight this tooth and nail. What that means for us, Congress, is that it is not enough simply to make demands of the Government. We also have to come together as unions in sectors to set minimum standards, conditions and rights. Because we know why, it is up on the board there - unity works. Congress, please support. (*Applause)*

The President: Thank you very much, CWU. And finally GMB.

Katherine Salt (*GMB*) spoke in support of Composite 17. *She said*: We must demand a new political and economic direction. I was so encouraged by Andy Burnham in his first speech as Prime Minister that he recognised that Britain took some wrong turns in the 1980s. As a proud daughter of a striking Nottinghamshire miner, who sadly died far too early of pneumonoconiosis, I also remember all those working-class women who helped the coal miners when we had no money at all. My dad used to go out during the winter and he would dig for coal in the brook and he would take it round every council house to make sure that they had warmth. Those women used to make soup. They used to provide food banks. And I never thought I would see food banks again in my lifetime but I have.

And those women are now WASPI women, our WASPI women who have not received their pensions. 3.6 million women born between 1950 and 1960 have lost £50,000 of their pension in this country. Government after Government has failed to give those women

what they deserve and they have continued to kick it down the road. Many of our Labour MPs publicly endorsed the WASPI women. They went out there and embraced them. The biggest supporter of the WASPI women was my friend and my hero, Dennis Skinner. Dennis, if you are listening to this, we miss you in Parliament so much. (*Applause*)

Those women still have not received compensation. The 2024 Labour Party manifesto omitted WASPI women's compensation. Since the WASPI women started campaigning in 2015, 430,000 WASPI women have died. Let's put that in context, since July, 5,871 WASPI women have died. Is that not an emergency? Because in my book it is. (*Applause*)

The Parliamentary Ombudsman agreed that each woman would receive £1,000 to £3,000 in compensation. To date they have not received a ha'penny. Not one ha'penny. Congress, when are we going to have an economy that properly values our women? The Government has saved millions of pounds by keeping what is owed to the WASPI women. These are your neighbours, your sisters, your aunties, your mothers, your grandmas. They need and deserve that money. They have lived in poverty. Our new Prime Minister has promised ---

The President: Katherine, I am afraid you have gone well over time now. Can you stop.

Katherine Salt: So, please support the WASPI campaign. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you Katherine, that was a very powerful speech. I will now take the votes on each motion in turn. Composite Motion 17, will all those in favour please show? Those against? The vote on Motion 24, will all those in favour show? And all those against please show? Thank you. Both motions are carried.

*Composite Motion 17 was **CARRIED**.*

*Motion 24 was **CARRIED**.*

SECTION 2: STRONG RIGHTS AT WORK AND PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION

The President: Congress, we move to Section 2 of the General Council report: Strong rights at work and protection from discrimination, from page 22. I now call Composite Motion 4, Migrant rights are workers' rights. Withdraw the unsettling UK settlement proposals. The General Council support the composite motion. Moved by UNISON, seconded by the Society of Radiographers. You are very welcome, UNISON.

Migrant rights are workers' rights.
(*Composing Motion 8 and Motion 9*)

Debbie Rowden (*UNISON*) moved Composite 4. *She said*: I am proud to stand here as the daughter of Trinidadian parents, a child of the Windrush generation. Proud to move this composite motion on behalf of my great union UNISON. (*Cheers*) A union whose stand on migrant workers' rights has been uncompromising. A campaign led by our migrant workers by their passion and their courage. A campaign which has gone to Westminster, to Holyrood, to the Senedd, to Stormont. We have gone to the Home Office and to No. 10 Downing Street, with a simple set of asks: justice. Justice for migrant workers. No ripping up of the rule book to appease racists. No broken promises. No second-class citizenship in this country. When we started on our campaign, one member said the message she wanted us to take to politicians was to let the certificate of sponsorship be decoupled from the employer, allow indefinite leave to remain stay at five years, give us fair pay, protect our rights, recognise our humanity.

This message calls out to us all as trade unionists. It feels very important to have this composite at Congress, steadfastly expressing our commitment and our support for our overseas members. The voices of hate and division have been very loud and our members have been targeted with violence and assault in the workplace and at home, too. And some of those attacks have come from the government in the form of visa rules.

We have long campaigned for a rights-based immigration policy but the change announced to settlement rules has shocked me to the core. Instead of the five years to settle that was originally promised, the Government now wants to keep them waiting for 15 years. They have specifically targeted UNISON members working in health and social care, saying that

this work was low waged and low skilled. They said people who did this work did not contribute enough to work in this country. The Government wants to give bankers - and yes I said bankers - a three-year route to settlement, but social care workers will be kept waiting for 15 years. Nursing auxiliaries, theatre nurses and healthcare assistants waiting 15 years. Children's residential home workers waiting 15 years. Bankers just three. What does this say about how public service workers are valued? What does this say about who is seen as really contributing? What does this say about the soul of our country when health and social care is seen as being a low contributor but bankers as the highest? One day we may well ourselves depend on that care and we will understand its true value. That is why we are calling for that five-year route to be kept: a promise to be kept, to be honoured. Surely it is not too much to ask.

Congress, I spoke on this subject at last year's TUC Congress and here I am again speaking on it today. I feel so passionately about this issue because everything I have heard reminds me so much of what the Windrush generation had to experience when they came here. Invited to come to help in a time of need and facing a barrage of racism and discrimination. Without them the NHS would not be what it is today. Neither would the trade union movement, because when the Windrush generation met with racism, they organised, just like our overseas members have done since coming here.

Congress, their courage inspires me. Even with the power the visa system has given to their employers, they fearlessly challenge exploitation. They aren't statistics. They are human beings. They are our colleagues, our friends and our neighbours. They are reps and activists

and they are fellow trade unionists. UNISON has become their union and they have together led the fight for fairness against exploitation.

And this composite makes it clear, we need to use the full power of the trade unions to bargain, negotiate and organise, to challenge racism, discrimination and exploitation. For migrant workers there is a gap between reality and theory when it comes to employment rights. That is why the trade union exists. Our power is to make those rights a reality; to use our solidarity and collective voice to fulfil the promise of fairness and justice in this country.

Congress, these rights were never handed to us, we had to fight for them and we need to do the same for migrant workers. We have to fight for fair visas, for promises to be kept. This is an employment rights issue, this is an equalities rights issue and I believe it is a human rights issue, too. We will have to fight together for justice. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Debbie. Seconded by the Society of Radiographers.

Leandre Archer (*SOR*) seconded Composite 4. *She said*: I am proud to second this motion. The Society of Radiographers supports this motion because migrant workers are not an optional extra in our society and in our NHS: they are a vital part of the workforce which patients depend on every single day. They are valued colleagues, leaders, educators, trade union activists and our members.

Radiography continues to face significant workforce challenges while demand for clinical imaging and cancer services continues to rise. For years workforce growth has relied heavily on internationally trained professionals. Between 2018 and January 2026, the number of internationally trained diagnostic radiographers on the HCPC register increased by more than 220%, while the number internationally trained therapeutic radiographers increased by 85%. Following the pandemic, international recruitment accelerated dramatically. These figures tell an important story. They show how dependent the NHS has become on internationally recruited professionals, to maintain services and meet patient demand, but they also expose a growing risk. The assumption has been that internationally educated radiographers will continue to come to the UK and continue to stay. Increasingly, the evidence suggests otherwise. In January 2026, almost 14,700 internationally trained radiographers were registered, yet by March 2026 only around 13,000 were recorded on the register. More worryingly still the number of internationally trained radiographers working in the UK fell by 12% in a single year with the steepest decline among those aged under 30.

Congress, if we want to understand the workforce crisis facing the NHS, we must look beyond registration numbers and ask a simple question: are people choosing to stay? And I think you all know the answer. At the very moment we need skilled healthcare professionals to build their careers here. Migrant workers are being told they face longer waits for settlement, greater uncertainly about their future and fewer rights for themselves and their families. Workers who came here on the basis of a five-year route to settlement

are now being told the goalposts could be moved after they have already committed their skills, their labour and often their lives to supporting our public services. This is not fairness. This is insecurity.

The Society of Radiographers also knows that many migrant workers face racism and discrimination. Through our anti-racism campaign and workplace surveys, workers have shared experiences. Policies that make migrant workers feel less welcome risk reinforcing those experiences and creating an even more hostile environment.

Congress, if we are truly serious about tackling workplace shortages, protecting patient care and challenging racism, we must stand with migrant workers. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Leandre. Congress, although I have various requests to speak on this issue I am going to take one more union and that is the TSSA.

Mary Sithole (*TSSA*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 4. *She said*: I am a TSSA delegate and a proud migrant worker. I came to the UK from Zimbabwe and have worked on the railways for over 25 years. In that time, as a trade unionist, I have stood up and spoken out for the people in my workplace and I am proud to be the first black woman in my union's history to hold the post of TSSA national Treasurer. (*Applause*)

There are countless people like me who work to keep Britain moving, who have not only fought to build their life in the UK but to improve the lives for everyone else, as trade unionists and as members of their community. That is why it is tiring to hear lectures about a lack of integration while the real causes of social disintegration go ignored - unaffordable housing, crumbling infrastructure, stagnating wages, public services on their knees.

If you put a numerical value on the amount of time spent scapegoating migrant workers and invested that figure in fixing those problems, we would be significantly closer to addressing them. But instead, anti-immigration policy is actively damaging our public services. Take the workers at TfL who debated the situation last year. They came here on graduate visas, built a life in Britain, expecting to move on to a skilled workers visa and to help keep London moving, and now the increased salary threshold means they face removal. Enough is enough. It is time to end the march to the right on migration and asylum policy and stand up for migrant workers. Please vote for Composite 4. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Mary. I will now go to the vote on composite Motion 4. Will all those in favour please show? Will all those against please show? The motion is carried.

Composite Motion 4 was ***CARRIED.***

The President: I now call paragraphs 2.6, 2.11 to 2.13 and Composite Motion 6, Neurodiversity inclusion access employment policies and fair work. The General Council support the composite motion. Moved by Nautilus, seconded by the Hospital Doctors' Union and supported by USDAW.

Neurodiversity – inclusion, access, employment policies and fair work
(*Composing Motion 14 and Motion 15 plus amendments*)

Giles Rice (*Nautilus*) moved Composite Motion 6. *He said*: I am Giles Rice, neurodivergent seafarer, first-time delegate and first-time speaker. (*Applause*) And it is my privilege to move Composite 6 on behalf of Nautilus International. This composite starts from a simple principle: neurodivergent workers belong in every workplace, they belong in every profession and they belong at sea. This composite recognises that neurodiversity is a natural and valuable part of society and of our workforce. It highlights the barriers that neurodivergent workers continue to face and calls for greater inclusion, support and understanding, particularly within maritime workplaces.

Congress, despite increasing awareness, too many neurodivergent seafarers and workers continue to experience exclusion. They face barriers to diagnosis, barriers to support, barriers to progression, and too often they face assumptions made about what they can or cannot do.

Trade unionists have always challenged arbitrary barriers in employment. We have fought and continue to fight discrimination. We have fought and continue to fight exclusion. We have fought and continue to fight prejudice. This composite applies those same principles to neurodivergent workers. However, for neurodivergent maritime professionals the challenge can be even greater. Life at sea involves long periods away from home, isolation from support networks and limited access to specialist services, yet neurodivergent seafarers continue to make enormous and very substantial contributions across our industry.

The problem is not neurodiversity. The problem is workplaces that are not designed to accommodate difference. The problem is systems that fail to provide support. The problem is outdated assumptions which persist. Congress should also recognise that neurodivergent workers are not a single group. Their strengths vary between individuals the same as each and every worker. Differences enrich workplaces as much as skills and talents.

Organisations are better, more rounded and more resilient with a rich array of thought, skill and approach. This composite calls on the TUC to work with unions, employers and regulators to promote neuro-inclusive standards to deliver with our neurodiverse workers and members to ensure they lead the way in setting what neuro-inclusive means and how we achieve it. It calls for timely access to diagnosis and support. It calls for education and training and it calls for maritime regulation and guidance to reflect a modern understanding of neurodiversity. At its heart this is a trade union issue because every worker deserves dignity, every worker deserves opportunity and every worker deserves a working

environment in which they can thrive. Congress, inclusion must not stop at the quayside. I move. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Giles. Seconded by Hospital Doctors' Union, thank you.

Sasha Burn (*Hospital Doctors' Union (formerly the HCSA)*) seconded Composite Motion 6. *She said*: President, Congress, I am proud to second this motion because it speaks to something close to my heart. I am a doctor and I am from a naval family and it is the recognition that neurodiversity is not an exception in our workplaces; it is a core part of them. Around 15% to 20% of UK adults are neurodivergent. That is millions of workers, millions of colleagues and millions of people whose strengths, talents and perspectives enrich our movement and our industries every single day.

Congress, awareness may be improving but the barriers remain. Literally hundreds of thousands of people are stuck on waiting lists waiting for assessments and support. And for those working at sea the challenges are even sharper. Isolation, long deployments and limited access to healthcare make diagnosis and support painfully difficult. No worker should have to navigate this alone.

We also know that employers are only just beginning to recognise neurodiversity and far too often they are getting it wrong. Adjustments are inconsistent. Policies are drafted without

neurodivergent voices and inclusion is treated as an optional extra rather than a core responsibility. When workplaces fail to understand neurodiversity, they do not just exclude people, they waste talent, damage well-being and undermine productivity.

Congress, neurodiversity is not a problem to be managed. It is part of many of us and we need to recognise that we all think differently, communicate differently and bring different strengths, which is a huge advantage in the workplace. And yet neurodivergent workers face sharp labour market exclusion, with employment rates far below those of neurotypical workers. That is unacceptable. Neurodivergent workers deserve safe sustainable careers on land and at sea.

This motion sets out exactly what needs to change. We need employers to involve neurodivergent workers and unions in designing policies. We need timely access to diagnosis, support and reasonable adjustments. We need training for managers, staff and crews. We need maritime regulation that reflects modern understanding, not outdated assumptions, and we need explicit inclusion of neurodivergent maritime professionals in equality and retention strategies. And Congress, we need a positive campaign: one that celebrates neurodiversity, one that raises awareness of workplace rights, and one that signposts beyond the workplace. This motion is about fairness, dignity and unlocking the strengths of every worker. Congress, I proudly second. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Sasha. I will call USDAW.

Jane Jones (*President, USDAW*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 6. *She said*: Congress, neurodiversity is not new. There have always been people in our workplaces who are neurodivergent and some of those individuals have always needed support at work from their employers, for a variety of different reasons. It has also always been the case that some employers have always done better than others at embracing differences and being supportive. Unfortunately, we know there have always been workers who have been persecuted for their differences. Thankfully, we are now more aware of the range of neurodiversity. We know that more people experience differences than previously thought and we can see the many ways it can impact people at work and in their whole lives.

Of course, neurodiversity is not just one thing. It is a term used to describe a number of alternative thinking styles such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism, Tourette's and ADHD. Diagnosis of neurodivergent conditions has increased significantly in recent years. It is now thought that around one in seven people in the UK are neurodiverse in some way. That is over 15% of all workers. Although there have been some significant steps forward in recognising the needs of neurodivergent workers, we do know that many employers are not doing everything that they should. Many workers still do not feel supported or understood. The way that employees shape their approach to neurodiversity at work is crucial. It is vital that neurodiversity is celebrated by employers and not seen as an obstacle. With the right support, neurodivergent workers bring their own life experiences and perspectives that enrich their workplaces.

USDAW welcomes the important work that the TUC has done to raise awareness of the needs of neurodivergent workers. We are calling on the TUC to build on this with a positive campaign celebrating neurodiversity and promoting the benefits of having such an approach. Together we can make a real difference for neurodiverse workers and help to shape the working world so that it is more inclusive, more supportive and one that celebrates all our differences in all types of workplaces right across the public sector and the private sector. Congress, I ask you to support the composite. (*Applause*)

The President: Well done, Jane, thanks very much. I am now going to go to the vote on Composite Motion 6. Can you indicate if you are in favour, all show? Please show if you are against? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Composite Motion 6 was ***CARRIED.***

The President: I now call paragraph 5.7 and Motion 16, Really supporting disabled people into work. The General Council support the Motion. Moved by Unite on behalf of the TUC Disabled Workers' Conference, seconded by UNISON. (*Applause*)

Motion 16, Really supporting disabled people into work.

Dean Collins (*Unite, TUC Disabled Workers Conference*) moved Motion 16. *He said*: I am moving Motion 16 from TUC Disabled Workers Conference on behalf of my union, Unite.

Congress, today we stand at a crossroads and let's not sugar coat it. A crossroads where disabled workers are still being pushed out, held back and written off, not because we lack talent, not because we lack ambition, but because structural barriers are being left in place by employers and governments who should know better and do better.

The latest government figures are a disgrace. Disabled people remain around 29% less likely to be in employment than non-disabled people. You heard right, yes - 29%. A decade of speeches, strategies and glossy commitments and that gap has barely budged. That is not progress. That is neglect. Let's be honest, employers are not doing enough to turn the tide. The Government's own surveys show falling confidence in recruiting disabled people and falling commitment to inclusive practice. When employers stop paying attention, inequality grows in the dark, and when inequality grows in the dark, workers get exploited. This is not just about jobs. It is about power, dignity and the right to build a future.

The Social Stability Commission's "State of the Nation" report makes it crystal clear: disabled people face some of the steepest barriers to progression anywhere in the labour market. Local-level data exposes brutal inequalities in access to qualifications, stable work and professional roles. Let's say it plainly. There is no social mobility when whole groups are structurally locked out of opportunity - and we refuse to accept that. Because here is

the truth, and every trade unionist in this room knows it. We already know what works. We know that when disabled workers get the adjustments they need, they thrive. We know that when workplaces are designed inclusively, everyone benefits. We know that when employers challenge stereotypes instead of reinforcing them, talent flourishes. And we know something else, the disability movement is powerful. It has fought cuts, it has fought degrading assessments. It has fought for dignity in the social security system. And now that same fire must transform our workplaces.

So today, I am calling for a shift, a real shift, not the polite incremental kind that gets lost in committee papers, but a shift driven by union strength, collective action and unapologetic demands. We must stop treating disabled people as administrative categories and start recognising them as colleagues, innovators, leaders and union members, whose rights are non-negotiable. We must demand that government and employers work with disabled people's organisations not as an afterthought, not as a tick-box but as equal partners in designing systems that uphold rights, promote independence and are genuinely fit for purpose because when disabled workers are seen, heard and supported, not pushed aside, penalised or overlooked, workplaces become fairer, communities become stronger and social mobility becomes possible for everyone.

Comrades, this is our fight. This is union work. This is solidarity in action and together shoulder to shoulder we will make sure disabled workers are not just included, not just accommodated, but empowered, respected and able to thrive. Congress, I move.

(*Applause*)

The President: Very well done, Dean. UNISON to second.

Lady Lola Oyewusi (*UNISON*) spoke in support of Motion 16. *She said*: Good afternoon, Congress, President. I am proudly supporting Motion 16. If we are serious about supporting disabled people into work we must first be serious about removing the barriers that keep disabled people out of work. Disabled workers like myself do not need lectures about work. We do not need suspicion. We do not need sanctions or cuts that are dressed up as supporting us. What we need is opportunity, dignity, and properly funded services that would enable disabled workers, disabled people to fully participate in work life.

Congress, this motion rightly highlights the dangers in the Government's current approach, which does not work and it would not work. These policies are dressed up as help, but they instead cause increased insecurity, hardship, disentitlement to disability benefit, and force people into stressful situations and stressful reassessments. It creates anxiety and poverty and further barriers to employment. We know the real problem is not us disabled workers or disabled people. The problem is inaccessible workplaces, discriminatory practices. Reasonable adjustments are not honoured and are counted as an act of goodwill. They are often the difference between someone being able to work or not. That is why my union UNISON continues to campaign for stronger enforcement, properly funded access to work and a legal framework that puts disabled workers right at its centre.

Congress, we are also concerned that schemes such as Disability Confident have become a tick-box exercise in most organisations and it is not an actual commitment to supporting disabled workers. As you can see, I am wearing my badge. I wear this badge everywhere. It talks about me having hidden disabilities and you should bear with me. This badge is not enough. Congress, disabled people are able. What did I say? Disabled people are what? Can I hear you loudly. (*Shouts of "Able!"*) From that side please. (*Shouts of "Able!"*) And that side please. (*Shouts of "Able!"*) Congress, please support this motion because I am able and you are able. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Lady Lola, that was excellent. The other speakers now, NUJ, NEU and NASUWT.

Natasha Hirst (*NUJ*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 16. *She said*: There is no spiralling welfare bill and there is no over-diagnosis of autism and ADHD. The Personal Independence Payment is not an employment-related benefit. Long Covid and chronic long-term health conditions are very real and hideously under-supported. This kind of misinformation that we see in reporting is so hard to tackle because it often comes directly from politicians, or it is contained within opinion pieces which can be shaped by aggressive editorial lines out of the control of individual journalists. We have a press regulator IPSO that consistently refuses to extend the Editors' Code of Practice to prevent discriminatory reporting against a group of people.

The social security system that disabled people rely on is unbelievably complex. Legacy benefits, Disability Living Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Universal Credit, minimum income floor, universal credit health element, work capability assessment, limited capability for work-related activity, PIP, PIP mobility component, Motability, Access to Work. The list goes on. If you have never had to navigate applying for the various benefits, concessions, schemes and grants, you will not have the expertise needed to pick apart the misuse of statistics or the harmful misrepresentation of disabled people's lives and most journalists lack that specialist knowledge and we do not have enough disabled people in journalism.

We often lack that expertise in our unions too and this is why it is vital to support and amplify the voices of deaf and disabled people's organisations. If cuts to social security remove disabled people's independence, the costs land elsewhere - on the NHS, on social care, on other public services and on those workers who deliver those services. Proposed cuts and reforms will not just limit our lives - it will kill people. It certainly will not support more disabled people into work. Social security is a trade union issue. We need to call out those who scrutinise and condemn disabled people instead of the policies that harm us.

Congress, this is a frightening, frightening time for disabled people in the UK right now. We are trying to survive in a society that does not value our lives. The emergency for disabled people is not over. The attacks on our rights are endless and awful. We need your solidarity. We need your action. Thank you, Congress. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Natasha.

Colleen Johnson (*NEU*) spoke in support of Composite 16. *She said*: President, Congress, this motion comes directly from the Disabled Workers Conference and it deals with an issue that greatly concerns disabled workers, that of welfare reform. We all know what it looks like when you get this wrong, when you do not properly consult disabled people about something so vital to their everyday lives. Personal Independence Payments and Access to Work are mechanisms that actually help keep disabled people in work. Many professions such as education are hugely important and enjoyable, but the hours and the workload can present significant barriers to disabled people from the start and many struggle to get the necessary reasonable adjustments. So, it is really tough. For a moment let us consider how PIP and Access to Work help reduce barriers. For some workers there are particular costs associated with being disabled. It might be the need to have the heating on more, to wash clothes and bedding more regularly, or to buy several medications or disability aids. The journey to and from work may need to be supported by a taxi ride or the provision of a Motability vehicle. All of this to level the playing field so that a disabled person can access their chosen profession without absorbing the significant additional costs that non-disabled workers simply do not face.

As I alluded to earlier, the first attempt at welfare reform was abandoned. Many disabled and non-disabled people protested loudly at the suggested unfairness. That resulted in a

pause and a review. We need to be really aware and careful though. We cannot tolerate Reform suggesting that cutting welfare is the way to finance a rise in tax thresholds and we cannot have those with some long-term medical health conditions being excluded from support, for example those with ADHD or severe anxiety. We simply will not tolerate our community being divided up like that. In fact, in a recent poll of the general public, most people said they did not support cuts in welfare so that was encouraging.

This autumn the Timms review is due to report its findings after consulting with disabled people and their organisations. If those findings are not reasonable and genuinely supportive, we need to react accordingly. And by "we", I mean all of our individual unions and the TUC itself. Otherwise more disabled people will fall out of work and become unemployed and we simply cannot accept that. Congress, please support this important motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Colleen. I now call the NASUWT.

Cat Dowd (*NASUWT*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 16. *She said*: NASUWT and TUC Disabled Workers Committee, proud to speak in support of this motion. NASUWT is honoured to support this motion and stands in full solidarity with all disabled people as the hostility towards us continues to increase; a hostility we thought would end after the 2024 election. NASUWT had high hopes that the newly elected Government would put pressure on employers to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made in a timely and holistic

manner, improve legislation to strengthen disabled workers' rights for flexible working, along with greater protections for our supply teachers, who are often in precarious employment contracts and fear requesting reasonable adjustments because, as NASUWT evidence shows, they are more likely to have their supply contracts ended if they do.

Instead, the responsibility was left solely on disabled people to maintain employment whilst continuing to allow the spread of hostility that labels us lazy and undeserving, with echoes of 1930s eugenics propaganda following not far behind. It is not laziness that prevents us from accessing public transport independently. It is an inaccessible system that needs significant investment. It is not laziness that prevents us from parking at our workplaces because there are no accessible parking places, or that prevents us from accessing toilet facilities because legislation for accessible toilets is outdated and inadequate. It is not laziness that makes us wait over 12 months for support for Access to Work, by which time many of our members report either leaving their roles under pressure from employers or being pushed out under capability processes. It is not laziness that makes us choose between accessing NHS appointments or employment. It is a society that fails to value the contribution of all disabled people.

If the Government was serious about really supporting us at work, it would reverse the chronic underfunding in the NHS, in transport, in education and in Access to Work. They would strengthen legislation to support us against unscrupulous employers, stamp out the hostility we face from the far-right and the media and stop echoing dangerous rhetoric about neurodivergent people, which is picked up by employers who do not take reasonable

adjustments seriously. They would take steps to reduce the disability pay gap and address the disability promotion gap. As NASUWT evidence clearly shows, disabled teachers are less likely to be promoted and more likely to be paid less. Lastly, it would sit at the table with us in genuine solidarity and offer us true co-production, not the failed economic model we have currently. You do not need fancy reports that cost millions written by non-disabled people. We can tell you what needs to change, so why don't you actually listen to us? There is nothing about us without us. (*Applause*)

The President: Catherine, thank you very much for that. I am going to go to the vote on Motion 16. Will all those in favour please show? All those against please show? That motion is carried.

*Motion 16 was **CARRIED.***

The President: Congress, we have one more motion on the agenda. First, can I ask Congress's permission to suspend Standing Orders and allow us to run to approximately 5.45 or just before so we can conclude today's business? Is that agreed? (*Agreed*) Thank you very much, Congress.

I now call paragraph 2.10, 5.6 and Motion 17, Oppose the EHRC Code of Practice. The General Council support the motion and I will call on the Assistant General Secretary Kate

Bell to give the explanation. It is moved by CWU on behalf of the TUC LGBT+ and seconded by the NHBC SA. Thank you.

Oppose the EHRC Code of Practice

Maria Uxhall (*CWU*) moved Motion 17 on behalf of the TUC LGBT+ Conference. *She said*: Chair, Conference, trans people are entitled to be treated with equal dignity at work and in wider society. The new Equality and Human Rights guidance is discriminatory and excludes trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people from swathes of public life, including their working lives. The law must be changed. The EHRC guidance is unworkable, it is absurd and it is cruel. The current guidance for service provisions is thoroughly impractical, and if they issue guidance for the workplace on this basis it will be, too. It will be a licence for those who wish to undermine inclusive workplaces and union organisation for equality. It is a direct problem for us. We know that the EHRC was subverted by the Tories for 14 years, both in terms of its senior appointments and the massive cuts in funding. But we must call out the EHRC's failure now to support trans equality, the failure to address the increasing prejudice and hate against trans people in our society. Organised legal activism backed by forces on the populist and far right is in plain sight in our politics and in our media.

Our friends in Hope Not Hate have shown that after anti-immigrant rhetoric, transphobia is the most common prejudice used by the far right. We know that institutions with international links and access to a lot of money from reactionary billionaires have a plan.

They also have a track record. They are the same people who have attacked progressive change on LGBT rights and women's rights for decades. They even use the same lawyers. For them homophobia, misogyny and transphobia are all put together. But they will only get away with it if they can divide us. To resist the backlash we must stand together. We must challenge the framing of trans rights and women's rights as contradictory. They are not. Such a framing pulls a rug under trans-supported women's organisations.

As LGBT+ trade unionists, we are very proud of the active solidarity from many women activists within our movement who have stepped forward as trans allies and shown us the future. A future of inclusive feminism. Conference, we must change the law. Trans people deserve equal civil rights, to go to work without fear, to take part in public life without harassment and vilification. This a human rights issue. It is about supporting trans lives. We need a process of gender self-declaration in the UK, something that exists in many other countries, and this, Congress, has a longstanding policy for gender self-declaration going way back to 2018. We are asking the TUC to campaign on our existing policy so trans people can live and work with the same rights as all other union members. This policy was overwhelmingly reaffirmed by this Congress just last year when we agreed our opposition to the Supreme Court judgment.

This policy must be acted on now. So, we are asking you to stand firm for trade union values of inclusion and equality. To stand firm against the accelerating efforts of the far and populist right to stoke hate. To stand up for trans people at a time of backlash. To stand for class unity against division.

Conference, in our workplaces we stand in solidarity with our trans colleagues. In working-class communities up and down this country trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people are supported as neighbours, as friends, and in their families. Solidarity is the glue that holds our movement together. It is what holds society together. We will not let the reactionaries divide us. Comrades, an injury to one is an injury to all. Unity is strength. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Maria.

Julia Georgiou (*General Secretary, NHBC SA*) seconded Motion 17. *She said*: We know that workers are being affected by the exclusionary guidance in the Code. Workers across the UK are scared. Even when not at work, trans people are scared: scared of challenge and exclusion from places they need to access in day-to-day life and scared of getting ill. There is no need for exclusion. It is only in place to appease those who hate and seek division among all communities, especially within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Congress, the Gender Recognition Act 2004 was not introduced without the judgment of the European Courts. A judgment that meant that trans men and women could change their birth certificates and be recognised; a judgment that still stands. This was followed by the Equality Act in 2010. That was 16 years ago. Parts of that Act have never been brought into force and the Act has not changed but society has moved on. We seem to have become

more fragmented. From gender-critical beliefs being protected to the sight of masked men on the streets of Dover. And we know that should Reform gain power, they will seek to remove the protections of the Act. Changes to law happen. There is no need to be afraid of opening a debate on the changes to the legislation that are required. And they are required. The Supreme Court did not rewrite the law. They simply looked at it and interpreted it the way they wanted to. The judgment ignored how and why the Act was formed in the way it was, and we must campaign to ensure that government restates the original intent in that law. The law must be strengthened to give working people the equalities they deserve, to develop and progressively extend those equalities and rights. Why do we need to do that? We are not blind. The politicisation of the EHRC is coming for us next. The new Code does not govern workplaces but it does impact on them. If the law is not changed, if we meekly comply the next Code, the one that does hurt workplaces, will be much worse. We supported a motion to change the law last year. We must actively campaign to change the law so that every person can live and work with dignity and respect, as promised in the manifesto of this Government, until everyone person in the workplace is protected by the law. Conference, I second. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Julia. I now call Kate Bell to give the explanation on behalf of the General Council. Kate.

Kate Bell (*General Council*): The General Council's attitude is support with explanation and I will now give the explanation. This motion highlights the vital importance of trans, non-binary and gender-diverse workers being treated with dignity at work and in wider

society. Congress is clear that the EHRC Code of Practice for services that followed the Supreme Court judgment of April 2025 is unworkable. It risks excluding workers, particularly trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming workers, from large parts of working life and it places them at heightened risk of discrimination, humiliation and denial of services.

As Congress has repeatedly affirmed, all trans identities should be believed and respected, and for all social purposes, trans women should be treated as women and trans men treated as men. In implementing the motion, the General Council will continue its longstanding practice of bringing together the LGBT+ and Women's Committees, following Congress policy and the principles agreed after the judgment was passed. We are proud of the tradition of collaboration and solidarity between the Committees and will draw on this as we discuss the practical implementation of this motion and call for an inclusive code of practice for workplaces.

The motion rightly calls on affiliates to challenge exclusionary guidance. While challenging this guidance, the TUC will comply with the law and make sure trans people are represented meaningfully. The TUC has always been clear: all workers, including trans and non-binary workers, have the right to safety, dignity and full participation in working life, including in our structures. With that explanation, the General Council support the motion and call for solidarity with all LGBT+ workers. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Kate. There have been various unions that have indicated a wish to speak. I am going to allow the FDA and the FBU.

Cleo Lunt (*FDA*) spoke in support of Motion 17. *They said*: To start with I need to say the FDA are planning to abstain on this motion because we are a Civil Service union and Civil Service impartiality needs protecting and I think is a really important and really valuable thing. As a union, we want to be able to continue to be able to represent and support all of our members, including those who have in the past and may in the future advise on legislative policy, so I will not be asking Congress to support or oppose.

So, why am I up here talking? I would like to share some of the experiences I have had as a non-binary trans queer disabled person. I am not a hypothetical situation. I am not a clever "got you" to use in a debate. I am a human being and I hope that my literal and figurative trans voice helps add to this discussion.

Some of my background. Section 28 was enforced throughout my school career. It started when I started school and they got rid of it when I left school - which I try not to take personally! Throughout my educational experience and throughout my life I have always been visibly queer. I have had strangers shout at me in the street. I have had slurs shouted at me. I have had people spit at me. I have been told I am going to hell. I have had friends physically assaulted for being visibly gay. I had seen things improve. Things used to be a lot worse than they are now. But recently I have seen things get worse again. I personally

know trans people who do not feel safe anywhere. be it in the workplace, or trans people who do not feel safe anywhere anymore and no longer leave their house. It is really sad. I have had recently in LGBT+ spaces strangers question my gender and say both very confidently, “Well you are obviously a man so why can’t you just accept that,” and “You are obviously a women so why can’t you accept that.” I cannot be both darlings, but I have had that. You know, I am lucky. I am in a position where I have been able to afford to pay for my transition related healthcare. Hooray, I get to spend money and I could have spent that money on a holiday. But I am lucky I am able to do that. I would prefer to go on holiday.

I have had some brilliant experiences. I was on a cruise. A waiter saw me by the pool. He saw my visibly trans body and he was a trans man and he had never seen somebody being visibly trans and proud and just living their life and being successful. He took a photo and sent it to his community back home. He was thrilled. I like animals, I like apes so I have been to Malaysia and Uganda to see the apes there. Being LGBT+ is illegal in both places. There is the death penalty in Uganda for being LGBT+. I currently feel more unsafe in the UK than I did on either of those trips. That is the situation we are living in.

And being able to come out as trans has been a huge positive in my life, being able to be me, to be respected as me, to be seen as who I am. To have that dignity and acceptance is absolutely wonderful and it is not something I am going to stop doing. I am not going to stop being me because I feel this unsafety, I think I deserve respect, dignity, safety, and to exist in the world. I am getting a red light now. Congress, thank you so much for listening. (*Applause and cheers*)

The President: Thank you, Cleo. And the Fire Brigades Union.

Maria Buck (*FBU*) spoke in support of Motion 17. *She said*: The proposed Code of Practice is discriminatory, unworkable and deeply concerning for every worker across the UK. It risks creating workplaces and publics services where trans and non-binary and gender-diverse people do not know whether they will be welcomed, challenged or excluded. Let's think about what that means in practice. A worker should never have to begin any shift worrying about whether they can safely use a toilet or a changing facility. A member of the public should not have to explain or defend their identity to access a service. And no one should face humiliation simply because another person decides they do not look or present themselves in the right way. No worker should have to choose between going to work or protecting their privacy.

Conference, consider the reality this creates for some of our members. Members who have worked for years without challenge. Members whose colleagues know them simply as hard-working valued members of the team. Well, under this guidance those same members may face an impossible choice: go to work and risk being challenged for using facilities they have safely used for years, potentially outing themselves to colleagues who did not previously know, or stay at home and lose pay because they no longer feel safe walking through the workplace door. That is the real-life consequence of this so-called guidance. A worker should never have to choose between earning a living and protecting their dignity.

This guidance will not create certainty. It has created fear and confusion and division. It will also place workers in extremely difficult situations. Staff could be expected to police other people's identities, make intrusive judgments and enforce policies that conflict with their own commitment to dignity and equality. That is not fair on trans people. It is not fair on workers. It is not a workable basis for delivering safe and inclusive public services.

Our movement has always understood that workplace rights are human rights. That is why this matters. We need the TUC to co-ordinate a strong and visible response. We need allies in this room to challenge exclusionary guidance, engage with MPs and work alongside LGBT+ people. We also need employers to hear clearly from our movement that equality cannot be reduced to the minimum they believe the law requires. Policies must protect people from discrimination, humiliation and harassment.

Conference, trans and non-binary people are not strangers to our movement. They are members, our representatives and our colleagues, and they deserve more than just our words. They deserve solidarity and action. Let us send a clear message that our trade union movement will not stand aside while equality is rolled backwards. Trans rights are human rights. Please support. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Maria. I am going to go to the vote on Motion 17. All those in favour please show? All those against please show? Thank you very much. So that is carried.

*Motion 17 was **CARRIED.***

The President: Just before I conclude this afternoon's business, I have got a request to make and that is we have rightly heard a lot about banks' profits today but just let us remember we represent thousands of bank workers facing the same cost-of-living crisis as working people across our movement. (*Applause*) Congress, thanks for your attention today. That concludes this afternoon's business. For the latest updates do check the fringe listings on the TUC website. Congress is now adjourned until 9.30 tomorrow. Thank you.

(*Congress adjourned at 5.39 p.m*.)

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