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 FOUR

(Wednesday, 16th September 2026)

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FOURTH DAY'S PROCEEDINGS:

WEDNESDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER 2026

(Congress assembled at 9.30 a.m.)

The President: I call Congress to order.

Video shown to Congress

The President: Good morning, Congress. Thank you to LAUCA a singer songwriter from Sutton. (*Applause*)

We will now see another short video celebrating union wins this year. This is your last opportunity to cheer for your union, so please make some noise.

"Union Wins" video shown to Congress

The President: Congress, can I remind you of our Statement of Conduct which is now on the screen.

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT

The President: 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*): Thank you, President, good morning, Congress. Congress, I am pleased to report agreement of another Composite motion. Composite Motion 18 will be circulated to delegates this morning.

The General Purposes Committee has approved a further three emergency motions:

- Emergency Motion 5 on rail safety will be moved by RMT and seconded by TSSA.
- Emergency Motion 6 on protecting search and rescue and RNLI volunteers and crew will be moved by Nautilus international and seconded by GMB.
- Emergency Motion 7 on defend LGBT+ people and civil society in Turkey will be moved by NHBCSA and seconded by NASUWT. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Rab, and thank you for all the work of the GPC throughout Congress. (*Applause*)

International Guest Speaker

The President: Congress, we now come to our final guest speaker. We are honoured to be joined on the platform by Osnay Miguel Colina Rodriguez, General Secretary of the Federation of Cuban Workers. (*Shouts and applause*) Osnay, it is a great pleasure to welcome to Congress.

Throughout our movement history bonds of solidarity between working people across the world have been a source of strength and hope. Today that spirit of international solidarity remains as important as ever. We are delighted that you can join us to share the experiences, challenges and achievements of Cuban workers and the trade union movement in Cuba. Congress, please join me in welcoming Osnay Miguel Colina Rodriguez. Osnay, I invite you to address Congress. (*Applause*)

Osnay Miguel Colina Rodriguez (*General Secretary, CTC Cuba*): Compañeras y compañeros del Congreso del TUC:

Hablo en nombre de la Central de Trabajadores de Cuba y llego para continuar una historia iniciada hace muchos años: La de trabajadores que se reconocen como compañeros, aunque trabajen en países diferentes y enfrenten realidades diferentes.

Aquí estuvieron antes compañeros en igual representación y encontraron lo mismo que hoy aprecio: Un movimiento sindical que entiende que la solidaridad de clase no conoce fronteras.

Los trabajadores cubanos vivimos horas muy difíciles, pero también de definición y profundo amor por nuestra tierra. Expresamos ese compromiso apoyando la construcción socialista y las transformaciones que necesita nuestro país.

Vivimos una situación extraordinariamente dura y se impone denunciar, una vez más, al verdadero responsable: El Gobierno de los Estados Unidos y su política de bloqueo y asfixia económica.

Desde 2019, Estados Unidos ha aplicado unilateralmente cientos de medidas coercitivas contra Cuba y ha profundizado el cerco económico, energético y financiero contra nuestro pueblo.

Entre marzo de 2025 y febrero de 2026, los perjuicios provocados por esta política superaron los 8 mil millones de dólares. Los daños acumulados ascienden a más de 178 mil millones de dólares.

Cuba no es una amenaza; el bloqueo sí.

Al mismo tiempo, ratificamos nuestra vocación humanista, solidaria e internacionalista y nuestra aspiración de vivir en paz y construir una sociedad con todos y para el bien de todos.

En este escenario, el Gobierno y los trabajadores buscamos alternativas para aliviar las dificultades, impulsar la investigación y encontrar soluciones con la participación activa de nuestro pueblo.

El Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro nos convocó a emanciparnos por nosotros mismos y con nuestros propios esfuerzos. Y eso lo hacemos precisamente en el año en que celebramos su centenario, convencidos de que solo quien lucha obtiene victorias.

Defender la Patria significa defender la vida y los sueños de nuestros niños y jóvenes, nuestras familias, nuestra independencia y soberanía; rechazar el terrorismo, los genocidios y la injerencia; y construir un mundo mejor mediante la solidaridad, la paz y el amor.

Cuba no se rinde. La Patria se defiende.

Hoy quiero hablarles especialmente de los trabajadores cubanos.

En los últimos meses, Cuba ha sufrido una grave crisis de su sistema eléctrico. Cuando se va la luz, no solo se va la luz: Se afectan el transporte, el agua, la producción y la conservación de alimentos y medicamentos.

No hablamos simplemente de estadísticas. Hablamos de vidas humanas: De pacientes en hospitales, de trabajadores con dificultades para llegar a sus centros y de familias que luchan por conservar los alimentos de sus hijos.

Pero quiero subrayar algo ante este Congreso:

Los trabajadores cubanos no son solamente víctimas de esta crisis.

Son quienes mantienen abiertos los hospitales, sostienen los servicios, producen alimentos, reparan instalaciones y buscan soluciones en condiciones extraordinariamente difíciles.

La resistencia de Cuba tiene también un rostro laboral: Millones de trabajadores que siguen haciendo funcionar un país bajo una enorme presión económica.

Cualquiera puede discrepar de nuestro sistema político. Pero ninguna diferencia política justifica imponer medidas de asfixia económica que terminen castigando a todo un pueblo y poniendo en riesgo la vida de millones de personas.

Ustedes lo saben bien, porque este mismo Congreso ha denunciado durante años el carácter extraterritorial del bloqueo, que también afecta a bancos y empresas británicas.

En medio de esta tormenta, Cuba sigue apostando por la cooperación y la solidaridad. Nuestra mayor arma es la certeza de que otro mundo mejor es posible.

Esa es la Cuba que represento: No la que pide lástima, sino la que resiste con dignidad.

Resistir no significa simplemente aguantar. Significa trabajar, crear y buscar alternativas.

Cuba trabaja para transformar su matriz energética, aumentar la producción de alimentos, fortalecer la soberanía energética y generar empleo.

El sol no se puede bloquear.

Y en esa resistencia, la solidaridad de ustedes dejó de ser una palabra y se hizo realidad.

Cuba Vive, respaldada por sindicatos británicos y por la Campaña de Solidaridad con Cuba, ya ha sobrepasado la cifra de medio millón de libras recaudadas y ha enviado quince grandes cargamentos de ayuda, incluidos equipos para hospitales, además de alimentos y suministros médicos.

Esto es para nosotros la solidaridad sindical: Trabajadores ayudando a trabajadores, no solo en palabras, sino con ayuda concreta.

Gracias al TUC, a la Campaña de Solidaridad con Cuba y a cada sindicato y trabajador que ha contribuido. Lo que ustedes hacen tiene consecuencias concretas y humanas en Cuba.

La solidaridad no es unilateral. Los trabajadores cubanos también entendemos qué significa defender a otros pueblos cuando lo necesitan.

Esta misma dignidad la exigimos para el pueblo palestino, con derecho a la paz, a la autodeterminación y al pleno respeto del derecho internacional.

Compañeras y compañeros:

Termino con tres peticiones.

Primero, que la hermandad entre la CTC y el TUC siga viva y se haga cada vez más profunda.

Segundo, que la solidaridad práctica, como Cuba Vive, siga creciendo: Necesitamos convertir la solidaridad política en soluciones prácticas.

Y tercero, que este movimiento sindical internacional siga firme en la defensa del derecho internacional, la soberanía y el derecho de los pueblos a decidir su propio destino, y por el fin de las medidas coercitivas unilaterales.

Porque cuando los derechos de un trabajador son atacados en cualquier lugar, los demás trabajadores tenemos una responsabilidad.

En nombre de la clase obrera cubana, mis más sinceras gracias, compañeras y compañeros.

Globalicemos la paz y la solidaridad, sembrando esperanzas.

¡Luchemos juntos por un mundo mejor! ¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre! Muchas gracias.

[English translation]

Comrades at the TUC Congress, I am here on behalf of the Cuban Workers' Federation, the CTC, to continue a history that began many years ago: The history of workers who recognise one another as comrades, even when they work in different countries and face different realities.

Comrades have stood here before representing the Cuban trade union movement, and they found what I value today: a trade union movement that understands that class solidarity knows no borders.

Cuban workers are living through extremely difficult times, but also through a time of resolve and profound love for our homeland. We demonstrate that commitment by supporting the construction of socialism and the transformations our country needs.

We are living through an extraordinarily difficult situation, and once again we must denounce the true culprit: the Government of the United States and its policy of blockade and economic strangulation.

Since 2019, the United States has unilaterally imposed hundreds of coercive measures against Cuba and has intensified the economic, energy and financial siege against our people. Indeed, since 2019, 240 measures have been imposed to tighten the blockade, alongside further coercive measures and financial and energy persecution.

Between March 2025 and February 2026, the economic damage caused by this policy exceeded 8 billion US dollars. The accumulated damage now amounts to more than 178 billion US dollars.

Cuba is not a threat; the blockade is.

At the same time, we reaffirm our humanist, internationalist and solidarity-based commitment, and our aspiration to live in peace and to build a society with everyone and for the good of all.

In this situation, the Government and the workers are seeking alternatives to ease these difficulties, promote research and find solutions with the active participation of our people.

Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro called on us to emancipate ourselves by ourselves and with our own efforts. And that is precisely what we are doing in this year in which we celebrate his centenary, convinced that only those who struggle achieve victory.

Defending the homeland means defending the lives and dreams of our children and young people, our families, our independence and sovereignty; rejecting terrorism, genocide and interference; and building a better world through solidarity, peace and love.

Cuba does not surrender. The homeland must be defended.

Today I want to speak to you especially about Cuban workers. In recent months, Cuba has suffered a severe crisis in its electricity system. When the power goes out, it is not simply a question of losing electricity: Transport, water supplies, production, and the preservation of food and medicines are all affected.

We are not talking simply about statistics. We are talking about human lives: patients in hospitals, workers struggling to reach their workplaces, and families fighting to preserve food for their children.

But I want to emphasise something to this Congress: Cuban workers are not simply victims of this crisis. They are the people who keep hospitals open, maintain essential services, produce food, repair facilities and seek solutions under extraordinarily difficult conditions.

Cuba's resistance also has a working-class face: Millions of workers who continue to keep a country going under enormous economic pressure.

People may disagree with our political system. But no political disagreement justifies imposing measures of economic strangulation that punish an entire people and put the lives of millions at risk.

You know this well, because this very Congress has denounced for years the extraterritorial application of the blockade, which also affects British banks and companies. The TUC's current Cuba motion likewise calls for opposition to the "extraterritorial application of U.S. sanctions".

Amidst this storm, Cuba continues to stand for cooperation and solidarity. Our greatest strength is the certainty that another, better world is possible.

That is the Cuba I represent: Not a Cuba asking for pity, but a Cuba that resists with dignity.

To resist does not simply mean to endure. It means to work, to create and to seek alternatives.

Cuba is working to transform its energy mix, increase food production, strengthen energy sovereignty and create jobs.

The sun cannot be blockaded.

And in that resistance, your solidarity has ceased to be a word and has become a reality.

Cuba Vive, supported by British trade unions and the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, has now raised more than half a million pounds and sent major consignments of assistance to Cuba, including medical equipment, food and medical supplies.

This is what trade union solidarity means to us: workers helping workers, not simply in words, but through practical action.

Thank you to the TUC, to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, and to every trade union and every worker who has contributed. What you are doing has concrete, human consequences in Cuba.

Solidarity is not a one-way street. Cuban workers also understand what it means to stand up for other peoples when they are in need.

We demand that same dignity for the Palestinian people, who have the right to peace, to self-determination and to full respect for international law.

Comrades, I will conclude with three requests.

First, that the brotherhood between the CTC and the TUC remains alive and grows ever deeper.

Second, that practical solidarity, such as Cuba Vive, continues to grow. We need to turn political solidarity into practical solutions.

And third, that this international trade union movement remains steadfast in defending international law, sovereignty, and the right of peoples to determine their own destiny, and in calling for an end to unilateral coercive measures.

Because when the rights of one worker are attacked anywhere, the rest of us workers have a responsibility.

On behalf of the Cuban working class, my most sincere thanks to you, comrades.

Let us globalise peace and solidarity, sowing seeds of hope.

Let us struggle together for a better world!

¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre!

Thank you very much.

(*Standing ovation and applause and cheers*)

The President: I am sure you will agree, Congress, that was suburb from Osnay.

SECTION 4 (CONTINUED): MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

The President: Thank you. We now move on. Delegates, we start with Section 4 of the General Council Report: Meeting the Challenges of the Future, which will cover Motions 75, 76 and Composite Motion 18. I now call Motion 75, Building real security. The General Council supports this motion with an explanation and I will call Paul Nowak to explain the General Council's position.

Building real security

The General Secretary: Thank you, President. The General Council supports Motion 75 with an explanation. In supporting this motion and the vital priorities it sets out, the General Council wish to reiterate their support and respect for all workers across our movement, including defence workers and public sector workers. Every worker, in every job, in every sector is a valued part of the trade union movement. In taking forward Motion 75, the General Council engage directly with those members. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Paul. So this will be moved by UCU, seconded by AUE and there will be a range of other speakers invited as well: GMB, Prospect, RMT, Unite, NEU and Community they have all indicated a wish to speak.

Jo Grady (*General Secretary, UCU*) moved Motion 75. *She said*: President, Conference Jo Grady, UCU General Secretary proudly to move Motion 75. Last year UCU supported by many other TUC delegates here at Congress said that our priority should be to invest in working people rather than the military. We passed a landmark Wages Not Weapons motion. But this debate, Congress, has not gone away. Since last year's Congress we have seen the US and Israel launch yet another war of aggression against the people of Iran. The hurt and devastation in Palatine and Sudan and beyond continues. Politicians have begun to talk as if there is no alternative to militarisation and that is because of national security. But our lives, Congress - our lives - they do not feel more secure because BAE Systems is getting another multi-billion pound contract. A global arms race does not make us feel safer. Security is having stable employment with a decent wage, being able to afford a home and afford to heat it; knowing that your children can go to a good school, college or university; being able to see the doctor when you need one; knowing your elderly relative can receive care; being equipped to face the climate crisis. That is what real security means for our class.

Right now, collectively, the majority of the population in the UK -- working people -- are denied these things. This is important, Congress, because this crisis is already here, it is not around the corner, so let me set out what we are calling for. Advancing our movement's vision of security based on decent work, public services, equality, climate action, democracy

and peace. To campaign for the genuine and sustained public investment in health, education, housing, social care and more. To raise awareness of our fundamental rights, including conscientious objection to compulsory military service. (*Applause*) And crucially, Congress, to uphold with others and respect international law.

Now I have seen voices this past week quoted in the media that the UCU pitting public against military spending was a right-wing argument. Congress, this is the most progressive motion on the agenda but the truth is there is a choice, because every pound spent on bombs does not get a homeless person off the street, it does not build a new school, it does not feed a hungry child, it does not help a desperate NHS, a crumbling transport infrastructure or the crucial need for a programme of insourcing and renationalisation. (*Applause*)

Some will say what about jobs in this area? We are all elected to lead and leadership requires bravery. We have to imagine a new world and we have to deliver it, Congress. Proper investment in real security requires skilled workers. Let's invest in an education system that will deliver them and let's invest in sectors that will employ them. A properly funded education system a country with sufficient housing, healthcare access, school places, decent work with proper wages. Do you know what that will do, Congress? It will stabilise our democracy. It will alleviate the scarcity of resources after decades of underinvestment and, in doing so, it will go a long way to eradicating the resentment that the far right thrive upon. So let's show the world watching that the UK trade union movement stands for peace, stands for justice and we stand for hope: for the people of Palestine, for the next generation, for the values of our movement. I move. (*Cheers and applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Jo. Seconded by AUE.

Lorraine Monk (*Vice-Chair, AUE*) seconded Motion 75. *She said*: Thanks to UCE for including our amendment. The creative arts are essential to create and sustain communities. Visual practice, music practice, theatre, all of them, give people joy as both makers and consumers. But they also improve and sustain health physically and mentally and act as an anchor supporting hope in a changing world. Sharing learning and creative arts across borders leads to better understanding of other people's histories, cultures and stories in that shared understanding of others' positions and histories, conflict resolution rather than war can be better served. Culture and art preserves past histories, explores and reflects the concerns of people living. It can represent ideas and ideals and because it does, it is often targeted by the right wing because they know the importance of that work; the banning of books and of art because they know how dangerous they are. Our world is fragmented, with wars, natural disasters and environmental catastrophes related to climate destruction, we need more than ever a powerful council of United Nations and we need to be speaking. New threats of powerful individuals controlling energy and communications, more powerful than any previous kings or dictators, controlling more wealth than many individual states; we need something to combat them.

Yesterday Trump, referring to China being a threat, observed, "Whoever controls AI, wins". War is a game; a game played by boys, win or lose. War is like an American football score.

We need peace negotiators, not warmongers. We need societies working together nationally and internationally in their communities, promoting ideas, sharing knowledge and looking after one another. Never has there been more urgency and more need for our government to invest in alternative energy and green policies. To create new jobs and new industries. As the North Sea gas industry will decline at some point new jobs can be created. Already there are offshore wind projects waiting for investment that could give a tremendous number of jobs which will give us cheaper energy as well. We human beings have such power in our minds, and in our hands and in our imagination, in our inventions and our creative works. Humanity has always managed to scrape through but it needs more than ever to use every skill, intelligence and knowledge, building on the past, challenging the present and looking to make a world that actually has a future. Congress, please support. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Lorraine. I now call GMB.

Lee Burgess (*GMB*) spoke in opposition of Motion 75. *He said*: President, Congress, Lee Burgess, GMB shipyard worker at BAE Systems in Barrow for 22 years. I am asking Congress to oppose this motion as a worker and trade unionist just like you. I will admit I am nervous; I am nervous this debate could divide a movement which is strongest when we stand together. You may have been told this motion is not about defence workers but it is. It supports a campaign to move investment from defence workers and give it to another group of workers. It shouldn't be wages verses weapons or public services versus defence. Our unions and the TUC represent workers in both and those workers deserve investment in both. (*Applause*)

Defence is not just about weapons. It is also about equipment and capability that protects us from cyber-attacks and natural disasters. If we are serious about real security let's campaign for investment in defence and public services. But this motion does not do that (*Applause*) Defence workers don't want war. We want our children to grow up in peace. Some of the things we build we hope never have to be used, but wanting peace doesn't mean leaving ourselves and our allies that need us most defenceless against new threats. My members manufacture and build some of the most complex and advanced equipment in the world and we should be proud of them.

Congress, we are a trade union movement, so ignore the sound bites and look at whose jobs this motion wants to take investment away from: Thousands of us highly skilled working-class trade union members across Britain. RMT seafarers, UCU members, teaching apprentices at BAE Systems. (*Applause*) Are we are seriously calling for our own members to have less investment in their jobs?

In Barrow, we have lived through defence cuts. We saw more than 14,000 shipyard jobs disappear. We lost generations of skills, experience and capability and our whole community paid the price. Working people paid the price. (*Applause*) And we are only just recovering. Congress, this comes down to solidarity and solidarity cannot be selective. My members and I have stood shoulder to shoulder with unions in this hall. We supported our teachers, firefighters, posties, NHS workers. When RMT members in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary fought

for their pay, 450 of our shipyard workers refused to cross their picket line. (*Applause*) Some were suspended because of it because that is what solidarity means to defence workers. Defence workers stood with you and we will stand with you again. But today we are asking to you stand with us because there won't be much of a trade union movement left if we start deciding which workers' jobs are worth fighting for. Unity works. Well if unity works it has to work for all of us. Please vote against this motion. Thank you. (*Cheers and applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Lee. Prospect.

Mike Clancy (*Prospect*) spoke in opposition to Motion 75. *He said*: Look, I am going to make an admission, which is unusual for a trade union General Secretary. I don't want to be up here speaking about this, certainly not for the second year running and that is because we reject the premise of the motion. We absolutely recognise there is a crisis in higher education and further education. We absolutely recognise there is a crisis in our schools. We absolutely recognise we have to re-build our public services. We absolutely recognise that our members in the MoD are public servants, but as Lee has said and others may as well, Congress, solidarity is a two-way street and when working people are united we can resolve our problems together. I do say to you bringing this again this year after the policy point was won last year runs the risk we are hanging a sign outside Congress House "Defence workers are not welcome here". What next? Is it nuclear workers? Are we going to make distinctions when workers do controversial things? Because this trade union movement is full of people who do important things for our nation which are sometimes controversial. We do not want to be in this position of this separation that we can't fund our public services and we can't fund

defence. If you are going to take a position in terms of defence spending, you have to ask yourself the question what is it. If you reject the idea we need to invest in our defences in terms of the new threats that are out there in security and in terms of global change what is the number? What number are you putting on defence spending? Let's have a proper debate not on the conference platform but one which actually influences the government for the good of all working people. Congress, unfortunately again we are asking you to oppose this motion, support defence workers, support all workers and not to make false distinctions in terms of those we value in this trade union movement. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Mike. I now call RMT.

Alex Gordon (*RMT*) spoke in support of Motion 75. *He said*: It is always good to have support from our comrades in the GMB but seafarers in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary are represented by the RMT and Nautilus and do not need the GMB to speak for them. Let's get something straight. Last year in this Congress we took a very important decision, a pivotal decision to reject the mistaken policy adopted by the Trade Union Congress three years earlier in 2022. That mistaken policy was to support demands for increases in military spending and that policy came in fact from a motion from GMB union. Let's be clear it is not the RMT, it is not the UCU, it is not UNISON, it is not any of the unions that opposed that policy that are dividing this movement. This movement is about fighting for jobs for public services, for investment in industries of the future that our young people, that our young workers need. Those industries are not military industries. The skills of the workers in the military sector are vital skills, vital skills that need to be used in civilian production. This year is the 50th anniversary

of the Lucas Aerospace workers' plan. We should learn from our own history, learn from the great people who came before us who had the vision to understand that we will not build a future for our children, we will not build a future for our fellow trade unionists by building nuclear bombs, by spending billions on Trident, by spending billions on American F35 fighters which are destroying the people of Palestine at this very moment.

Let's get something absolutely straight, Congress, let's be clear headed, the money that is being sucked up by the military sector in R&D, in development of the ORCUS programme in Barrow-in-Furness is money that should be spent on civilian jobs, on much-needed engineering and infrastructure improvements in this country and beyond. We can change the policy that this Government has adopted of cutting public services to pay for military spending but we need to get behind the UCU motion to do it. Congress, please support. (*Applause and cheers*)

The President: Thank you very much Alex. I now call UNITE.

Tony Reilly (*UNITE*) spoke in opposition to Motion 75. *He said*: I am a first-time delegate and speaker. (*Applause*) I am speaking here this morning asking you to oppose this motion. I am an engineer in the civil aerospace sector and I specialise in the manufacture of commercial aircraft engines. I am speaking not only on behalf of defence workers but on behalf of all workers.

Unity Works, Congress, that is the theme of this year's conference, and the principle at the heart of this debate. We cannot accept TUC policy that pits one set of workers against another. One group of workers does not need to fail in order for another to succeed. Congress, we understand and are supportive of the spirit of this motion. It is not weapons I stand here to defend but jobs, terms and conditions - all of them hard earned.

This motion treats the national economy as a household budget spending too much on aircraft and not enough on education. That is not how it works. Public investment in manufacturing, including in defence manufacturing, generates some of the best returns in private investment and supports the building of critical industrial supply chains. Let's take my company Rolls Royce, where unite has almost 15,000 members. These are workers with decent pay and conditions and robust collective bargaining. Rolls Royce is a defence company. It is also a civil aerospace company. It is also on the front-line of green transition, rolling out the production of small modular nuclear reactors.

Congress, we reject the false choice that in order to have secure jobs in defence the government must cut public services. Did closing the coalmines help the hospitals? Of course not. It comes down to political choices. Already this week we have debated and supported the right policies to break with the failed economics of the past. We support UNITE's motion on the economy calling for a reversal of public sector austerity by paying for day-to-day spending with a wealth tax. We are calling for reindustrialisation. This is a question of political will.

Congress, we can move the Government but we can only do it if we are united. Reject division. We must win for all workers. Congress, do not pit worker against worker, trade union member against trade union member. It is in the spirit of unity and solidarity that I ask you to oppose this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Tony. I am going to call NEU.

Joe Flynn (*NEU*) spoke in support of Motion 75. *He said*: Earlier this year the teachers' pension scheme was revalued. The revaluation was good news. Employer contributions will be significantly reduced saving around £3 billion. That money could have made a substantial difference in our education system which has seem cuts of £4.6 billion since 2010. Across the four largest public sector pension schemes, revaluations saved around £12 billion. Within one day, rather than announcing that that £12 billion would be used to begin rebuilding public services, a £15 billion increase in defence spending was announced. How coincidental. This is part of a plan to raise defence spending by £36 billion a year to £102 billion per year by 2035. These are staggering sums of money. Even with a wealth tax and windfall tax on big tech, they won't touch the sides. It is hard to see how the positive demands we have made this week can possibly be met with tens of billions more, not for current workers or jobs, going to prepare for war. The day after the local elections the then Defence Secretary John Healy responded to the poor labour results by demanding extra money for war, saying, "You can't give people hope without security" - a line worthy of George Orwell.

This motion sets out an alternative. What is real security? Nearly a million children in households reliant on food banks don't have security. People in unsafe or insecure housing don't have security. Workers on exploitative zero hours contracts don't have security. Colleagues working in dangerous over heated conditions in need of climate mitigations don't have security. One in five children worldwide already live within 50 kilometres of an armed conflict. They don't have security. We should show solidarity with them.

Our priorities as a movement and the Labour Government's priority should be to deliver these people security: to deliver warm homes, climate mitigation, secure jobs and to abolish food poverty by 2035, not £102 billion per year on weapons. Real security comes through a peaceful world; through supporting and strengthening international law and diplomacy, not through seeing Britain's role as appeasing Trump's demand for ever more arms spending.

The motion rightly endorses opposition to compulsory military service. This is a live issue in the UK and Europe. Germany has reintroduced voluntary conscription with the threat of compulsion if they don't get enough volunteers and here with the UK Chief of Defence Staff stating, "More families will know what sacrifice for our nation means."

I am in a classroom teaching children every week. I do not want the kids I teach or my own kids to grow up in a country unprepared to ensure their safety at work, decent jobs, wages and standard of living but where our leaders are prepared to sacrifice them in war. As the

labour movement we should lead the campaign against this war drive and prioritise a better future. Support the motion and build the campaign. Thank you. (*Applause and cheers*)

The President: Thanks very much, Joe. The final union is Community.

Andrew Gutteridge (*Community*) spoke against Motion 75. *He said*: I am an ex 29 Commando Royal Marine veteran. (*Applause*) Congress, I understand the sentiments of this motion and recognise it is being proposed with good intentions but, Congress, good intentions and blind faith will not keep our country safe.

I have served in our Armed Forces and I know we cannot ever take our national security for granted. It is vital that we have the means to not only defend ourselves but also our allies. The unprovoked, unjust and undemocratic war in Ukraine is one example. The UK has stood in solidarity with our fellow workers in Ukraine and their right to choose their own destiny. Much of the support has been diplomatic but we have also supplied Ukraine with crucial high-tech military equipment built by unionised workers in our defence industry.

Supported by our steel industry, there are tens of thousands of unionised workers represented by unions in this hall who rely on our defence industry for their livelihoods. If we forget our defence industry, we will lose the well paid unionised jobs, from the final assembly line all the way back to my steel industry, and it will be our communities and our families that will suffer as a result.

We all want our world to be more peaceful, to build solidarity across borders, to see a time when war is a distant thing of the past, but that is not the reality of the world we are living in. We instead live in a world where strong men want to dominate others and while those men exist, it will be our armed forces that we need to defend us.

Congress, I have been on the battlefield and I have friends who have bravely fought to defend our country, who bravely stood shoulder to shoulder in defence of the person next to them and who showed the ultimate bravery and gave their lives for the values that we in this hall hold closest to our hearts. Some of whom lost their lives because they did not have the equipment they needed when they needed it. I have seen this, Congress, and I still do see these things.

I ask you, Congress, if our armed forces are called to defend our rights against those that wish to harm, would you see them stay and fight with nothing but their bare hands? Because if you would then you are not advancing the ideals raised in this motion. You are instead empowering those forces in the world that would see them torn down.

Congress, this is not a motion that will advance real security, freedom and workers' rights. It instead leaves us at the mercy of those that would tear them away. A motion that if implemented by the Government would mean lives being lost. Congress, I implore and I beg you oppose this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Andrew. Do UCU wish to exercise their right of reply? Thank you, Jo.

Jo Grady (*UCU*) exercised a right of reply. *She said*: I absolutely do, President. Jo Grady here to exercise my right of reply. I want to thank you everybody who has spoken in this debate. Lee from the GMB this won't divide our movement. It can unite our movement. Let's have this out now. So much of what we do here is possessional, but our movement is built on debate. It is built on having it out and then coming together. You say some things we build and we hope never to be used. Lee, I am sorry but the weapons that are used are used to rain down hell on earth in Palestine right now. (*Applause*) You fought all your life. It is time to fight for something different and something that builds real security.

Mike from Prospect, this is building on last year's policy. This is not about how we value workers, it is about fiercely and proudly being anti-war, anti-genocide and having difficult and honest conversations. Please stop talking about divisions caused by motions whilst thousands of people have lost their lives because this nation has handed weapons over to Israel and others. (*Applause*)

Alex from the RMT, spot on: ambition, hope, peace, justice. Our vision was once the norm and we want that back.

Tony from UNITE, I am sorry but you are not speaking on behalf of all workers. Jobs, Terms and Conditions is a powerful slogan, and it has had a brilliant impact in UNITE, but it is not something we can hide behind because we know the devastation these weapons cause. Let's have more green jobs at Rolls Royce. Let's think about how we build a future that is secure for everyone. You said it comes down to political choices. Yes it does and I choose, our union chooses to invest not in military spending.

To our NEU delegate, brilliant speech. Someone as a teacher living and breathing the impact of reduced education spending alongside increased military spending. I want to say something on Thatcher, actually. I was born in 1984 to a striking miner. I know exactly what the devastation is for communities where funding is withdrawn, but let's not pretend this motion is somehow equivalent with Thatcher. She wanted to crush a community and an industry and a set of workers. She was not looking to move that investment into our sectors, into our communities. This is not the same. (*Applause*)

And to our final speaker, I was 17 when we saw the Iraq war, when we saw the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. I do not need macho men defending me. Most of the young men that I was friends with at that time enlisted in the army and came back traumatised and wounded and have never been the same. (*Applause*) For every story you could tell, there is a different story of trauma and misery. So please support the motion and keep building this campaign. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Jo. I will say before we go to the vote that all the speakers have been extremely passionate defending their positions, their unions and their workers. I think on the whole it was pretty respectful to each other as well. I thank you all for that because unity does work. (*Applause*) So, without further ado, we are going to go to the vote. All those in favour of the motion, please show? All those against the motion, please show? The motion is carried. (*Applause*)

*Motion 75 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Motion 76, End the siege of Cuba. The General Council support the motion. It will be moved by POA and seconded by PCS. I will also be calling Equity.

A Speaker: Point of order, Chairman. Can we have a counted vote?

The President: I am not going to do that for the simple reason that from this position up here, it was clearly carried, so I am not going to go to a card vote. (*Applause*)

End the siege of Cuba

Phil Hannant (*POA*) moved Motion 76. *He said*: I am a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Seven years ago, the POA stood in room to move a POA motion condemning Donald Trump's escalating economic warfare against Cuba. The POA said then that these were worrying times and that the Cuban people needed our solidarity. Congress, today the situation is immeasurably more dangerous. Since January, the Trump Administration has imposed what amounts to an energy siege on Cuba, threatening countries that supply the island with oil. Cuba has desperately tried to overcome the crisis by expanding renewable energy so the States started targeting companies involved in Cuba's energy sector and sanctioned shipping companies supplying solar panels, medicines and food. At every turn when Cuba finds another way to keep the lights on, medicines flowing and its economy functioning, Washington looks for another way to close it down.

Let's be absolutely clear about what is happening. This is economic warfare designed to make everyday life unbearable, to create hunger, desperation and suffering in the hope that this will produce political change, and it is the ordinary Cuban people who are paying the price. Families are surviving on two hours or less of electricity a day, food spoils because there is no refrigeration. Water cannot be pumped. Public transport is on its knees. Hospitals struggle without reliable electricity, medicines or essential equipment. Infant mortality has risen 148% from four per thousand live births in 2018 to 9.9 last year. Cancer survivor rates among children and young people have fallen from 85% to 65%. As Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodrígues Parilla said last week, "These are children; they are not numbers."

Congress, this is a collective punishment and now economic warfare is being accompanied by increasingly open threats of military intervention. Donald Trump has talked about taking Cuba. Mark Rubio has openly called for regime change. When Trump was asked whether still greater pressure could be put on Cuba, he said, "There is little more that can be done unless you go in and smash the place up."

Our response as trade unionists must be unequivocal: hands off Cuba. That is why the POA submitted Motion 76. It calls on our Government to oppose the extra-territorial application of US sanctions, reject any US military intervention, provide humanitarian assistance and defend Cuban sovereignty and the right of self-determination. For more than three decades Britain has voted at the United Nations against the blockade, but, Congress, voting once a year and then returning to business as usual is no longer enough. If our Government believes the blockade is wrong it must act like it. It must defend British companies, banks and organisations against US sanctions. It must provide meaningful humanitarian assistance and it must make absolutely clear that Britain will oppose any attempt at military intervention. Our movement has already shown what solidarity looks like. Twenty-eight trade union General Secretaries have signed the Cuba Solidarity Campaign's urgent call for peace and sovereignty. Unions have passed motions, lobbied government and sent delegations to support the Cuba Vive appeal. Together the trade unions and TUC supporters have raised more than half a million pounds and delivered 14 consignments of medicine and food. That is an extraordinary achievement, but we should never lose sight of the obscenity that makes it necessary. Trade unions should not have to raise money to replace medical supplies Cuba cannot buy because banks fear US penalties and British unions should not be providing

humanitarian assistance while our Government provides virtually none. Cuba does not need charity. It needs the blockade to end. Whatever anybody thinks about Cuba's political system, no Government has the right to deprive another country of food, medicine and fuel.

This is a fundamental trade union internationalist principle and the passing of this motion cannot be the end of our responsibilities. Take it back to your unions, regions and branches. Support Cuba Vive. Affiliate to the CFC. Send delegations and young members on solidarity brigades. Lobby MPs and Ministers. Build solidarity in our workplaces so today we can send a message to Washington and our own Government. British trade unions will not remain silent when the entire population is subject to collective punishment and we can send the important message to Osnay and our Cuban sisters and brothers: Stop Trump! Vive Cuba! Support the motion. (*Applause*) Dead on time.

The President: I expect no less from the POA. Thanks very much, Phil, for that. I made a slight error when I said that it was PCS who was seconding it. It was actually UNISON to second, so can we have the UNISON speaker please and PCS, if you wish, I will take you as a speaker as well in relation to supporting it.

Micaela Tracey-Ramos (*Vice President, UNISON*) seconded Motion 76. *She said*: Congress, earlier this year Donald Trump proclaimed, "I can do anything I want with Cuba." This disgraceful comment is entirely reflective of the US policy and attitude in Latin America and came at a time in which the US was escalating its aggression in ways which should alarm all

of us who believe in sovereignty and peace. This Trump Administration has signed an Executive Order declaring Cuba an "unusual and extraordinary threat", repeating the lie that Cuba harbours terrorists. Imagine that, the hypocrisy of the US, the facilitator of real state terrorism labelling Cuba as such. (*Applause*) This Administration, determined to crush Cuba, has deprived them of oil since January. In practice, this means 22 hour a day power cuts. It means surgeries under torch light, hospitals unable to function and food unable to be transported and kept. Today, the oil blockade, the inclusion on the spurious state sponsor of terrorism list and the economic blockade in the country has meant 12,000 children waiting for essential surgeries, infant mortality has doubled and over half of Cuba's essential medicines are unavailable. Congress, as our comrade Colina said earlier, these measures are costing real people's lives in Cuba. I am proud that my union UNISON has long-standing solidarity with the people of Cuba that goes back for over 30 years. We supported aid during the special period and we initiated the Cuba Vive! Campaign. And through this initiative we have raised over half a million pounds in medical aid.

This is an incredible achievement for our movement, but, Congress, we must do more. We must mobilise our members to fund raise for Cuba and redouble our efforts for the blockade to be lifted. But now Congress, let's speak directly to the British Government do not stand idly by and watch this violation of international law and human rights. Send humanitarian aid to Cuba like Mexico and Brazil. It is not enough to oppose the blockade at the United Nations. You must do more to denounce the illegality of the economic and oil blockade, protect organisations in Britain from the extraterritorial measures of US sanctions and, critically, be prepared to reject any US military intervention of Cuba. Because, Congress, it is our

responsibility as trade unionists to step up and for our collective voice to be heard and our political demands to be heard by this Government. Because Cuba has always stood for the world, so now in its moment of greatest need we must stand with them. Viva Cuba! (*Applause and cheers*)

The President: Thank you very much and well presented. I will now call Equity.

Sam Swann (*Equity*) spoke in support of Motion 76. *He said*: Congress we owe huge gratitude from our movement to the people of Cuba for their resilience, resistance and inspiration. It is not just an abstract idea. It is actually existing socialism facing deliberate existential threats from the global superpower. The Cuban people are some of the bravest comrades of our movement's history whose existence every day is a challenge to capitalism and a challenge to imperialism, capitalism's highest stage.

Cuba is a country that for our culture sector shows that there is an alternative. As our comrade Colina said earlier, "A better world is possible." In Cuba, actors and musicians get a basic income through state support. All education including arts education is free up and to and including university, as well as their famous music and theatre academies. Fidel Castro said that culture is the nation; it is the shield and sword that protects its independence and collective self-awareness. But the culture sector in Cuba faces devastating consequences as a result of the US's callous aggression that has caused power cuts of up to 30 hours, forcing key cultural institutions to suspend performances and night life, decimating the incomes of

thousands of those workers. Despite this, Cuban workers have carried on performing shows during daylight hours in schools, town squares and communities in order to maintain the shield and sword that protect Cuba's independent and collective self-awareness.

If the ruling class thinks that socialism is doomed to fail on its own, why do they put so much time, effort and resources into meddling, sabotage and attacks. If capitalism is so inherently superior, why does it need barbaric interventions to maintain dominance?

In Cuba, there is a higher literacy rate than the US. It has the highest number of doctors per capita in the world and, before the siege, Cuba had a lower infant mortality rate than the USA. Rather than the ruling class of the richest country in the world feeling humbled or perhaps even inspired by Cuban achievements, instead they seek to crush the Cuban spirit. They will of course fail. Solidarity is not simply words. It must be concrete practical industrial support.

In the face of the US blockades and the impact on the creative and cultural sector, Equity's Council provided financial contributions to the Cuban National Union of Cultural Workers to provide solar-powered vehicles. When we met with comrades from Cuba CTC yesterday they said that the aid is appreciated but it is solidarity that means the world. We want them to know that Cuba means the world to us. Solidarity always! Viva Cuba! (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Sam. The final union PCS.

Bluebell Eikonoklastes (*President, PCS*) spoke in support of Motion 76. *They said*: President, comrades, fellow workers, I am proudly speaking in support of this motion. I would like to thank the POA for submitting this excellent motion. I would like to thank our Cuban comrade for coming all this way and I would like to thank all the previous speakers absolutely in solidarity and agreement with all that you have said.

So, what can I say? I commend the amazing work done by so many trade unionists supporting the Cuban workers. Our support for fellow workers worldwide is a long tradition. It is our fellow workers in Cuba that have our full unconditional solidarity whatever regime they or we are labouring under. Cuba has a right to independence and sovereignty and there can be no excuse for the oppression that the United States has shown so Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America, including the death squads in El Salvador and the coup in Chile. When I was at college a lecturer had been to Nicaragua after the revolution and she spoke of how in Central America you can really feel the weight of the oppressive armed to the teeth entity that the USA.

As trade unionists, democracy is at the heart of everything we do. Democracy is the greatest force for civilisation. Everywhere we support free and independent trade unionists and the right to strike and it is time that our comrades in the POA had that right. I stand in full solidarity with our trans, intersex and non-binary comrades. Free Palestine! Viva Cuba! Support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much for that, Bluebell. I am now going to the vote on Motion 76. All those in favour please show. All those against please show? That motion is carried. (*Applause*)

*Motion 76 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Composite Motion 18. The General Council support this composite motion with an explanation. I will call on Paul Nowak to give the explanation on behalf of the General Council once moved by AUE and seconded by UNISON, supported by UNITE and NEU. AUE please move.

Palestine

(*Composing Motion 70*)

Zita Holbourne (*AUE*) moved Composite Motion 18. *She said:* We must stand firm with the Palestinian-led BDS movement, a global campaign involving over 170 Palestinian civil society organisations. It calls for non-violent economic and political pressure to urge Israel to comply with international law and for BDS to be used to bring pressure on Israel. Many national UK trade unions have a BDS policy. Civil and human rights boycotts have existed throughout history, including the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the USA and the Bristol Bus Boycott here in the UK which led to the first race legislation. One of the largest historical boycotts was against

apartheid in South Africa, something I experienced the horrors of first hand as a child. I grew up in a family participating in the boycott campaign and I organised and led student boycotts of banks and stores such as Barclay's and Sainsbury. This global campaign was started by the anti-apartheid movement here in the UK. I am proud to be a trustee of its successor ACTSA and to have played a part in this history. It was joined by artists, musicians, health workers, architects, lawyers, educators, dock and transport workers and included sports and cultural boycotts. Young workers at Dunnes Stores refused to handle South African products, striking for three years. A play was written telling their story. When the playwright Tracey Ryan and I facilitated workshops for school drama students, they immediately made the link with what is happening in Palestine today. Artists including our members of AUE are facing censorship and is cancellation because they created work in support of Palestine. I co-signed a letter condemning the removal of art about Palestine by two artists in the Royal Academy's young artists' summer show. Arts Council England (ACE) faced a huge backlash when they changed their guidelines on reputational risk and we challenged ACE on this, raising concerns that ACE-funded organisations were being encouraged to ignore calls to engage with BDS and undermine freedom of expression on Palestine.

Art has a long and powerful history of standing against oppression and for human rights. As a socially engaged artist, it is the foundation for my creative practice. It was good to see yesterday several music artists stand with rapper Macklemore when he was removed from Ed Sheeran's tour for supporting Palestine and all support artists on that tour have removed themselves from it in solidarity with Palestine and with Macklemore. (*Applause*) One of those artists Finneas stated, "Artists must not be silenced when they speak up for the oppressed."

Whilst recently the UK Government has accepted the July 2024 international Court of Justice ruling, and that is welcomed, it is not enough and we as a movement must push for more.

Palestinian civil society, including unions, has reiterated the call for the international community to implement BDS against ongoing crimes of genocide, apartheid and occupation. The genocide has continued for almost three years. Over 73,000 people have been killed and many thousands are missing. The vast majority of people in Gaza are living in makeshift accommodation without adequate protection from extreme weather. Babies, the elderly and disabled are most at risk. Israel continues to withhold aid, food, power and water from Gaza, with growing attacks on humanitarian organisations limiting food and medical support on the ground. Remaining hospitals are struggling without power or medical suppliers. More than 95% of schools have been destroyed, which leaves the majority of children with no formal education. On the West Bank, settlor state and military violence have dramatically escalated. More than 70 Palestinians have been killed in settlor attacks across the West Bank just this year, including children.

Palestinian unions have just issued a global call for action this November to end complicity in the ongoing genocide and apartheid. It is essential that the trade union movement leads the way in answering this call and to provide support to members challenging complicity from their employers, corporations and institutions. Please support the International Day for Palestine on 10 October. Support the PCS TUC conference on 14th November. Support the Workplace Day of Action on 26th November and please give your wholehearted support this for this motion. Free Palestine! Free free Palestine! I move. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Zita. I now call UNISON.

Margaret McKee (*UNISON*) seconded Composite 8. *She said*: Congress, Palestine has always been an international priority for UNISON and I am proud that we were amongst the first unions in Europe to put BDS at the heart of our campaigning on support of our demand for justice, rights and a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel. BDS is a policy we have worked hard to put into practice, demanding that the companies our pensions invest in and those we procure from don't profit from the occupation and don't contribute to grave violations of international law or indeed to genocide. We all have a responsibility to continue and build on this work in response to the call from the Palestinian people.

Congress, it was shortly after we met a year ago that he so-called ceasefire in Gaza was announced, but relief soon turned to desperation as the bombardment, air strikes and gunfire continued, killing at least 1,300 more Palestinians, and that death toll is rising every day. And now with the Israeli military controlling over two-thirds of Gaza and the population confined to an ever-decreasing strip of land, the overcrowded camps are suffering a catastrophic public health crisis.

Congress, in the West Bank the situation is getting even more desperate by the day, with settlors attacking Palestinians with impunity, Palestinian homes demolished at an unprecedented rate, while illegal settlement construction takes place at record levels. Food insecurity is widespread, starvation rife, essential medicines in short supply and public service

workers remaining unpaid as the Israeli Government withholds the customs revenues it owes to the Palestinian Authority.

So Congress, over 73,000 and nearer 74,000 people have been murdered in Gaza since 7th October. The new leadership of the Labour Government has at long last started to take meaningful steps to uphold international law in relation to the settlements by banning the trade of goods and some services and further restricting arms sales. We now have a huge task to make sure that other nations follow the lead and that Labour's comprehensive re-set means robust measures in support of justice, rights and a two-state solution, and of course, we will continue to call for the motion we proposed at last year's Labour Party Conference to be implemented in full. This means fully suspending the arms trade and fully suspending the UK-Israel trade and partnership agreement until human rights and international law are respected. If this Government does not do this, you are still being complicit in the genocide of the Palestinian people, and we as a trade union must do everything we can to end the genocide in Palestine. Congress, please support this motion and make BDS central to all our union this campaign. Free Palestine! (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Margaret. I now call Unite.

Megan de Meo (*Unite*) spoke in support of Composite 8. *She said*: I am a first-time delegate, first-time speaker. (*Applause*) In supporting this composite, I am stressing the importance of engaging with union members and reps in the most affected sectors so that when we take

action we do so from a position of collective power, because that is the only and greatest tool that we have when standing with the people of Palestine. (*Applause*) Congress, there is nobody in this hall and nobody in this movement who has not watched Israel's brutal onslaught in Gaza with complete horror: the murder of children, the targeting of hospitals and of aid distribution centres, the workers who lie dead and silenced in the rubble. It appears to be beyond words, but it is not. There are words for this and we must not shy away from them: ethnic cleansing/genocide.

Congress, our brothers and sisters in Palestine call for our support. We have a duty to stand with them. We welcome the Government's recent announcement on illegal settlement trade as an important step forward towards lasting peace in the Middle East. This Congress must demand the Labour Government uses its international position to bring an end to the genocide and find a negotiated solution. We must demand our Government places effective and immediate sanctions on the Israeli economy, including the seizure of assets held in the UK. And Congress, we led the way in calling for the recognition of the state of Palestine as part of a two-state solution.

For our part, Congress, our support for the Palestinians must be practical as well as political. We must put our collective strength to the task of stopping UK complicity in the genocide and the flouting of international law and Congress remember it is the regimes and the Governments responsible that need to be condemned, not the workers. UNITE stands with our fellow unions in being committed to supporting worker-led campaigns to boycott the handling of Israeli goods and services. Let us not forget that to be effective these must be

worker led because the language of our movement is not statements, it is power: power in our workplace and power in our communities.

One of the proudest moments in the history of my union was the blockade of Pinochet's Chile by Rolls Royce workers in East Kilbride who refused to supply aircraft to the fascist Pinochet Government. Worker-led solidarity was so impactful and it must be again. Congress, let us recommit ourselves not to solidarity with the people of Palestine. Free Palestine. Support this Composite. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Megan. As a first-time speaker that was extremely well delivered. Well done. NEU.

Ed Harlow (*Joint President, NEU*) spoke support of Composite 8. *He said:* Earlier this year I was lucky enough to go on a delegation. We went to Jordan and I went it with leaders from sister unions EIS and UCU through Education International, a global umbrella organisation of the education unions with 15 international education trade unions leaders from Argentina to Australia and South Africa to Singapore. We were invited by the General Union of Palestinian Teachers to stand with our brothers and sisters in that union in the West Bank on the International Day of Education. Unfortunately, we did not get in. We were detained by the Israeli military at the border and we were searched, our phones were taken, we were detained for several hours and then we were forcibly deported back to Jordan. It was an unpleasant, scary and de-humanising experience, but absolutely nothing compared to the

punishment that Israel rains down on the Palestinian people day after day. It was a co-ordinated attempt to isolate our brothers and sisters in the Palestinian trade union movement from the global community, and it is in response that we must isolate the genocidal regime in Israel as this motion calls for. Why do they not want us in the West Bank seeing what they are doing? It is simple, Congress: 21,000 children lie dead beneath the rubble of Gaza since 7th October, nearly three years ago. Children like Wafa - eight years old murdered last Monday with her father by an Israeli strike on her way back from the first day of the new school year - and 45,000 more children injured.

A UN Commission in Gaza found lifelong trauma caused by separation, injury, orphanhood, disability, repeated displacement, starvation, torture and the use of sexual violence targeted at children by Israeli military, alongside the almost total destruction of healthcare and education infrastructure. The UN Commission said that this amounted to the erasure of childhood itself in Gaza. The Chair of that Commission said, "By targeting children, Israel is attacking the very capacity of the Palestinian people to exist and to determine their future." In the West Bank, children are routinely prevented from attending school and movement is restricted.

Nelson Mandela said, "The most powerful weapon you can use to change the world is education." Well, it is the only weapon I want my kids exposed to. It is the only weapon I want your kids exposed to and it is the only weapon we should ever tolerate the children of Palestine being exposed to. (*Applause*)

Lasting peace and justice and security will be delivered in the classroom, not from the bomb bay doors of F35s. Free Palestine! (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Ed, for that contribution. I will now call on the General Secretary Paul Nowak to give the explanation on behalf of the General Council.

The General Secretary: Thank you, President. The General Council support Composite 18 with an explanation. This motion calls on the TUC to urge the Government to impose wide-ranging sanctions on Israel until it complies with international law, and to support Palestinian-led boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns in support of Palestine. It calls for an end to all arms trade and military co-operation with Israel, to comply with international law, and to campaign for legislation banning trade with the illegal settlements and suspension of the UK-Israel trade and partnership agreement until international law is respected.

This is in line with previous Congress policy which calls for a total ban on all trade which aids or assists Israel's violations of international law, including with Israel's illegal settlements.

In taking forward this Composite, the TUC will work in partnership and consult with our sister trade union centre, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, our own affiliated trade unions and the General Council. The General Council support member-led action that

has been agreed by their union, operates within the law and respects all workers. With that, we urge you to support Composite 18. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Paul. I call on NASUWT.

Matt Wrack (*NASUWT*) spoke in support of Composite 18. *He said*: We are supporting the composite but making a point about some elements of how we build campaigning on this issue. While we have seen horror unfold in the genocide in Gaza, we have also seen some inspiration around the world as people have protested globally against what is happening, particularly among young people and trade unions can play a key part in that.

This movement has a long history of engaging on international issues particularly around the issue of the rights of the Palestinian people but we also want to raise the issue about what is happening within Israeli society and a number of unions in Congress have over years had dialogue with various organisations, and the truth is that, while there are horrific levels of racism among certain groups of Israeli voters, and we see that reflected in the fascist statements of Israeli Ministers, there are also possibly small but nevertheless opposition voices as well.

Affiliates in this room today have previously had dialogue with, for example, the Workers' Advice Centre, with Peace Now, with B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organisation, with

Standing Together. In other words, there are people within Israeli society, there are Israel Jewish citizens opposed to what is happening and unfolding on the West Bank and in Gaza.

I would ask Congress to think for a moment about the Vietnam war. The Vietnam war was a vicious colonial war. Eventually American forces were defeated by the Vietnamese people, but one important element in that struggle was opposition within the United States among young people and students and increasingly among the American troops themselves.

In Israel, we do not have that scale of opposition yet, but there are young Jewish Israeli citizens in prison today for refusing to serve in the occupied territories in the West Bank or in Gaza. They are part and parcel of this movement, too. We need to build an international movement. We need to build that in trade unions, among young people, and that includes some of those heroic people, Jewish citizens of Israel being beaten up and arrested on the streets of Tel Aviv and elsewhere for their opposition to the genocide in Gaza and for the ethnic cleansing taking place on the West Bank. Thanks, Congress. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Matt. I know there was a range of unions that had indicated they wished to speak on this issue but because of time constraints, I am only going to take two of those unions which is PCS and CWU. I hope you understand and apologise if you had prepared as if you were going to speak.

Rachel Heemskerk (*PCS*) spoke in support of Composite 8. *She said*: In full support of this motion. Did you all have a good night's sleep in a comfortable bed, not worrying about a bomb coming and killing you? Did you walk today through streets that are not rubble because of a war; an unjust genocide? This is not acceptable. Unions must stand together. We must fight. We must do what the Palestinian workers are asking us to do. We have got the luxury of sitting here comfortable. We have got the luxury of having a job that we can go back to on Monday. (Sorry I didn't mean to say that!) But we have got luxuries. We are so lucky and we must stand firm against this unjust attack on our Palestinian siblings and comrades. We must support this motion and we must continue the fight to free Palestine. (*Applause*)

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

Sajid Shaikh (*CWU*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 8. *He said*: Conference, we have watched with horror as Israel has continued the genocide in Gaza and intensified settlors' terrorism in the West Bank, escalated its war and aggression across the region. Tens of thousands of civilians killed, millions displaced in cities and villages reduced to rubble.

The Government's decision to sanction illegal Israeli settlements was an important step but, given the scale of the urgency of this crisis, falls short of what is required. Sanctioning settlements right because of the unlawful immoral facilitating of profiteering from the theft of Palestinian land and the violence used to enforce it. However, the settlements sit on the fringes of Israel's economic sanctioning. That alone will not create the economic

consequences necessary to force the end of Israel's criminal conduct, and the UK cannot ignore its own responsibilities. The International Court of Justice ruled that Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territories is unlawful and that states have obligations not to recognise, support or assist in maintaining the illegal situation. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant for war crimes against humanity.

The UK's legal obligations are clear. The UK must ensure that its arms trade, arm sales, investment and other economic relations do not facilitate the violation of international law. That means going beyond the sanctions announced so far with comprehensive sanctions and an arms embargo and the end of the economic atrocity which supports Israel's crimes. The demands of Palestinian civil society is clear: boycott, divestment and sanctions.

Congress, it falls for us as the trade union movement to act. We must use our collective political strength and demand that the Government goes further, ensuring that Israel and those profiteering from their crimes face meaningful economic consequences. Where the Government fails to act, the trade unions cannot simply stand aside. We can press employers and institutions to divest ---

The President: Sajid, it is a red light, can you finish off, please.

Sajid Shaikh: Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

The President: That is very kind of you, thank you. Congress, I am now going to move to the vote on Composite Motion 18. All those in favour please show? All those against? The motion is carried.

*Composite 18 was **CARRIED.***

The President: I now call paragraph 4.4 to 4.7 and Motion 78, Solidarity with Ukrainian workers. The General Council support this motion. Moved by the NUM, seconded by GMB and I will call UCU and ASLEF to also speak.

Solidarity with Ukrainian workers

Chris Kitchen (*NUM*) moved Motion 78. *He said*: Congress, Ukrainian trade unionists are calling on delegates at this year's TUC Congress to stand with them by supporting the National Union of Mineworkers' motion. Since Russian forces seized the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, workers have faced a campaign of intimidation, violence and coercion, all aimed at forcing them to accept Russian citizenship and sign contracts with Rosatom Russia's state corporation for atomic energy. Of the 11,000 workers who operated Europe's largest nuclear power station before the occupation, only 3,000 remain. At least 1,000 have endured psychological abuse and torture. The situation places nuclear safety across Europe at serious

risk. Fifteen members of the Nuclear Energy Industrial Workers' Union of Ukraine Atomprofspilka have been abducted, tortured and sentenced to prison terms of up to 25 years after show trials on fabricated charges. Some NUM members will recognise a similarity with what happened to them 42 years ago. Among them is Serio Portiena(?), a Youth Council member, whose wife was tortured before he himself was abducted, beaten, accused of terrorism and jailed for 20 years.

The persecution of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant workers is a deliberate part of Russia's war on the Ukrainian people; a war that has killed thousands. Since 2014, Ukrainian trade unionists have faced systematic attacks, independent unions banned in occupied areas, union leaders murdered and workers exploited under Russian colonial rule. The NUM motion calls for a campaign for the release of all detained Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant union members, and to stand with Ukrainian workers who continue to live and work under conditions of constant Russian terror, bombardment and occupation. Stand with Ukraine workers, defend trade unionists under attack. Please support the NUM motion. Slava Ukraini! (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Chris.

Barbara Plant (*National President, GMB*) seconded Motion 78. *She said*: I am proudly seconding Motion 78. Can I start by paying tribute to our union sister Ivanna Khrapko from the FPU in Ukraine, who has attended Congress all week. Ivanna narrowly avoided Russian

attacks to get to the UK via the Polish border. It is a testament to not only Ivanna's courage and determination but those of the Ukrainian people that she can be here with us. (*Applause*)

GMB recently welcomed a delegation from the Ukraine Nuclear Energy Workers' Union in a visit that reaffirmed the deep bond of solidarity between our two movements. As a union whose members build new nuclear plants and handle decommissioning, GMB was proud to open its doors to colleagues who share the same trade, the same pride and same commitment to the people they represent. Our members were horrified at the reality facing Ukrainian workers at the Zaporizhzhia plant, the largest nuclear facility in Europe, which remains under Russian occupation. Their accounts were harrowing. Workers and their families abducted, tortured and imprisoned by occupying Russian forces. These are conditions that no worker anywhere should have to face. Our members building Sizewell C nuclear power station stand shoulder to shoulder with them and all workers in Ukraine. We will keep standing with them every day until Ukraine is free.

But solidarity means more than warm words, Congress, so our union has made two lasting commitments. We will twin our Sizewell C branch with our sister branch in Ukraine, binding our members together in a partnership built to endure. And on every Ukraine Independence Day, 24th August, we will send a donation in recognition of the workers who keep Ukraine's lights on in the darkest circumstances. Every worker should be able to go to work and be safe.

We look forward to the day we can meet Ukrainian members in their country, liberated from Russian aggression and occupation. Until that day comes, our solidarity will not waver. We

call on the whole movement to do the same. It was disappointing that the war in Ukraine was not mentioned in the earlier debate on wages, not weapons. Support this motion. Stand with Ukrainian workers. Thank you. I second. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Barbara. I call UCU.

Vicky Blake (*UCU*) spoke in support of Motion 78. *She said*: Please focus on the words of this motion which calls specifically for solidarity building with fellow trade unionists which should not be conditional on decisions of their Government. If solidarity with us depended on international opinion of our Government, we would be in trouble. Our sibling trade unionists are organising in immediate danger, defending workers' rights and democracy amid Putin's full-scale invasion. They deserve clear and practical solidarity from our movement now and in the rebuilding of a truly free and democratic Ukraine.

Last night at the Ukraine Solidarity campaign fringe we heard from fellow trade unionist Ivanna Khrapko describe ordinary trade union workers doing extraordinary things to keep public services, infrastructure and education going. Teaching, meeting, organising often in bunkers and always under threat. Workers face violence and coercion to accept Russian citizenship and contracts and we have seen them be subjected to sentences of up to 25 years following trials on fabricated charges. Leaders of 22 UK unions including UCU have called on our Government to act. The freedom of trade unionists everywhere should concern every union here.

In 2022, on an ETC solidarity mission to Rumania and Moldova, I met Ukrainians desperate to return home. Educators continued teaching online and in borrowed classrooms caring for children and older relatives and missing loved ones in Ukraine, and their determination to return and rebuild under lined the importance of self-determination Rumanian and Moldovan unions were organisation accommodation and support, sharing sometimes scarce resources and listening to what was needed. Colleagues who travelled to Ukraine have powerfully described the experiences and responsibilities we share.

By July, figures published by UNESCO recorded over 4,600 educational institutions damaged, destroyed and targeted, and behind those figures are colleagues trying to teach, students trying to learn and communities whose futures depend on them. Human Rights Watch have documented educators threatened, detained and tortured for resisting Russian occupation authorities and workers refusing occupiers' demands imprisoned and tortured. This is recorded.

So, reaffirming Congress's solidarity means campaigning for the prisoner's release, working through ETUC and ITUC to support all workers under occupation. For our union that means work such as supporting displaced educators and students, developing university and college links and backing educational appeals identified by Ukraine unions, but it means defending workers' rights to organise and shape reconstruction with collective bargaining, public services and education at its heart. Please support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much. The two final unions, ASLEF and then Unite.

Simon Weller (*ASLEF*)spoke in support of Motion 78. *He said*: I am a trade unionist. I oppose imperialism in all its forms. I am a trade unionist; I am an anti-imperialist. It does not matter whether that imperialism comes from Washington or it comes from Moscow. If it quacks like a duck, it walks like a duck: it is imperialism.

We have seen a rise in the attacks on trains. Last night there was an attack on a Ukrainian passenger train by Russian weaponry. Some 62 rail workers have been killed by Russian aggression in the last four years. I have visited Kyiv. I have been to railway depots in Kyiv. Really any excuse to see electric locomotives! However, we were there standing shoulder to shoulder with those Ukraine drivers and those Ukrainian rail workers.

We are also seeing in the occupied zones the Russian suppression of free trade unions. I read in a newspaper yesterday, I believe, that was saying unless Ukrainian trade unions voiced support for Zelensky, they were suppressed. Ukrainian trade unions being suppressed because they did not support President Zelensky. Let's be clear - that is nonsense. I would go so far as to say it is a lie. What we must do is continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with those free independent trade unions in Ukraine, the KPU and FPU federations, and continue to send our best solidarity to those workers who are caught in a war that is not of their making. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much Simon. Finally Unite.

Heather Gilfillan (*UNITE*) spoke in support of Motion 78. *She said*: This motion is about the inhuman treatment of energy workers in Russian-occupied Ukraine. On behalf of Unite, the largest union in the British energy sector, I extend our solidarity including to our Ukraine comrades in the room today. Solidarity! (*Applause*)

I am a health worker and when I see the devastation not just on the front-lines but in schools, hospitals and homes, I am angry. I am not speaking here today about the politics of the conflict, about Putin or NATO. I am here because I am a working-class woman and I know who suffers in war: people like me. They used to say a bayonet is a weapon with a worker at both ends.

First and foremost, UNITE clearly condemns the Russian aggression. We call for a ceasefire followed by lasting negotiated peace. UNITE is also clear on our policy of support for Ukraine workers and their trade unions. Right now they are defending themselves from Russia, but when peace comes they will have to defend themselves again from the vultures that will circle to buy Ukraine on the cheap and profit from the wreckage. Ukraine workers put their lives on the line every day. They have invaders in front of them and oligarchs and international finance circling behind them. That is why solidarity of the labour movement is so important so they can end the war and win the peace. I support (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Heather. I am going to go to the vote on Motion 78. All those in favour please show? All those against please show? It is carried.

*Motion 78 was **CARRIED**.*

SECTION 5: A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE TUC

The President: We now move to Section 5 of the General Council report: A strong and sustainable TUC, from page 56. I now call paragraphs 1.5, 3.16, 3.17, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.11 to 5.16 and Motion 79, The role of the trade union movement in delivering a new social and economic settlement. The General Council support the motion with explanation and I will call on Assistant General Secretary Kate Bell to give the explanation on behalf of the General Council. Motion 79 will be moved by CWU, seconded by Equity and then I will call Kate.

The role of the trade union movement in delivering a new social and economic settlement

Dave Ward (*CWU*) moved Motion 79. *He said*: We are moving Motion 79 in the same spirit as the first motion that this union brought to the table to get us to the point of getting campaign going on the New Deal for Working People. This one is setting out a clear plan for not just thinking about what Labour is going to do but what is the trade union movement

going to do to bring about a new social and economic settlement for working-class people in this country.

The CWU believes that in Andy Burnham we have the right political leader for these times. He represents both the best and last chance for Labour to deliver real change. And I think that what is fundamental here is that we do not make the mistake as a union movement that we wait for Labour to deliver that change. We have to get on the front foot now like never before in this movement and we have to do our bit collectively to deliver that change. That is what this motion sets out.

The first point of the motion is about reigniting again the New Deal for Workers campaign. I always remind people that it started with a trade union movement. We took it into the Labour Party and we got the Labour Party when they were in government to move it forward but it hasn't gone far enough. We should not rubbish it because there are some great things in there for our movement, but we have to be honest it has not gone far enough on collective rights. That is why we believe the most transformational change we could make is to introduce sectoral bargaining across every single sector within the UK, unions coming together like never before with the same bargaining agendas and the same solidarity standing up for every worker setting up the race to the top and defeating once and for all the race to the bottom.

Single status of worker is also crucial. We cannot hide from this anymore. Bogus self-employment is taking place in this country. It is killing companies like Royal Mail and it is also making multi-national companies that have got loads and loads of money avoid paying national insurance to the UK government. It is not on. We have got to do something about it. Wave of insourcing, guaranteed hours. These are collective rights.

The second point in this motion is you have agreed this week that AI is so important that we have a collective position that we go to the Labour Government and we say this is what we expect you to do to protect workers from AI. We are not bargaining around it. We know that it is going to be a massive issue. I was impressed with Louise Hague's speech yesterday. I thought she done really well in setting out their commitment to that.

The third part of the motion is to make sure we now unify working-class people. We have got some great union, leaders, we have got great reps back in the workplaces but I urge this Conference, if we are going to defeat Reform then we have to set out a positive agenda that unifies working class people across ethnicity, across gender with all of our values all in there but bring them all together around a real agenda that will make a real change in their lives. Reform will not be able to deal with that.

A final point is what we did last year. We brought a motion, we listened, we called for reform of the TUC. The criticism was that we set about almost defining the outcome of that. We have listened and we just want to have a debate about strengthening the TUC. We have a lot

of faith in the leadership of the TUC, and I think Paul is doing an excellent job, but I think if we are going to take on Reform, and bring about real change for working-class people then we are going to need to look honestly at ways of strengthening our movement. Having sector interests and union interests is fine, it is understandable, but the bit that is missing sometimes is how you bring that altogether where you harness those strengths, the enormous strengths we have for the betterment of all working-class people. We want to have that debate across the year in a sensible and constructive way. I urge this Conference to see this motion as a unifying motion: to see this motion as something that will bring about the fundamental change we need. Not wait for Labour. Let's get on the front foot as a trade union movement. Support the motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Dave. I now call Equity.

Paul Fleming (*Equity*) seconded Motion 79. *He said*: Congress, 100 years ago my predecessor, the first ever General Secretary of Equity was the Chair of the London Trades Council, the largest socialist organisation on the planet at the heart of the General Strike. And whatever the debates are about its successes or failures, and whatever the debates are about the TUC's role in it, we cannot deny that it is foundational to who we are as a movement and foundational to how we win. We don't do it through policies. We don't do it through lobbying or through pressure. We do it through industrial co-ordination and strong unions in people's places of work.

And day in, day out the TUC does that. I want to pay tribute in particular to Paul and to Kate and the way they bring together sectors of the economy day in day, day out. It does not matter whether it is energy, utilities, transport, rail, the arts, or indeed the work the President has done in the justice sector, to ensure industrial co-ordination happens. That has allowed our members to win. It is only through co-ordinating with musicians and technicians have we fought back on the cuts in jobs and terms and conditions in opera. It is only through industrial co-ordination that we have protected sectoral bargaining in the West End, which when Margaret Thatcher bans our closed shop, she is no match for the might of the industrially coordinated unions who can say now that our members earn more than double in real terms on the West End than they did when we had a closed shop. (*Applause*) But I want to ask you when we look around this hall and when we listen to the debates we have had would a lay member in your branch get that impression of this TUC? Most importantly, would the non-member in your workplace get that impression of our movement or this TUC, or would they believe that we are a policy lobbying organisation? Does this hall look like your workplace? Does it, more importantly, sound like your workplace? We know from the growth of Reform within our own membership that increasingly we neither look nor sound like our class. That is a problem.

When my National Executive says to me how do we change it, how do we affect the TUC for 2026, I am unable to give an answer. It is very hopeful that the General Council has given support to this motion which is a beginning, not of talking about union business for the sake of it but talk about a renewable of our movement as an industrially co-ordinated force. Not political lobbying or service providers but building the power of our class.

Last year I spoke on a very similar motion and I asked delegates when they leave the hall to look out to the ocean. We have a choice. We can be like a crumbling 19th century structure that that has been forgotten and abandoned; once a symbol of where working-class when to feel good and feel human being washed away by the sea. Or we can be like the ocean itself pushing away relics of the past and leaving a world where we have forgotten about underinvestment in our communities as we slowly chip away at the forces that oppress us.

Congress, I urge you to vote for this motion, to grasp reform, to build an industrial movement. I second. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Paul. I will now call Kate Bell, the Assistant General Secretary with the explanation.

Assistant General Secretary (*General Council*): Thanks, President, and thanks Dave and Paul. The General Council supports this motion with this explanation. The motion commits the TUC to a review of governance. This will include all the areas covered in the motion and the General Secretary will consult with the Executive Committee on the overall terms of reference and bring forward proposals for the review no later than December 2026. With that explanation, the General Council ask you support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Kate. There were other unions that indicated to speak and once again, I apologise I am trying to claw a little bit time of back so I can get you all home on time. I think Dave and Paul between them have covered every aspect of that motion. I am going to go to the vote on Motion 79. Will all those in favour please show? Will all those against please show? That is carried. Thank you very much.

*Motion 79 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call paragraph 5.10 and Motion 80, Trades Councils' participation within the TUC Congress. The General Council seeks remission or, if the mover will not remit, opposes this motion and Kate Bell will set out the General Council's position. Kate.

Trades Councils' participation within the Trades Union Congress

Assistant General Secretary (*General Council*): Thank you, again, President. The General Council is asking for this motion to be remitted but if the mover will not remit the motion, we ask you to oppose it.

The motion raises longstanding debates about our movement's governance. If the movers of the motion are willing to remit it, the General Council can continue to discuss the concerns it raises. Delegates have just now agreed to a review of the governance of the TUC and these

issues can rightly be debated as part of that review. But if the movers of the motion are not prepared to remit, the General Council asks delegates to oppose a move to adopt the specific proposals set out in this motion.

We all agree that trades councils play a vital part in our movement and all of us are grateful for their solidarity and their activism, but the specific proposals set out in this motion would raise real challenges for the governance of our movement. Trades councils would have a delegation to Congress larger than that of a third of our affiliates, and that delegation would have no democratic mandate to determine its view on any given motion at our Congress. As you know, the Trades Council Conference traditionally meets before the Congress agenda is set, so where would the mandate come from to judge the collective view of the trades councils on any given motion or, indeed, any emergency motion adopted on to the agenda? What would happen if trades councils delegates decided to take a view different from that of the union they represent? And how would we justify to the 28 unions not represented on the General Council that a trades council delegate should leapfrog them: a delegate that again would have no democratic mandate and come from a body paying no affiliation fees to the TUC.

The motion is silent on these issues and it risks rushing us into a set of conclusions without an opportunity for the General Council or indeed for any delegate here to consider them. We all value our trade councils but we ask the movers of this motion to remit it so this issues can be considered as part of the review of our governance. If they are not prepared to allow further discussion, the General Council asks Congress to oppose this motion.

The President: Thank you very much, Kate. Dave Chapple, on behalf of the TUC Trades Council, can you outline the position for us, please?

Dave Chapple (*Trades Councils' Conference*): Conference, Dave Chapple on behalf of the Trades Councils' Conference making my statement in reply to Kate's. I am from the proud working-class town of Bridgwater in Somerset a and proud member of the CWU, Unite the Union and the Writers' Guild. There is no difference between the trades councils and the TUC: we are just the TUC at local level.

My response to the specific criticisms and concerns in the statement Kate read out. A delegation larger than a third of our affiliates. If it was up to the smaller affiliates, surely, to amend the motion and then there would have been a wider debate about whether we have one delegate or three and perhaps to go back with a winning vote with one delegate, we would have been pleased with. They did not amend it and so the choice in the motion was three or oppose.

A democratic mandate. That is rubbish and Kate knows it. We have a TUC JCC. It meets eight times a year. Carl Roper no less oversees it and takes the minutes. Steve Gillan no less presides over it. We meet eight times a year and we have a mandate from conference that that is the leadership of the conference in between conferences. We have a democratic mandate as good as any union in this hall - and that is absolute rubbish. (*Applause*)

The President: Dave, can I just correct you there. Kate was talking on behalf of the General Council so please don't individualise it.

Dave Chapple: Okay. What would happen if the Trades Council delegates decided to take a view different from that of the union they represent? Well, that is the whole basis of this because the TUC General Council. everybody in this room has no problem with the Scottish TUC, no problem with the Wales TUC, no problem with the regional TUCs, no complaints about trades councils voting against their own union in all those bodies, and I haven't heard a single complaint as a TUC JCC rep for the South West in all of the wonderful South West TUC conferences where the trades councils play a leading role. How do we justify a member of the General Council? At a conservative estimate, I am talking on behalf of 200 trades council, the local arms of this TUC and I think 2 million plus members: the TUC at a local level. I do not think one General Council member out of 55 is disproportionate and we are not taking a single General Council seat away from anybody.

Now to the positive part of my statement. Right now I can't even vote on this motion. It is ridiculous. We are being taken for granted. We are committed volunteers who for 24/7 and for 52 weeks a year, as Kate knows, as Steve knows, as Paul knows, as everybody knows. bring affiliated unions together and organise key events for solidarity. For example, who organises May Days? Trades councils. Who organises Workers' Memorial Day? Trades councils. Who runs coaches to TUC demonstrations? Trades councils. Who supports union strikes, picket

lines, lobbies, with donations? Trades councils. Who carries out TUC policies 24/7 and campaigns in local media and local branches? Trades councils.

A few local examples. Leeds TUC has a young workers exchange programme going with Dortmund in Germany. Bridgwater TUC, of which I am secretary, only last week gave out 1,000 leaflets, Young Workers Know Your Rights at Bridgwater College Freshers' Fair. Trades councils are not separate from Congress. We are the TUC at local level.

Facts from history, trades councils preceded the TUC. We were actually set up in 1868. Unfortunately, were expelled or not invited to the Congress in 1895. One hundred and thirty five years, comrades and friends, is a long time to wait for minimal justice. It is only thanks to Bob Crow and the RMT and thanks to the FBU, prepared to second this motion and the RMT to speak, who in 2013 persuaded you we should at least have a motion, even though I can't event vote for my own motion. How crazy is that? This is the core of my case in terms of the rights in Scotland, in Wales and in the regions. No union here, whether you are prepared to vote for this or against it, has any problem working with a much greater representation of trades councils in Scotland and Wales and the English regions. What is the problem then with here? What is the problem with the TUC? (*Applause*)

It is an anomaly. It is inexplicable. It is a historic injustice that can be remedied. I can assure Congress that our Trades Councils Annual Conference could elect brilliant trade unionists on

to the General Council and they would be working. They would not be retired like me. They would be working and they would make positive contributions.

A couple of other examples. In Somerset we will be supporting within a week with our banners and bodies, a lobby of the Somerset Health Trust organised by the brilliant UNISON migrant worker organiser Adekunle Akinola against the gross outsourcing plans for the Somerset NHS. And this Saturday for the fourth time in four months, the trade unions, not Hope Against Hate, not Stand Against Racism, the trade unions in Somerset will be organising counter protests against Nick Tenconi, Paul Golding and the far-right fascists who have chosen Taunton as a county town. The first time we outnumbered them two to one, the second far-right demonstration we outnumbered them three to one. The last demonstration we outnumbered them five to one and this Saturday we are going to outnumber them 10 to one. That has been organised by the trades councils, not by the TUC. The trades councils are the TUC at local level. We are two sides of the same coin.

Now a big decision to make. We have spoken ---

The President: I hope you make it quickly because there is a red light now.

Dave Chapple: We have spoken to some of the people on the General Council who we respect the most. And yes, last-time delegate, last-time speaker, we have agreed to remit and we expect justice from this review or else we will be back next year. Thanks a lot. (*Applause*)

The President: Very well done Dave, as always. I have got to say you actually saved us some time because there were other unions, the AFBU, POA and Bakers' Union going to speak after you. But you have done the right thing and remitted it. Thanks very much. (*Applause*) So there is no need for a vote on that one, Congress.

*Motion 80 was **REMITTED.***

The President: I now call Emergency Motion 3, Justice for Colombia. The General Council support the position. Moved by NASUWT, seconded by POA and again, there are lots of unions wanting to speak on this but because of time I am only going to have one union and that is EIS. NASUWT.

Justice for Colombia

Alan Hackett (NASUWT) moved Emergency Motion 3. *He said*: In the recent past, Colombia had a progressive Government. It passed a historic labour reform that gave back to workers' rights they had lost decades ago. It regulated the working week, reintroduced overtime and holiday pay, starting paying apprentices and brought in protections against discrimination. It was a Government that also recognised trade unions as collective victims of state repression. The helped repair some of the damage done over decades of violence, by educating people

about what unions do and help support people in organising. This was a Government that was trying to do its best to overcome inequality and violence, and it stood for peace. However, earlier this year, elections in Colombia brought in a far-right Government under Aberlardo de la Espriella, a friend of Donald Trump. It was a narrow victory, fewer than 150,000 votes out of approximately 60 million people. There have been claims of vote buying.

So, now Colombia has a Government that is the polar opposite of what came before. The new Government promises to tear the guts out of the left. It has threatened trade unions. It has cut significant funding for key parts of the 2016 peace agreement. The new President has threatened to imprison the leaders of the former FARC in violation of the peace agreement. As trade unionists, we should be horrified and deeply concerned at the increase in threats to and killings of unionists and social activists. In the last fortnight, two Historic Pact members have been assassinated in their own homes. A leader in the north narrowly survived an assassination attempt whilst another was shot near Popáyan. In all, 12 signatories of the peace agreement have been murdered since 7th August. This new President seems to relish the prospect of war and violence. His Government has restarted military operations one of which killed 33 people, including three children.

Congress, this situation is why we need to urgently act to defend the lives and rights of our comrades in Colombia. We cannot sit back and watch as the forces of violence and injustice seek to destroy the workers' movement in Colombia. We need to redouble our working for the Colombian trade union movement by supporting the Justice for Colombia campaign and encourage affiliation to the JFC across the whole of our movement. We must not sit back

and allow a new generation of trade unionists and social activists to be murdered like those in the eight years under the Gaviria Governments or those killed in the 1980s and 1990s.

We have to ensure that our Government defends the 2016 peace agreement and to recognise that this is no ordinary Colombian Government. We must not do business as usual with them. We need to speak out for human and labour rights in Colombia and make sure our MPs support Justice for Colombia at Westminster. We cannot allow this Colombian Government to walk back from its legal duty to implement the 2016 peace agreement. The people of Colombia deserve peace. They deserve to enjoy their rights and we have to make sure our Government acts strenuously to support peace and human rights in Colombia.

Congress, I ask you to support this emergency motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Alan. POA to second.

Geoff Willetts (*POA*) seconded Emergency Motion 3. *He said*: Congress, el Presidente, I am happy to support this motion. I ask you to stand in solidarity for our sisters and brothers in Colombia, because when trade unionists are threatened, attacked and murdered anywhere in the world, it is an attack on us. Colombia has made an enormous sacrifice in their pursuit for peace. The 2016 peace agreement offered an historic opportunity to end decades of conflict and build a country where people could organise, work and live without fear. But today that progress is seriously under threat. In one weekend in August, three trade unionists

were murdered, two members of the Historic Pact were murdered on 1st September. These are not just statistics. They are workers, they are activists: they are people with family and friends and communities. They are people who stood up and believed that their country would be a better place. Now, trade unionists and human rights' defenders, peace activists and political opponents are increasingly living in fear. The fear is completely compounded by stigmatisation, by the danger that anyone who challenges those in power can be labelled as a narco-terrorist and subject to repression.

Congress, we know where this road leads. We have seen throughout history what happens when trade unionists are demonised, when dissent is criminalised and when Governments believe they can act without accountability. That is why international solidarity matters. Our solidarity must not stop at our borders. We must defend the right of Colombian workers to organise. We must defend human rights, we must defend the peace agreement. And we must defend the right for people to campaign for a better society without facing death threats for doing so.

The Colombian peace agreement must be defended not dismantled. Rural reforms must be protected. Reincorporation programmes must be properly funded. Former combatants must lay down their arms and must now not be threatened with imprisonment and labour and social reforms that have improved the lives of working people must not be rolled back. We must be absolutely clear: peace cannot be built through repression.

So, I am asking Congress to send a strong message and a united message today. First, we need to double our support for the Colombian trade unionists including supporting and encouraging affiliation to justice to Colombia.

The President: Finish up your speech now as it is the red light.

Geoff Willetts: Congress, I urge you to support this motion. Solidarity with Colombia. Solidarity with trade unionists. And solidarity with all those people that are fighting for peace, justice and workers' rights. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Geoff. I will now call EIS.

Susan Quinn (*EIS*) spoke in support of Emergency Motion 3. *She said*: President, Congress, like others in this room and in the wider trade union movement, I had the great fortune and privilege to visit Colombia alongside affiliates and friends from Justice for Colombia to review and overview the peace process after 2016. In February 2020, we met with colleagues from trade unions and former combatants who freely shared their concerns about the dangers experienced, but they also demonstrated the most amazing positivity of the opportunities that they were campaigning for. At that time I shared with teacher colleagues in Scotland the dangers that teachers in Colombia faced on a daily basis for promoting education as a means to peace. And many times in the years that followed that trip I reflected on the experience

of those we had met, wondering each time we heard of another murder of a trade unionist or political activist, whether it was someone we had met or not.

Colleagues, for a wee while there under Petro, those colleagues in Colombia saw progress towards not just sustained peace but improvements in workers' rights and support for all people. Their strength and resilience saw improvements to lives for many, even in still difficult times, and yet in a few short months these are to be reversed. With the election of President de la Espriella, backed by his far-right pals in the US and further afield, Colombia's peace talks ended just like that overnight, and military operations were redoubled and former negotiators and local government figureheads were threatened. His actions are heightening fears of a disregard for human rights which activists warn could see the violent targeting of social movement, trade unions and former guerillas in the peace process.

Our sisters and brothers in Colombia need our support. They need the voices of trade unions who are fighting against the far right in their own country to support them and to be visible in their support against the far-right Government in Colombia. Their lives are on the line. If we cannot provide that support, we have to be the voice of the people who know what is right for the world. The far right are not who should be governing in Colombia. They are putting the peace process backwards and we need to show that we will be there with them. As colleagues have said, you support them by affiliating to Justice for Colombia. You support them with your voice being heard at every opportunity. Please support the motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Susan. I am going to go to the vote on emergency Motion 3. All those in favour please show? All those against? The motion is carried.

*Emergency Motion 3 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Emergency Motion 4, Oppose employer attempts to delay the ban on zero-hour contracts. The General Council support the motion. It will be moved by GMB, seconded by POA and UNISON will also be called to speak.

Oppose employer attempts to delay the ban on zero-hour contracts

Penny Murphy (*GMB*) moved emergency Motion 4. *She said*: First-time delegate, first-time speaker (and slightly dyslexic). (*Applause*) The GMB welcomes the Employment Rights Act. We believe the protections contained within the legislation should apply to all NHS workers, including those employed on zero-hour contracts through the various staff models that NHS trusts introduced instead of paying national agreed Agenda for Change overtime rates. It is therefore with great concern that our union, alongside other healthcare trade unions, note the recent statements from the NHS Alliance calling for a pause in legislation within the NHS trusts.

The NHS Alliance states that many workers choose to work through NHS banks because it provides a genuine two-way flexibility for employers and staff, allowing workers to choose when and how they work while helping maintain services and safe patient care. We do not accept this.

As a recognised healthcare trade union on the NHS staff side, we have seen through our joint union campaigns and flexible working that many NHS trusts remain unwilling to approve flexible working requests. While some trusts have embraced good practice, they remain the minority rather than the majority. It is therefore difficult to take the claims of widespread flexibility that they claim when it is not what most NHS workers feel.

We are also deeply concerned about those who work alongside the bank agreements. These workers over have less beneficial terms and conditions than their directly employed colleagues. In many cases, they do not enjoy the full employment status, limiting their actions on rights, protections and benefits, that most workers would reasonably expect. The consequences can be significant, creating insecurity and genuine hardship for workers and their families.

The NHS should be an employer of choice with the highest standards of employer practice leading by example to grant rights to NHS employees. Bypassing employment rights legislation would send an entirely wrong message. It would suggest that the Government's commitment to Make Work Pay does not apply to one of the largest public sector employers

in the country. To allow this to happen would risk a two-tier workforce within the NHS and open the door to further outsourcing. It would also invite criticism from other employers who would question why the NHS should be exempt from standards that apply elsewhere.

Congress, the answer is not to delay or water down employment rights. The solution is to ensure that all NHS workers are employed on fair, secure and national agreement terms and conditions. Therefore, we call on Congress to oppose any delays or weakening of the Employment Rights Act as proposed by the NHS Alliance. We further call for NHS Agenda for Change and conditions across the NHS workforce, which would address many of the concerns that have been raised while securing fairness, security and dignity at work.

Congress, we believe in decent work we believe in fair treatment and we believe in NHS workers deserving the same rights as everyone else. There is no excuse and no delay. Support this motion. Don't leave the NHS behind. Make work pay for the NHS. Thank you. I move. (*Applause*)

The President: Very well delivered, Penny. Thank you. POA.

Angela Montgomery (POA) seconded Emergency Motion 4. *She said*: President, Congress, visitors, the POA is proud to second this motion. We have fought as a trade union movement to offer better terms and conditions for those workers on zero-hour contracts and to have guaranteed hours which reflect the hours they regularly work. Zero-hour contracts leave

workers in a situation where they are working week to week, shift to shift. It does not give them stability. It does not give them the opportunity to plan. It is disappointing that NHS employers have sought at the last minute to call for a pause and is unacceptable. They wish to allow bank workers to be able to sign away their rights in order, as they put it, to maintain a 24/7 workforce and ensure patient safety. Patient safety has been damaged by bank working.

In the secure psychiatric services which we represent, one of the issues is that at times our members have to restrain patients for their own safety or for the safety of other patients. Bank workers because they do not have the same rights and term and conditions are reluctant to do that. This places them at risk and it places their patients at risk. The NHS employers have sought to play one trust off against another by having different bank rates. This is unacceptable.

We have had two years of consultation in relation to the Employment Rights Act yet it is only in August of this year that they have raised their concerns. My suggestion to them as the mover of the motion says is to adhere to NHS nationally negotiated Agenda for Change terms and conditions, which all of our members want. Every single health union has pushed for those conditions to be maintained but we have constantly been undermined by employers. So, I would ask you to second this motion and should you get the chance to go to an AGM of your legal NHS Trust to turn up and make the point. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Well done, Angela. Thank you. UNISON.

Michelle England (*UNISON*) spoke in support of Emergency Motion 4. *She said*: I speak in support of Emergency Motion 4 and as a proud NHS worker. Congress, we have heard many times this week the Government has to be praised for turning the Employment Rights Bill into an Act, but this has to be turned into meaningful change on the ground.

Banning zero-hour contracts is one of the headline measures of this Act, but we know that employers have been fighting tooth and nail before, during and after the course of this Bill going through Parliament, and it is still happening now, even in the NHS.

As the motion points out, last month NHS employers called for a pause in the ban because of the potential impact on bank staff working in the NHS. They claim that zero-hour contracts provide two-way flexibility and that is completely wide of the mark. The reality is - and this is demonstrated by a survey of UNISON members - they fear that if they don't accommodate last-minute changes by the employer or they turn down work then their bank worker work will be stopped. Employers claim that the NHS has taken steps to improve the experience of bank and temporary workers. Claiming the NHS can improve worker experience without implementing extra measures again, is completely wide of the mark.

As we stand here today, in my region - and I want to say solidarity to all of the theatre staff at the Northern Care Alliance who are taking action (*Applause*) – these theatre staff have had

their overtime taken off them and been forced on to bank shifts and every shift is paid at less than their normal hourly rate. That is completely wrong.

Finally, I think the motion points out that exempting the NHS from zero-hour contracts sets a dangerous precedent, signalling a move to more unscrupulous employers in other sectors of the economy, and suggesting the use of these was somehow optional.

So, Congress, the Government needs to stand firm. They need to stand up to employers from whatever sector who want to slow down and water down their commitments to staff. We need proper action. We need to ensure that everyone has got the right to a contract that reflects the number of hours they regularly work, as well as proper arrangements for flexible working and overtime in the NHS. Thank you, Congress, please support the motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you very much, Michelle. To try and keep us on track because I know other speakers had indicated, but I think all the main points were made by the GMB and indeed the POA and UNISON, so I am not going to take any more. I am going to move to the vote on emergency Motion 4. Will all those in favour please show? Those against? The motion is carried.

*Emergency Motion 4 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Emergency Motion 5, Extreme weather and rail safety. The General Council support the motion. It will be moved by the RMT, seconded by TSSA and there will be one other speaker from ASLEF.

Extreme weather and rail safety.

Julian Thomas (*RMT*) moved Emergency Motion 5. *He said*: I am a first-time speaker. (*Applause*) Congress, this summer has seen extreme heatwaves and once again the rail network has been under threat from extreme weather events. We have had members directly impacted by derailments, including myself as a track worker. Rail workers are deeply concerned that unless action is taken there will be more tragedies, unfortunately.

A third of the railway is already at flood risk and that is predicted to rise by about 50% by 2050. Shockingly, there has been a rise in adverse weather conditions that have impacted the railway in the last five years compounded from the previous 10 years. It is clear we cannot wait any longer. Urgent action is needed to protect the railway from climate impacts. Congress, now that the Government have said they will call a rail summit, we will be demanding to attend that summit. That means a massive increase in rail infrastructure investment. It means reversing the cuts to rail maintenance and track renewals. It means ending the dangerous outsourcing on our rail infrastructure. It means instead of outsourcing we need insourcing now. Insourcing will mean that we can increase the number of skilled

railway workers necessary to make the railway more resilient and, Congress, we need to make sure that we have a guard on every train, no more driver-only trains, (*Applause*)

Congress, rail workers and passengers should not pay the price for politicians' failure on climate change. We need to act now before it is too late. Please support this motion. I move. (*Applause and cheers*)

The President: Very well delivered, Julian, as a first-time speaker. You presented it very well, thank you. Seconded by TSSA.

Harry Gibb (*TSSA*) seconded Emergency Motion 5. *He said*: Conference, President, when I started on the railway I was quickly taught there is a reason we do the things the way we do. Less than a career ago, passengers were wary of travelling by train for fear of accidents and incidents, which had become all too common. We have learnt from those and become one of the safest and most trusted railways in the world. That is the way it should be and that is the way we need to ensure it remains. It is up to the RAIB to work out what happened on consecutive days this summer at Lewes and Wickford, but we cannot ignore the fact that climate change and underfunding have had a massive impact on our railways. The incidents in the summer are a warning, but we have already seen tragic consequences of extreme weather, such as the Carmon incident, where extreme rainfall and a failure in the inspection and maintenance regime led to a derailment and resulted in three fatalities and six injuries.

With the hottest summer on record this year and extreme weather becoming the norm, we need to adapt to the world we find ourselves in and build resilience in our railway infrastructure. And where these incidents have occurred, we must pay tribute to the staff onboard who have performed their duties in extraordinarily difficult conditions and have undoubtedly saved lives. We need to ensure these people are registered, recognised as safety critical, properly rewarded and properly trained.

Of course, railways are part of the solution towards our common goal of reducing our impact on the environment. Rail accounts for less than 1% of total UK transport greenhouse gas emissions despite handling around 10% of passenger journeys and 9% of freight traffic. We welcome the DfT's climate adaptation policy but note its limited delivery. The Office for Road and Rail has voiced its concerns already this summer that Network Rail has forecast to complete only 83% of planned works in the control period from 2024-29. They have warned that an increasingly ageing asset base has implications for asset reliability, performance and safety. We are doing a patch-and-mend job to extend the life of what is there rather than wholesale asset renewals. Where renewals are getting funded, there is a phrase that floats around "minimum viable product". It is the cheapest solution that will plausibly work but it doesn't have any bells and whistles.

Congress, I don't know about you but I don't want a budget railway. I want a railway fit for the 21st century and one that works for the benefit of us all, so please support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Harry. I will now call ASLEF.

Dylan Leonard (*ASLEF*) spoke in support of Emergency Motion 5. *He said*: In my day job I am a professional delay creator on the East Coast Mainline, driving over infrastructure which at its core is over 150 years old, with earthworks which are outdated and which cannot deal with the changes caused by the wetter winters and hotter summers. These new extremes of heat and dry weather can and do lead to overhead wires sagging, buckling rails, dried-out soil and track dropping as trains move over it, while the extreme levels of rainfall, particularly after dry spells, can lead to landslips and wash-out of the track bed.

Congress, this is not something that is just theoretically possible. This is now almost a daily reality, one that has already contributed to the recent incidents, as I am sure we have all seen, and one that has become more of a concern for me and all my rail colleagues. What we need is to campaign for a massive increase in the investment in rail infrastructure and reverse the cuts, to bring it up to modern climate standards because it really isn't.

Congress, the reality of these cuts means that the current plan is to continue using ageing infrastructure for as long as possible, with speed restrictions being commonplace, in the hope of avoiding complete failure of the infrastructure while reducing the capacity for the railways to grow and address the climate emergency, so quite a vicious cycle. Infrastructure failures

are not a surprise and drivers every day notice deterioration in the track. We are seeing an increase in the amount of reports we are making.

In 2025, a chief engineer from Network Rail put it bluntly: "For our sustainable assets we need to renew 2.5% of our assets." We are projecting 0.75, doing fewer renewals than we need to be sustainable. The workers on the ground are the canary in the coalmine and the Treasury is not looking, so we need to collectively raise this issue. The true cost of these cuts and neglect to our infrastructure is to me and my colleagues and to all of your safety. And you can't put a price on safety, apparently.

Congress, I do not want to have to turn up to work worried as to whether today is the day that the infrastructure that I am driving over fails after many years of these cuts. We take great pride in our jobs and your safety and we are simply not as an industry learning the mistakes of the past. Now is the time for the Government to be bold in addressing this emergency and to properly invest in the railway to make sure that we are climate resilient. Congress, for my safety, for your safety, and for your friends and families' safety, please support. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Dylan. I am going to go to the vote on Emergency Motion 5. All those in favour please show? Anyone against? That motion is carried.

*Emergency Motion 5 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Emergency Motion 6, Protecting search and rescue and RNLI volunteers and crew. The General Council support the motion. It is going to be moved by Nautilus, seconded by GMB and RMT also to speak.

Protecting search and rescue and RNLI volunteers and crew

Martyn Gray (*Nautilus International*) moved Emergency Motion 6. *He said*: Look at any stretch of open water and it will tell you one fundamental truth: the sea does not care who you are. The sea does not check passports, it does not ask for papers, it does not care what language you speak, what colour your skin is or how much money is sitting in your bank account. To freezing water, every single human body is the exact same fragile flesh and bone.

For centuries, every seafarer, every maritime nation, every decent human part of a coastal community lived by an unwritten unbreakable law that when life was in peril at sea, you launched and you helped. (*Applause*) You didn't hold committees on slipways. You pulled people out of the water because leaving somebody to die at sea is an outrage against all common humanity.

And it is not just a moral code. It is codified directly into British law. Section 93 of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1995 presents a criminal sentence of two years to any master who

is convicted of failing to help a person in distress at sea. And more recently when Parliament updated our immigration statutes under section 41 of the Nationality and Borders Act of 2022, they carved out a statutory offence that anyone assisting mariners in danger or acting on behalf of or co-ordinated through the Coastguard search and rescue operations is legally protected from allegations of facilitating illegal entry of persons. Our own domestic law commands people to rescue people in distress at sea and protects them when they are directed to do so.

So, what took place on 6 September south of the Isle of Wight, where over 120 human beings were pulled from an overloaded unseaworthy craft by volunteer lifeboat crews operating under direct Coastguard tasking, is these people stepped up, risked their necks and fulfilled their humanitarian and statutory duty as volunteers to pull people in distress out of the water. And what happened when they tried to land these 120 exhausted terrified people ashore? They were met by port authorities in Southampton and Portsmouth who told them no. But not only did they tell them no and refuse them access to a safe harbour, which is a shocking shameful abdication of their basic duty, they threatened those crews with prosecution if they landed the survivors ashore without authority. Offering lifeboat crews the wrong dock when they are already shielded by the law is outrageous and criminalising volunteers tasked by the Coastguard to bring human lives to safety should shame them all. (*Applause*)

And while the port operators were doing this, what else did we see? We saw thugs. We saw thugs who think patriotism is smashing emergency vehicles, obstructing the rescue response and screaming vile abuse in the face of volunteers and emergency workers. So let's call that

out for what it is. It is cowardice masquerading as patriotism. There is nothing brave about threatening a volunteer. There is nothing patriotic about vandalising rescue gear. There is nothing worthy in putting lives at risk. (*Applause*)

The law is clear. It is not negotiable on this. So, Congress, it is time to say enough is enough. The motion calls on the General Council to demand urgent independent investigation, to demand clear enforceable arrangements to ensure the safety of people at sea and to demand absolute unequivocal legal and physical protection for volunteers, seafarers and every emergency worker who puts their life on the line to save others. Stand up for the selfless. Let's stand up for safety and defend maritime law. Please support the motion, I move. (*Applause and cheers*)

The President: Thank you very much and extremely well delivered as well. GMB.

Sonya Davis (*National Vice-President, GMB*) seconded Emergency Motion 6. *She said*: Colleagues, the motion is quite clear that saving lives at sea is a humanitarian responsibility. It is also our members' jobs in the Coastguard rescue service who send their solidarity to the RNLI volunteers. Thousands of volunteers up and down our vast coastline drop everything, no matter what time of day when a life is in danger. That call goes to people from all parts of our coastal communities who have committed themselves to this great duty. Our members in the Coastguard have faced similar levels of abuse as our RNLI colleagues when they are trying to get out to save lives. Whether you are employed or volunteering, you are carrying

out a job and you should be safe. It is no surprise that the people who would be happy to rip up workers' rights are stirring up hate and division to put more people in danger. So, it is of utmost importance that the Government make it safe for all emergency and rescue workers to keep taking those calls. The coastal communities of our country put their lives at risk to save others and we are a better country for them. Our Coastguard members don't want to be drawn into any of the political division. They just want to be treated with respect so they can get out to save lives. Please support this important motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Well done, Sonya, thank you. Final speaker RMT.

Dave Watkin (*RMT*) spoke in support of Emergency Motion 6. *He said*: Congress, President, let's be absolutely clear: this is about saving lives. On 6 September, around 120 people were rescued from an overloaded small boat south of the Isle of Wight. These were people in distress at sea and the RNLI did exactly what it has always done: they went out and they saved them. That is what our lifeboat crews do. No questions about nationality, no questions about immigration status. They are just people in danger so they go out and get them.

But then we get to the truly shocking part. The requests to land those survivors at Southampton and Portsmouth were reportedly refused and volunteer lifeboat crews operating under HM Coastguard co-ordination were warned that entering a port could potentially lead to prosecution.

Congress, this is not good enough. We need an urgent and transparent investigation into what happened, and who made the decisions and why, because responsibility for finding a place of safety belongs with the state, not with an RNLI volunteer standing on the deck of a lifeboat trying to save somebody's life. And what happened after that is a national disgrace. We saw violence and intimidation addressed at migrants and emergency workers, damage to vehicles and vile abuse and threats against RNLI volunteers. Let's call it what it is – far-right attempts to intimidate people who are trying to do their job and doing the right thing.

Congress, we have been here before. In 2021, the Tory Government tried to criminalise the rescue of migrants at sea. Maritime trade unions stood together and what did we say? Not on our watch. (*Applause*) Trade union solidarity matters now more than ever.

The RNLI has around 4,600 volunteers operating hundreds of lifeboats across 90,000 miles of coastline. They carry out about 150 emergency rescue operations every day. They do not ask who you are before they save you and, Congress, neither should we.

So, Congress, let's demand proper places of safety around our coastline, let's demand absolute protection for our RNLI colleagues, seafarers and emergency workers and let's send a message to the far right: you will not intimidate maritime workers, you will not criminalise lifesaving and you will not divide our communities. (*Applause*) When somebody is drowning, you don't ask for their passport, you save them. That is solidarity, that is humanity and that

is what this trade union movement stands for. I urge Congress to support this motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Well done, Dave. So we go to the vote on Emergency Motion 6. Will all those in favour please show? Will all those against please show? That motion is carried.

*Emergency Motion 6 was **CARRIED**.*

The President: I now call Emergency Motion 7, Defending LGBT+ people and civil society in Turkey. The General Council support the emergency motion and it is going to be moved by NHBC SA and seconded by NEU.

Defending LGBT+ people and civil society in Turkey

Julia Georgiou (*NHBCSA*) moved Emergency Motion 7. *She said*: I know you all want to get home and thanks for staying. I will not even take five minutes of your time. When workers, activists and minority communities come under attack anywhere in the world, our movement has a duty to speak out and fight back. That is why we must condemn the recent raids against LGBT+ organisations and activists in Türkiye. Last weekend, Kaos GL and other LGBT+ organisations, community organisations and human rights defenders were targeted in co-ordinated operations across multiple provinces. Dozens of activists have been detained

and others targeted. LGBT+ organisations have had restrictions imposed upon them and those organisations argue that they are being hit because of their organising and advocacy work and have strongly rejected all allegations made against them.

This must concern every trade unionist. We understand the importance of civil society. We know that progress depends on people being able to organise collectively, campaign for change and advocate for those whose voices are too often ignored. When organisations are raided, activists detained and campaigners intimidated, it affects the democratic space that all movements depend upon.

Trade unionists in Türkiye have faced significant challenges over many years in defending worker's rights and democratic freedoms. They know that rights are rarely taken away all at once. They are eroded piece by piece, often beginning with groups that are already marginalised. That is why this motion matters. It is not simply about LGBT+ rights, although they are important. It is about the right to organise, the right to campaign, the right of association and the right to live free from discrimination and fear.

LGBT+ organisations in Türkiye have said clearly being LGBT+ is not a crime, defending equality is not a crime, advocating for human rights is not a crime. We have a proud history of standing alongside those facing discrimination and injustice. We have consistently affirmed that LGBT+ people are entitled to dignity, equality and justice, in both the workplace and in

wider society. So, let's send a clear message to LGBT+ activists in Türkiye: your struggle for equality and human rights is not being ignored, it is our struggle.

Congress, this motion is about defending those principles wherever they come under attack. I ask Congress to support. Solidarity to LGBT+ people in Türkiye. Solidarity to all those defending human rights and equality. Congress, I move. (*Applause*)

The President: Very well done, Julia. I now call the NEU.

Rebecca Fallows (*NEU*) seconded Emergency Motion 6. *She said*: I regret that my first time at TUC Congress ends with this emergency motion. It should not be needed but it is. I send my best wishes as well to our colleague from the NEU and the original seconder Becks Tebbett from the NASUWT, who were both taken ill today. This motion was a joint effort by unions including the FBU and NASUWT, who are unlikely to have the opportunity to speak.

As an LGBT+ rights activist, I can think of nothing worse than attendance at my own organisation being used by the government to find and arrest the very people I am fighting so hard to protect, yet for Turkish activists that is the painful reality. The raid of HIV support groups is particularly insidious. It leaves innocent people unable to seek life-saving medical care for fear that it will be the precursor to their arrest. We no longer live in a world where the boundary of what we know is limited by our language, geography or media. Videos of those heinous arrests are right here on our phones and in the bedrooms of our children who

are looking on in horror at a world that to many of them feels without hope. But we can change that. We are their role models, parents, educators, health workers; the smiling bus driver who greets them every morning, the musician who lifts their spirits. We have the ability to show that unity among everyday people works, that solidarity is power and together we can stand for the innocent LGBT+ community who want nothing more or less than the right to exist and be as safe and as free as everyone else.

Yesterday more than 150 human rights defenders were detained for peacefully protesting against Sunday's raids. These defenders, including trade unionists, journalists and human rights activists, are the first line of defence for repressed people. The attempt to suppress those who would hold the Government to account for the systemic persecution of its citizens must be condemned and opposed through every available mechanism, including by our own Government.

Turkish activists who are doing lifesaving work for the LGBT+ community must have the certainty of knowing the international trade union movement is behind them. They must know that when they do what they do best, we will use every considerable resource at our disposal to bolster their voices and that we will mobilise and advocate for their freedom and the freedom of those they defend.

The name of Sunday's raids on the LGBT+ community can be translated to "My family is safe". Again, we see family values contorted unrecognisably into hatred, used as a weapon against

those who have become scapegoats to prop up far-right governments, and used as a shield to legitimise discrimination and injustice. But we will push forward, defending the defenders and advocating for the vulnerable with indefatigable determination, not just because it is what we are good at but because it is a moral imperative that will not be constrained by geography. Countries have borders but our compassion does not. To the delegates from the Confederation of Public Employees' Unions who joined us this week, and every LGBT+ activist resisting this attack, we see you, we hear you and you do not stand alone. To quote the brave Turkish protesters who were detained yesterday, "Long live life in defiance of hate". Solidarity! (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Rebecca and Julia. You presented it very well. I am not going to take any further speakers on this. I am going to go to the vote. Emergency motion 7, all those in favour, please show? All those against? That is carried.

*Emergency Motion 7 was **CARRIED**.*

Financial Statements

The President: Congress, could I now draw your attention to appendix 3 from page 72 of the General Council report which is the Financial Statements. The auditor is present on the platform. Does Congress accept the accounts as set out in the appendix? Is that agreed?

(*Agreed*) If agreed, we are also required to reappoint the auditor. Can I confirm that Congress is happy to approve the appointment of Crowe? (*Agreed*)

I will now ask Congress to adopt the General Council report. Is that agreed? (*Agreed*) Delegates, that completes the formal business of Congress. (*Applause*)

General Council retirements

The President: Delegates, a number of colleagues left the General Council this year and we thank them for their tenure. A list of General Council members is on page 64 of the General Council report. I am sure Congress will want to show its appreciation for the contribution and commitment of all those who served on the General Council. (*Applause*)

Gold Badge Presentation

The President: The following colleagues are invited to receive the Congress Gold Badge. And I will give each of our recipients the option to say a few words (or not). I call on Martin Furlong from the Royal College of Podiatry.

Martin Furlong (*RCPod*): Last-time speaker. I just want to say thank you to everybody I work with on General Council, the TUC staff and everybody else who makes it all work behind the

scenes, who do a fantastic job. I am honoured to get this but also honoured to be sharing this award with two really inspirational women in Annette and Liz, so I will shut up now to hear from the real stars. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

The President: Martin, that was brilliant, thank you. I am delighted to call now Annette Mansell-Green from the BDA.

Annette Mansell-Green (*BDA*): Thank you Paul, and thank you, President. I am also a last-time speaker. Many of you will be pleased to hear that! After 30 years of attending this Congress on and off, it has been an absolute honour to spend nine of those years on the General Council. What I would like to say in particular is that my time on the TUC Women's Committee, which I first joined in 1996 and latterly have chaired, has been one of the most important parts of my trade union life.

We are meeting here this week and there have been a number of fantastic debates, but it is against the backdrop of the rise of the far right in this country and across Europe, and we should be very, very afraid of that. I know you have debated that in this hall and in the fringe meetings, and what it means for women and women's sex-based rights should be a worry to all of us. We are on the precipice of women's rights going backwards in this country. It is up to all of us to work together in unity to ensure that the progress that has been made over the last couple of hundred years is not lost because we have not organised and we have not put our sisters first in our fight against the far right.

I will end by saying solidarity to everybody, solidarity to our sisters and brothers and I remind you that the price of progress is eternal vigilance. (*Applause*)

The President: Thanks very much, Annette. And now Liz Snape MBE from UNISON.

Liz Snape (*UNISON*): Thank you. Never one to shy away from having the last word! I will be very brief. I know you have got to get away. It has been a long but great week. A huge thank you to the many many friends and comrades across the movement. I have made so many good and I hope lasting friends over the last 38 years. That is the first time I have admitted that figure! Also to Paul and Kate and the whole team at the TUC, you run such a tight ship and you do so much with so little. It has been an absolute joy working with all of you over so many years. They are an incredible team. We are so lucky to have them.

Last but not least my wonderful union UNISON. (*Cheers*) We do not often boast about our size (we are the biggest!) but we are very much the best, and that counts. We are the best because (1) we look after each other, and (2) we organise and make sure we are strong and powerful in our workplace. I am hoping that over the next few years I will still be part of all our efforts to make sure that we go forward and we go forward stronger. It is great to have been part of this wonderful movement and the TUC. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

The President: Very well done, Liz. Christina McAnea (UNISON) and Sarah Carpenter (Unite) will also receive Gold Badges but cannot be here to collect their them in person.

Before I do a vote of thanks, there is one person that I really want to mention at Congress who is a strong, inspirational and courageous woman and who has led the way in the trade union movement in calling out sexual harassment, and that is Barbara Plant, GMB President. (*Applause*)

Vote of Thanks

The President: Congress - I now wish to make a number of votes of thanks to those who have contributed to the smooth running of Congress. It will be brief because of the time but they are sincere and heartfelt.

I would like to start by thanking Matt Wrack for his role as Vice-President and other General Council members for helping keep our speakers on time. (*Applause*)

I would like to move a vote of thanks to the staff at the Brighton Centre for all they have done to ensure that the Congress has run smoothly (*Applause*) and to the stewards for all their assistance during the week. (*Applause*)

I would also like to thank all of the Staging and AV Production in all areas QED, the verbatim reporters, Auto Cue by Scroll on Media, the BSL Interpreters Interpreting Matters, live Captioning CJ Captioning, Exhibition builders X-HIBIT, logistics U2 Events, and the brilliant musicians who have worked so hard throughout the week. (*Applause*) And of course I want to thank all the brilliant TUC staff who have assisted me brilliantly this week.

Finally, Congress, I can announce that the next President of the TUC - who takes office from the close of Congress is Simon Weller of ASLEF. (*Applause*) I wish him well and hope that he enjoys his year as President as much as I have done.

Simon Weller (*ASLEF*) I call on Jo Grady to move the vote of thanks to the President.

Jo Grady (*General Secretary, UCU*): Steve, I wanted to say thank you. Thank you for the way that you have chaired Congress and thank you for the way you have chaired General Council. Both are not easy but you have made them smoother and, dare I say, more fun because of your character, experience and class. You are an incredible trade unionist. You are at the forefront of fighting against government cuts. When they have told your members that they can't strike, you have relentlessly fought to improve their terms and conditions. I also want to highlight your work on fighting sexual harassment and misogyny, in our society, in our workplaces and in our trade union movement. Steve has been at the forefront. When so many pay lip service to equality, he has role-modelled the type of behaviour we want to see from all our brothers. (*Applause*)

As we have seen this week, it takes a special person to keep trade union leaders in line, and I think we can all agree that Steve has done a great job. (*Applause*) I do think it probably helps that we all know you know people who could lock us up.

You have watched people on this podium trying hard to make a difference, sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing, giving you hope and then taking it away, and anyway, that's enough about Celtic! I want to personally thank you for your friendship, for your advice and for your sense of humour. I was actually reflecting just now on the way you handled for instance the aftermath of Motion 75. You thanked all speakers. Some gentle and well-placed words immediately brought the entire room back together. That is a gift, Steve, and it is one that few possess. You have it in abundance. (*Applause*)

I read your statement after you became President. You talked about fighting for workers, fighting against racism, fighting for affordable housing, tackling poverty and investing in care. I tell you what, Congress, Andy Burnham could do a lot worse than spending some time in the company of Steve to set out the priorities for the UK. (*Applause*)

Steve, I do understand that you spent some of your youth in Australia, so I will end by embarrassing myself on the podium by saying G'day mate!

Simon Weller: Thank you, Jo. I call on Dave Penman to second the vote of thanks to the President.

Dave Penman (*General Secretary, FDA*): I am a first time, delegate, first-time speaker, seconding the vote of thanks and to be honest, Congress, I was a little bit surprised to be asked. Why me? What do Steve and I possibly have in common? Yes, we are middle-aged bald white men but let's face it that is half the General Council! We are neighbours. As you know, Steve, living in the same parliamentary constituency in Essex, although as a testament to our joint campaigning skills we are represented by James McMurdock, an MP who is so bad he was even chucked out by Reform!

We represent similar unions, though. Your union doesn't have the right to strike and my union doesn't like to strike, but whatever the reason, Steve, it is an honour to be asked. Steve, I want to thank you for keeping up the tradition started last year by your predecessor Mark Dickinson of a parting gift to the General Council. Mark, for those of you who don't know him, is General Secretary of Nautilus International, the maritime union, and he gave us a lovely tea towel (that is no word of a lie) with a map of the UK and all the shipping forecast areas on it. You have kept up that tradition this year, Steve, with a gift from your own industry, so on behalf of the General Council I want to thank you for the metal food tray that we can all eat our dinner of and a lovely presentation plastic knife and fork set! And thank you, Steve, for the offer of a lesson in how to sharpen that into a shiv, which I am sure will come in handy.

It is not easy being President and I think this week we all got a bit of a sense of how you ran D wing at Pentonville: A hall of 400 ill-disciplined reprobates, half of whom would happily throttle the other half - that is obviously Congress I am talking about not D wing - but your steely Glaswegian 1,000 yard stare was enough to scare most speakers into keeping to time. Even Sharon Graham kept her speech to less than 10 minutes. That is a success in itself and deserving of a Gold Badge!

But seriously, Steve, we often work alongside each other representing Civil Service unions and I know from personal experience what a powerful advocate you are on behalf of your members who do one of the most difficult jobs in public service, combining that with the role of President is a huge challenge, but you have stepped up admirably. You have chaired Conference with humour and discipline and you have kept your word about treating everyone equally regardless of who they are or the size of their union.

I want to thank you on behalf of delegates, General Council members and the TUC staff for being such an excellent President. Congress, it is an absolute honour to second the vote of thanks for Steve Gillan, POA General Secretary and President of the TUC. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

The President: Congress, thank you for all your support this week. Thank you for all you do for our movement and thank you for being part of the trade union family. I think the first-time

delegates were absolutely superb this week and the trade union movement is in very safe hands. (*Applause*)

To Jo Grady and Dave Penman, thank you so much for your very kind words. I truly am humbled. And to Paul Nowak, it has been an absolute pleasure working with Paul throughout the year and I am sure Simon will enjoy doing the same. Finally, to my union, to the support staff, to the executive members and full-time officers, and especially my mate Mick Pimblett, the Deputy General Secretary, thank you so much. Thank you to everybody. I really do appreciate the support you have given me throughout the last few days. Thank you. I now declare the 158th Congress closed. (*Applause*)

(*Congress adjourned*)

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