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TUC Congress 2009 verbatim account of proceedings

Congress Day 1: Monday 14 September

141st annual Trades Union Congress

Held at **The BT Convention Centre, Liverpool**

Congress President: **Sheila Bearcroft MBE**

This is the unedited verbatim report of the first day of the 2009 Congress as supplied by verbatim reporters Marten, Walsh, Cherer

MORNING SESSION

(Congress assembled at 10.00 a.m.)

The President (*Sheila Bearcroft*): Congress, the programme of music this week has been put together by *Music for Youth*, and many thanks to Nathan and Tom, known as NaTo, who have been playing for us this morning. (*Applause*)

Congress, I have great pleasure in opening this, the TUC's 141st Congress, and I warmly welcome all delegates and visitors here to Liverpool.

Appointment of tellers and scrutineers

The President: Congress, the first and formal item of business is to ask Congress to approve the tellers and scrutineers as set out on page 10 of the General Purposes Committee Report booklet. Is that agreed? (*Agreed*) If any teller has not yet met Mike Smith of the TUC staff would they please come to the corner of the platform, on my right, now.

May I remind all delegates to switch off their mobile phones. If there is an emergency, you will receive instructions on what to do either from me or over the tannoy. Details of evacuation procedures are posted outside of the doors to the hall next to the seating plan. There are no fire alarm tests scheduled. If you hear the alarms, it is for real. If any delegates require first aid, requests should be made to any member of the BT Convention Centre staff.

Welcome to Sororal and Fraternal Delegates

The President: Congress, I now come to the introduction of sororal and fraternal delegates and visitors who are seated behind me on my right. As usually, we have a number of international guests, although fewer than usual because of the AFL-CIO Convention which is taking place in Pittsburg this week. We will, however, be joined by the out-going AFL-CIO President, John Sweeney, by video.

Our international guests here this morning are Salvador Valdés Mesa, General Secretary of the Cuba Workers' Group of Affiliated Trade Unions, who will address us tomorrow. *(Applause)* His colleague is Raymundo Nevarro Fernandez. They are joined by Eddie Brown. *(Applause)* From Colombia we have Joaquin Romero. From the JTUC Rengo, Japan, we have Masayuki Shiota. We have with us Kirsty Drew from the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD from Paris. Later in the week we will be joined by Maria Helena Andre from the ETUC, Anna Bondi from the Workers' Bureau at the ILO and Dan Smith from the ILO. Also we will be joined by Peter Bunting from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. We know that colleagues will be coming from the DGB in Germany, from the Iraqi trade union Movement, and several others will be here as guests of affiliated unions. This year's delegate sororal from the Trades Union Councils Conference is Geraldine Murray. I would like to give you all a great welcome here to the TUC Congress. *(Applause)* As I have just said, we are expecting other guests during the week and I will introduce them to you as they arrive.

Obituary

The President: In leading in on Chapter 10 of the General Council's Report, Obituary, she said: Congress, I will now take Chapter 10 of the General Council's Report, the Obituary. It is traditional for us at the beginning of our annual Congress to remember all of the colleagues who have died since we last met. In our report we list Michael Barratt, former general secretary of the National League for the Blind and Disabled between 1979 and 1995; Laurence Daly, former national secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers from 1968 to 1984 and General Council member from 1971 to 1981; Ken Gill, former general secretary of TASS and MSF unions, and General Council member from 1974 to 1992; Amanda Hachner, President of the NASUWT in 2008; Eric Hammond, former general secretary of the EETPU and General Council member from 1983 to 1987; Bert Hazell, former President of the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers; Jack Jones, former general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union and General Council member from 1968 to 1977, who was a veteran of the International Brigade, a champion for pensioners and one of the giants of the trade union Movement; John Newman, former general secretary of NUMAST and General Council member from 1990 to 1991; Deidre Smith, chair of the Derbyshire Group Staff Union from 1998; Brian Stanley, former general secretary of the Post Office Engineering Union and General Council member from 1983 to 1986, and Mike Terry, former executive secretary of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and NUT member.

Since the report went to press, the death has occurred of Eric Nevan, former general secretary of NUMAST who served on the General Council from 1985 to 1989.

In asking you to stand in memory of these former colleagues, I ask you also to remember other trade union colleagues who have died in the past year, both here and around the world. Also, as is customary at this time, I ask that we re-commit ourselves to the cause of world peace. Please now stand for a minute's silence. *(Congress stood in silent tribute)*

Report of the General Purposes Committee

The President: Congress, I now call to upon Annette Mansell-Green of the General Purposes Committee to report to us on the progress of business and other Congress arrangements. Annette.

Annette Mansell-Green (*General Purposes Committee*): Thank you, President. Good morning, Congress. The General Purposes Committee has approved Composite Motions 1 to 20, which are set out in the GPC Report and Composite Motions booklet that you have all received. Also in the booklet is the General Council's Statement on the economy. The GPC also approved Composite 21 on public services in the economy, to be moved by UNISON and seconded by PCS, a copy of which has been placed on your seats this morning.

On behalf of the GPC, I would like to thank all of those unions which have co-operated and worked together to reach agreement on composite motions. I can report that the compositing of Motions 61, 62 and 63 has not been agreed and these will now be taken as three separate stand alone motions.

The GPC has approved Emergency Motion 1 on pleural plaques, to be moved by UCATT and seconded by Unite, which is also contained in your booklet. The GPC also approved two further emergency motions. They are Emergency Motion 2 on cuts to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme to be moved by PCS and seconded by Prospect, and Emergency Motion 3 on the Royal Mail dispute, to be moved by CWU and seconded by Unite. Copies of both of these emergency motions have also been placed on your seats this morning. The President will indicate when it is hoped the emergency motions will be taken.

You will see that the printed GPC Report indicates where the movers of motions have agreed to accept amendments to their motions. I can report that the list of Unite nominations for section A of the General Council has now been confirmed and reported to the General Council. They are Tony Burke, Gail Cartmael, Len McClusky, Doug Rooney, Derek Simpson, Pat Stewart, Tony Woodhouse and Tony Woodley. Please note that due to exceptional circumstances, the following members of the General Council will not be attending Congress this year. They are Mark Fysh, John Walsh, Alan Ritchie and Brian Orrell.

Please note that there has also been a change to the scrutineers. Paula Brown from PCS has replaced Cheryl Gedling.

May I remind you that it is intended that this morning's session of Congress will conclude at 12 noon so that delegates can take part in the silent vigil against racism and fascism. Subject to Congress approval, the GPC has agreed to suspend rule 26(a) which sets the times of sessions in order to accommodate this.

In order to ensure that we do not fall behind with Congress business, let me remind you to be ready to come to the rostrum quickly if you are scheduled to speak. Reserved seats are at the front of the hall for those wishing to speak. It is very important also that you respect speaking times which, unless reduced, are five minutes for moving a motion and three minutes for seconding a motion and all other speakers. However, delegates, it is not compulsory to use all of your allotted time.

Finally, I remind all delegates and visitors to keep their mobile phones and any other portable ringing devices switched off. Also, you will need your conference credentials and other photo ID with you at all times. I will report further to you on the progress of business and other GPC decisions where necessary throughout Congress.

I want to add that this is a particular poignant Congress for me personally because my father passed away on 1st April of this year. He was a past President of the NUT and delegate to this Congress for at least 20 years. So what I do this week is for my dad. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Congress, I now invite you to formally receive the GPC's Report. Can we agree? (*Agreed*)

Before I go on, I want to inform you that where there has been no opposition to any motion or composite, I will not be offering the right of reply as there would be nothing to reply to. Thank you, Congress.

Following on from the GPC Report, in order to conclude this morning's session of Congress at noon, so that we can take part in the silent vigil against racism and fascism, it will be necessary to suspend rule 26(a) which sets the times of Congress sessions. This needs a two-thirds majority. I now move the vote on the suspension of Standing Orders. (*Standing Orders were suspended*)

The GPC also reported the approval of Emergency Motion E1, Pleural plaques. If there is time, I will try to take this emergency motion after scheduled business this afternoon. Emergency Motion 2, which concerns cuts in the Civil Service Compensation Schemes, and Emergency Motion 3, Royal Mail dispute, will be taken later in the week and I will give you notice.

Also as reported, Motions 61, 62 and 63 will now be taken as stand alone motions in the education debate on Tuesday morning. Composite Motion 21, Public services and the economy, will be taken this afternoon as published in the Guide.

Colleagues, we begin the business of Congress with an opening address by the General Secretary, but before Brendan speaks we have a short video to remind ourselves of Liverpool's union links. (*Presentation of a video on Liverpool's union links*)

Congress, I am sure that you will join me in thanking Liverpool for that very warm welcome. Thank you, Liverpool. I now invite the General Secretary to give his address to Congress.

The General Secretary's Address

Brendan Barber (*General Secretary*): Sheila and Congress, as you said, Sheila, welcome to Liverpool, a great industrial city, a maritime city, a city that is rightly celebrating the release just a few days ago of the wrongly imprisoned Michael Shields, and wasn't that terrific news! (*Applause*) But, above all, as has been said, this is a union city. I don't know whether this is trade unionism coming home but, as you can see from the film, it is certainly quite a lot of the General Council coming home.

In recent years we've met in Brighton, but it is right to have moved this year because this Congress needs to be different. For the past few years we have taken quite a few things for granted; high employment, strong growth, increased public spending, a Labour government that we sometimes applauded and that sometimes drove us to frustration, progress on key union campaigns, disappointment on others. Even my speech to Congress had many common themes, reminding us not to forget our successes as we set out our new goals; building our membership, the only real basis for our influence with government and employers, and

saluting the real strength of our movement - our activists and reps. Let's make sure that the disgusting anti-democratic practice of blacklisting is outlawed once and for all, and let's offer our solidarity to those construction workers who have suffered because of the shameful activities of Ian Kerr and those companies who disgracefully used his services.

Congress, all those themes are still just as important. But what we must do this year is come to terms with big changes, because we are suffering the effects of biggest financial crisis since the 1920s. The resulting recession has been as deep as any we can remember. When the crash first hit, there was much talk of a classless recession. But each month since makes it clearer that while the causes are different, it's the same people again paying the highest price. Manufacturing workers have been hit hard and vulnerable workers hit the hardest. The same regions and cities that suffered last time have been hit yet again. Ordinary bank workers have been affected badly, while those at the top, those who caused this crisis, are now back at the bonus trough. And it's our young people, the future of our country, who are least to blame and yet are suffering the most. We are all familiar with the statistics: almost one in five of our young people are without work. 140,000 under-25s are long-term unemployed. But behind the facts and figures lies a human tragedy of talents wasted, horizons diminished and aspirations stubbed out.

Congress, whether young or old, joblessness is a devastating experience. Days become weeks, weeks become months, sometimes months become years - and all the while confidence is being sapped, self-esteem eroded and hope replaced by despair. Our country cannot afford to write off another generation to mass unemployment. That is why I am horrified when I hear the Conservatives talk of public expenditure cuts which would turn any progress towards economic recovery into a nosedive back into recession. On this - the biggest issue of economic policy today, which will determine our fortunes for years to come - they are profoundly on the wrong side of history and totally out of step with thinking in every other major economy.

Here in **this** city, which was so scared by the riots of the 1980s, let us remember the crippling economic and social costs of the Tory recessions, and let us resolve: never, ever, again. That's why we welcome the Government's active policies to stimulate the economy and support the hundreds of thousands of jobs that would otherwise have been lost. That's why we welcome the Future Jobs Fund and the jobs guarantee for young people. Indeed, we want these measures to go further. My hope for the Prime Minister's speech tomorrow is that we will hear even more about help for those who need it most.

There is beginning to be talk of recovery, but we need to be careful. Too many people want to avoid facing up to the lessons of the crash. This was no ordinary slow-down but a financial meltdown. It was made in bank boardrooms. It happened because politicians bought the line that finance should be king and deregulation the answer to every problem. Activities now so well described by Adair Turner as 'socially useless' were seen as economically essential. Set finance free we were told. Have a bonfire of regulations. Let the super-rich get even richer as it will somehow trickle down to the rest of us - and don't annoy them by asking them to pay too much tax. Manufacturing is old fashioned. Let the City rule. Greed is good. Those were the watchwords. And those who still preach that creed want us to forget the crash and tell us that the economy is now in recovery so they can re-engage the free-market autopilot.

But the economy has fallen off a cliff! Green shoots mean little when thousands of people a day are joining the dole queue. Rising share prices count for little when a million and more

young people can't find work. And bumper bonuses are an obscene joke when it was our money that rescued the banks and it is our public services that are now being told they will have to face the consequences.

Congress, it's only when unemployment starts coming down, only when we create decent jobs that pay decent wages, and only when vital public services are safe from cuts that we will be able to talk about a real recovery.

Whatever the statistics say, the bad economic news is not over. Banks are still not lending as much as they should but are rebuilding their balance sheets. Businesses are not investing. Consumers are slow to spend. That is why public spending and state intervention has to fill the gap. This Government did well to stop the threat of financial catastrophe. If the banks had collapsed we would not have had recession, but an economic nuclear winter. Ministers were right to step up public spending. The Bank of England has been right to pump liquidity into the system through quantitative easing. Make no mistake - things may be bad but without that action they would be very much worse. Those who now talk of recovery are not saying how well all this intervention has worked. Quite the opposite. They want to pretend the financial crisis was no more than a little local difficulty and now it can be back to business as usual and bonuses as usual.

Instead, they are arguing that the public sector deficit is now the big problem. We have to take that argument head on, because a public sector deficit is inevitable in a recession. It's a symptom - not a cause - a symptom not just of a reduce tax take, not just of an increased benefits spend, but also of the £1.3 trillion of taxpayer money now propping up the banks, the biggest case of market failure in our history. But try and cut a deficit during a recession and you just make the situation worse. But we can't accuse others of not realizing the world has changed, if we don't. Yes, trying to close the deficit now will make it worse. But in the medium and long term, it must start to come down and that is going to mean some hard choices. This is not a debate that unions can ignore. It's going to be the big national debate of the next election and the next Parliament.

There is a simple issue at stake: it's fairness. Just as young people should not pay the price for the recession, nor should those who depend on vital public services foot the bill for reducing the deficit. All that extra investment of the last 12 years in our schools and hospitals must not now be allowed to go to waste, and nor should our vital public services face the disastrous prospect of yet more privatisation and fragmentation. So we will need to be very clear about how we are going to cut our national debt. Tax increases are inevitable. The question is who will pay them: poor and average earners or the best-off? Fairness, surely, demands the latter.

The TUC has led the debate in exposing how the super-rich and big companies dodge their taxes. Closing those loop-holes must be the start. While we welcome the higher taxes on those earning more than £150,000 in the Budget, there's much more to do to make the tax system fair. Of course, spending will also come under scrutiny. If times are tough, why are we spending massively more each year on pensions tax relief for higher rate taxpayers than we are on public sector pensions? If times are tough, then why are we splashing out on ID cards that people don't want and experts say won't work? And if times are tough, and our defence needs are now profoundly different in a new terrorism-threatened, post cold war world then why are we planning a new generation of nuclear weapons? *(Applause)* I think that spending countless billions on new nukes when we are failing to meet our targets on child poverty is wrong, wrong, wrong. *(Applause)*

Congress, there has never been a time when the energy and the determination of our Movement has been more needed. Campaigning, like we did in the unprecedented *Put People First* coalition that we brought together in the run up to the London G20 Summit making the case for Jobs, Justice and Climate; fighting to defend decent pensions, including for six million public service workers who reached an honourable deal only four years ago that both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats now want to rip up, and delivering that fairer deal for agency workers promised by the European Directive. Come on, Gordon, let's see that legislation introduced now. *(Applause)* And delivering solidarity to brothers and sisters around the world fighting their own battles to deliver basic decency for justice for working people.

Since our last Congress we've received the grim news of even more brutal attacks on good trade union colleagues in Colombia - even assassinations. They still need our help.

Our President, Sheila, and I talked at first hand only a couple of weeks ago in Harare with our Zimbabwean colleagues who, with a rare steadfast courage, are striving to build a new Zimbabwe out of the utter devastation of the Mugabe years. They still need our help. And I talked in Cuba with the wives and families of the Miami 5 of their continuing struggle for basic justice. They still need our help, too. *(Applause)*

In Havana I had the special pleasure of attending the May Day celebrations this year marking the 50th Anniversary of the revolution and the 70th Anniversary of the founding of the CTC. It is a real pleasure to have Salvador and Raymundo with us this week. Let me tell you, in Havana on May Day they really know how to throw a party. *(Laughter)*

Solidarity is what this movement is about all around the world. We are going to need to maintain solidarity and trade union cohesion here at home over this next period too, whatever happens in the next general election.

Congress, we lost someone who had solidarity coursing through his veins. He was born 96 years ago just down the river from here. He spilled blood fighting fascism in Spain. He was an outstanding champion of workers and of pensions. As an activist in Liverpool during the Great Depression, he knew what hard times meant for working people. Jack Jones was an inspiration to us all, a true colossus of the labour Movement and we will never forget him. At this time of great uncertainty, in the midst still of this economic crisis, let us resolve to fight for those causes that Jack did so much to advance, speaking up for decent jobs, workers' rights and public services; speaking out against greed, exploitation and discrimination, and ensuring that when this storm subsides, Britain emerges a better, fairer, more equal place.

Thanks for listening. Let's have a great Congress. *(Applause)*

The President: Thank you, Brendan, for that inspiring speech reminding us of the values at the heart of trade unionism and the importance of trade union unity in the months and the years ahead.

Economic and Industrial Affairs

The President: Delegates, we turn now to Chapter 3 of the General Council Report, Economic and Industrial Affairs and the National Health Service on page 80, and I call paragraphs 3.1 and 3.14, and Composite Motion 16, Defending the NHS. The General

Council support the composite motion to be moved by UNISON, seconded by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, and supporters, the Society of Radiographers and Unite, and GMB have indicated that they wish to put a supporter in. Thank you, colleagues.

Defending the NHS

(Insert Composition Motion 16 - Defending the NHS)

Lilian Macer (*UNISON*) moved Composite Motion 16.

She said: Congress, during the summer we have seen an unprecedented outburst of emotion in defence of our NHS. This was prompted by a campaign of lies and misrepresentation by right-wingers from both sides of the Atlantic lining up to abuse the NHS as a way of protecting the interests of American health insurance companies. The reality is that our NHS continues to provide excellent care regardless of income or employment and at a fraction of the cost of the American system, a system that is bogged down in market bureaucracy and leaves millions without health insurance.

As part of our *Million Voices* campaign UNISON made the point of highlighting these issues and rebutting the myths in a fact file that we sent to our sister unions in the States. We are not the only ones. The response from the British public was spontaneous and for those working in the service extremely heartening but, most importantly, the whole debate helped us focus our minds on exactly what fate may await patients if we let our NHS go the way of the American healthcare system. We cannot allow this to happen and yet if we are not careful that is exactly where we will end up.

The composite highlights and lists a long line of initiatives designed to impose a market system on the NHS in England. Firstly, the Transforming Community Services Programme intensifies the purchase providers' footing and sets competing healthcare providers against one another, and is creating a larger role for private companies and social enterprises. For patients this means having to work their way through an intensively fragmented complex system where providers have no incentive to work together to produce a seamless smooth pathway of care. For staff it means jobs, pensions, and other terms and conditions coming under threat. The safeguards set up to facilitate an easier passage for staff moving into social enterprises are not sufficient.

Secondly, in case local health commissioners are not sufficiently zealous in their drive to hive off services there is a new body to keep an eye on them. The title Cooperation and Competition Panel is a complete misnomer. There is nothing cooperative about it. Make no mistake, the Panel is there to enforce the opportunity for private companies to make further inroads into healthcare provision. If taken at face value, the interim guidance would block virtually all public sector mergers within the NHS.

Thirdly, we have the ludicrous title, Necessity not Nicety. When the NHS Together coalition originally came together one of its major achievements was to force government back round the table. The revamped NHS Social Partnership Forum gives unions the opportunity to be involved at the earliest stage of decisions that affect our members and at the very least be informed of latest developments, and yet in May this year the Department of Health chose to circumvent the SPF when it parachuted in its latest piece of market madness at a time of the most serious recession since the 1930s. Necessity not Nicety proposes spending an extra

£20m setting up a series of commercial support units to support the NHS to develop local markets. To quote directly from this esteemed publication, it states quite openly its desire to maximise the contribution from the third and private sector organisations. Shortly after this came out the unions did secure a partial retraction from Health Minister, Ann Keen, when she stated that in spite of recent publications the NHS remains the government's preferred provider of care. It was also around the time that the Department's Director General for Commissioning, Mark Bucknell, decided to leave the department. Where did he go? Yes, to KPMG!

It is not surprising that the Government continue to favour the market solution when the revolving door between consultancy and government keeps on spinning. At the start of this month an accounting report from the Department of Health was leaked. They recommended massive job cuts. What a surprise! After all, they could not recommend cutting the waste in the market system because then the opportunity for firms such as McKinsey, who would be involved in providing commissioning advice, might disappear. I have an alternative. How about cutting the number of market consultants within the NHS? (*Applause*) Recent reports have shown that hundreds of millions of pounds have been wasted by the Department and apparently with no way of checking whether these consultants are providing value for money, and when we talk of alternatives we have to remember there is another way. In Scotland and Wales markets have been abolished in favour of greater integration and, guess what, the world has not ended. In fact, the devolved countries have shown a perfectly plausible way of delivering improvements without resorting to the short-sighted policies used in England.

It is good that we are having this debate here today and it is excellent that it is based on a composite. It demonstrates the unity and strength of purpose across the TUC. NHS Together has continued to lobby hard for change and we remain confident that we can make the Government see the error of their ways before it is too late. But to conclude, Congress, the Government need to know this: union members from UNISON and across the TUC will not stand idly by and watch our NHS being dismantled piece by piece. Congress, please support.

Lesley Mercer (*Chartered Society of Physiotherapy*) seconded Composite Motion 16.

She said: Speaking of myth-busting who should we trust on the NHS these days? Is it the kind of Euro MP that recently said he would not wish the NHS on anyone? Is it the media with their relentless pursuit of bad news stories about the NHS? Is it any of the political parties who say that they care about the NHS but are not coming clean on their plans for it? Are these the kind of people that we should be trusting or should we be trusting the hundreds of thousands of healthcare workers who show every day in their working lives how much they care? Should we be trusting our Government who have invested for 10 years consistently and have brought down waiting times dramatically, have improved the chances of everyone in this room of surviving the two big killers of cancer and heart disease, and for the first government ever to start taking health promotion seriously?

Congress, these are really concrete achievements borne out by just about every patient survey carried out in recent years. We should be celebrating it. We should not be listening to the self-serving propaganda that runs down our NHS. But the future is not totally safe. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, the impact of the recession is starting to be felt in the NHS. The pressure, I fear, is building for short-term cuts at the expense of long-term improvements and health maintenance. We have, I think as the previous speaker said, built up really good partnership arrangements in the Health Service and we are really going to need them. I personally feel,

and I have always felt that it is only by government, employers, workers and unions working together can we actually maintain progress and go further.

There is one thing that health unions will never, though, help or support and that is in the area of competition. It is fragmenting our services. It is sapping staff morale. It is wasting huge amounts of money and it is destroying the cooperation that is so vital to the NHS by pitting trust against trust. It all goes by the name of World Class Commissioning, so look out for that name. I dare anybody to go to the CSP members working at the Royal Free Trust in London who have just seen their world-class physiotherapy service sold off to the private sector. Congress, we need to stop this mad experiment through NHS Together and through the whole of the trade union Movement. Please support this motion.

Tracey Taylor (*Society of Radiographers*) supported Composite Motion 16.

She said: Chair, delegates, if it is not nerve-racking enough standing for the first time addressing Congress, my delegation thought it would be a good idea for me to have a prop - the egg. The egg has been security-checked and cleared for attendance. Congress acknowledges the vast improvement to the NHS as a result of the increased investment in both staff and services. However, some of the drivers used by government are in danger of damaging the relationship between the NHS professional, UK public, and patients. The focus of increased quality and increased productivity at a reduced cost cannot be ignored. We are all investors in and potential customers of the NHS. We all want value for money. The downfall of applying business-driven principles to the NHS is that our units do not come on a production line down a conveyor belt. The wonderful human being comes in all shapes and sizes. We love the variety. We are people people.

Evidence gathered by the Society of Radiographers shows that in an efficiency drive to reduce the cost of the successful breast screening programme some commissioners want service providers to halve the time of an appointment from six to three minutes. Ladies attending breast screening are anxious. This is a procedure that involves intimate handling in the positioning of the breast, two images of each breast, and each image must be of the highest quality to enable the finest microscopic detail to be visible of the whole breast tissue, to enable the diagnosis of potential life-threatening disease. There is no room for error. Radiographic practitioners are highly competent in what they do but irresponsible throughput increases the risk of repetitive stress injury. Evidence shows that where appointments have been reduced staff absence rates through sickness increase. Any potential saving is negated and the screening programme fails. No one wins.

Congress, in the three minutes I have been allocated to this speech I have not had time to boil the egg, never mind having to greet, put at ease, handle your wife's, mother's, sister's or daughter's breasts, but this is not the service our parents and grandparents laid the foundations for. Congress, please support this motion and ensure the mantra for economic savings does not damage our NHS for future generations.

The President: Thank you very much, colleague. For a first-time delegate at the rostrum that was an excellent part of the debate.

Gail Cartmail (*Unite the union*) supported Composite Motion 16.

She said: I want to start, if I may, by quoting one of our members, Nicky, who told us why she joined 3,000 other of our members in signing a letter to Andy Burnham. She said: 'I work in a pathology department that has currently been approached by a private firm. Their terms and conditions and methods of working go against all the principles of providing a quality service that puts patients' care first.'

The motion points out that the UK Government's current agenda is opening the way for future governments to dismantle the NHS. Previous speakers have very eloquently itemised the complex structures of marketisation of the NHS. The estimated cost to oil the wheels of these financial transactions is a staggering yearly £20bn, a step toward the USA-style transaction costs. In the USA, where private healthcare is most developed, they spend over 16% of their gross domestic produce on health yet more than 45 million Americans lack health insurance. Britain spends half of that yet the NHS covers everybody. In his speech to the joint sessions of Congress on healthcare reform earlier this month President Obama said: 'We spend one-and-a-half times more per person on healthcare than any other country but we aren't any the healthier for it. This is one of the reasons that insurance premiums have gone up three times faster than wages.' President Obama is valiantly fighting for social healthcare in America.

In Britain there are an estimated 149 PFI hospitals valued at £12.27bn but the NHS spends £70.5bn for them. It is cheaper and would save government money to buy out these contracts. We can pull away from the brink of privatisation. I would just like to wind up, chair, if I may, by quoting Robin: 'Health is not a business and to treat it as such dehumanises the patient, reducing her to nothing more than a unit, to be treated or sacrificed depending on her cost to the company coffers,' and her colleague Sarah says: 'Because health is a basic human right and not a business opportunity I will fight to defend the NHS.' Thank you.

Sharon Holder (*GMB*) supported Composite Motion 16.

She said: The NHS has made huge progress during the past few years delivering a quality and innovative service through a well-trained and committed workforce. The D'Arcy Review showed a welcome focus on the importance of staff, patients, and community engagement and there has been real improvement in staff consultation and trade union involvement, but the GMB is extremely concerned about the increasing focus on outsourcing of NHS services. The government state their preference for direct delivery of NHS services yet the real agenda is demonstrated by the initiatives rolled out by the Department of Health. The Transforming of Community Services Programme, the Necessity not Nicety, and the Cooperation and Competition Panels initiatives are all proof of the drive towards privatisation. For 'transformation' read 'privatisation'.

We often hear statements about joined-up services but this policy will only lead to chaos and fragmentation of services. While billions of pounds are wasted on driving the privatisation agenda, there is no evidence that competition actually delivers better public services. In fact, we believe it makes things worse, both for the quality of services to patients and the livelihoods of the workforce. There is plenty of evidence that outsourcing leads to the attacks on terms and conditions and pensions of staff. TUPE and the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters may provide a degree of protection to staff but there is constant downward pressure on terms and conditions to save costs while employers get away with providing lesser terms and conditions, and pensions, to new staff creating a two-tier workforce. The delivery of high-quality services arises with the training, development and motivation of the workforce.

Independent sector providers have little incentive to provide training and development. After all, their main aim is about profit.

The GMB is proud of the commitment and loyalty of our members working in the NHS but attacks on terms and conditions and the lack of opportunity to develop skills are bound to affect their motivation and morale. In turn, the quality of care is bound to suffer if the workforce is underdeveloped and de-motivated. Yet through Agenda for Change and working with the NHS unions the NHS has progressed in recent years and can continue to do so, given the chance. We believe that through service review and a level playing field in-house NHS services can provide the high-quality care that patients need. The GMB calls on the Government to reverse the privatisation agenda before it is too late, before it gives future governments the excuse and the chance to completely destroy the NHS. We call on the Government to save our NHS.

** Composite Motion 16 was CARRIED*

The President: I now call Motion 55, NHS waiting time targets. The General Council's stand is to support the motion.

NHS waiting time targets

(Insert Motion 55 - NHS waiting time targets)

Sue Johnson (*Society of Radiographers*) moved Motion 55.

She said: I, too, am a first-time delegate so please ignore the sound of knocking knees. (*Applause*) Thank you. As already mentioned, those of you who have been patients using the NHS in recent years have experienced many changes. You will have seen vast improvements in your healthcare. Despite the horror stories often promoted by the media there are a great deal of good news stories within the NHS. Patients are benefiting greatly from major investment in both staff and facilities. There has also been huge expenditure on technology. In many cases the tests asked for will be scans or X-rays carried out in a diagnostic imaging department, or X-ray department as many of us know them. Radiographers and assistants, our members, work alongside doctors, nurses, and clerical support staff in these departments. Radiographers are at the forefront of delivering both diagnostic and therapy services. We have a high level of skill and take great pride in the quality of the service that we provide.

You will have seen a big improvement in the time it takes from referral by your general practitioner for tests to actually having the test that you need. For example, MRI scans did take over a year before you were sent your appointment but now the maximum time is six weeks. At the same time, you now have better and easier ways to get a diagnosis and there are lots of new equipment and techniques at our disposal. Our members have made great efforts to make sure we work efficiently and effectively. The task of bringing waiting times down is a challenge but one that we willingly take if it improves the outcome for patients.

Recently, the Government have introduced a new indirect target. The primary care trust which pays for the tests that we as patients have tell us that if the NHS cannot provide the tests within two weeks from the date of referral they may send patients to the private sector. This means the funding would go there as well. We have been achieving a target of six weeks from the date of referral to the date of the test for some while now. To bring this down to two

weeks in some areas will have a significant impact on the ability of our members to deliver the service in a safe way. This is a real slap in the face for all NHS workers who have worked so hard to achieve the targets.

There is no more money, we know, for additional resources in either equipment or staff. This means that the only way to increase capacity is to decrease the time each scan or X-ray takes and use the equipment for 24 hours a day. Under these conditions the idea of providing personalised individual care is seriously threatened. A high-quality X-ray examination or scan requires the appointment to have been booked correctly to ensure you that you have all the right information and that you are the right patient attending at the right time for the right test. As a patient you would also expect that our members would have the time to talk to you, explain what is going to happen, and answer any queries before they then concentrate on performing the test accurately and with a high level of skill. However, with pressure to decrease examination times something has to give and our members are finding that having the time to provide a caring high-quality examination is being squeezed. One consequence of this is that more errors are likely to be made. The sausage factory booking system means there is no leeway for delay. If you are an anxious patient who needs a bit more time or a less mobile patient who requires a bit more support and assistance while having a test, this no longer exists. The pressure to push patients through takes away our time to care, and focuses purely on workload. Professional radiography managers are pushing their staff to hit targets while they themselves may face serious consequences.

This Government want quality, not quantity, but this is what is happening on the ground. This Government are being two-faced about health policy. Patients cannot always be prioritised based on clinical need. Now we focus on the requirement for them not to breach the waiting time target. Our primary aim seems to have become achieving the target, not providing the best care for the patient. To increase our ability to hit the targets we need to work longer hours and staff are becoming exhausted as overtime becomes the norm rather than the exception. Anecdotally, staff are also feeling the stress of high workloads and time pressures. I have already mentioned the stress placed on managers to hit the target. Please support this motion that puts pressure on government to revise its focus on targets. Lord D'Arcy has already found we need to focus on provision of a quality service and all we ask is the ability to use our professional skills and knowledge to ensure that you as patients receive the diagnostic imaging test that you need. Thank you.

Clare Williams (*UNISON*) seconded Motion 55.

She said: I am very pleased to be seconding this motion on such an important debate and topic. Other speakers have already said in the previous discussion that there have been record levels of investment in the NHS and I think we have to acknowledge that actually the NHS of today is very different to the NHS of 1997. The NHS of 1997 was actually one of the worst in Europe and at the bottom of the league tables. Actually, our NHS now is cited as being one of the best in the world. There have been large record amounts of investment and we have higher numbers of frontline staff than we have ever had before. I think we have to acknowledge that targets have played a part in improving standards. Of course, everybody accepts that you do not want people waiting years for operations or years to access services. However, the other side of that coin is that actually many targets are having unexpected and quite negative consequences.

For example, UNISON, and I am sure many others, is well aware of the four-hour wait in Accident & Emergency Departments. That resulted in not a better access for people who needed it but actually people having to lie in the back of ambulances so that trusts did not fail in meeting their four-hour targets. I have said that I am sure targets are intended to push up standards but I think we do need to look at the evidence that is increasingly telling us that many of these targets are backfiring. Many targets are now actually creating stress in services that are actually impacting on the quality of care that can be delivered, that are putting immense pressure on healthcare workers who work often in very challenging situations and increasingly in an environment of increased efficiencies and increased expectations of productivity.

So, we want to call on the Government to be open and honest about these targets and actually to listen to us and our members who deliver healthcare. We know that the private sector does not deliver the best healthcare and we think its introduction to meet targets is counterproductive and unnecessary. We do not need artificially created measures to say, 'Let's get the private sector to do it better.' We have already given them £5bn on independent treatment centres not to deliver operations. That is not quality, and that is not efficiency. We need the Government to take a sober look at the direction of the NHS. I think we need a new vision and we need a new direction. That needs to be one where we do not have central targets, where we do not have markets in healthcare and where we do not have privatisation. Of course, we all want quality healthcare, of course we all agree we should not have long waiting times, but let's not create artificial arguments, let's not use that to introduce privatisation. Let's build on the best of the healthcare, which is working with healthcare workers for quality healthcare in the public sector. Thank you very much.

* *Motion 55 was CARRIED*

Equal Rights

The President: Delegates, we now turn to Chapter 2 of the General Council's Report, Equal Rights, Anti-Racism, and Tackling the far right, from page 33. I call paragraphs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, and 2.6, and Composite Motion 6, Opposing the far right. The General Council support the composite motion.

Opposing the far right

(Insert Composition Motion 6 - Opposing the far right)

Rena Wood (*UNISON*) moved Composite 6.

She said: Delegates, I am very conscious whenever I speak on any platform on this issue that people think I am preaching to the converted, or 'I have heard it all before'. Well, clearly, we have not been listening very hard. The fact is that we have needed it up in this region with Nick Griffin, the leader of the BNP, having a seat in the European Parliament. The irony is the BNP was elected on fewer votes than were cast in 2004. We know why that is. People are disaffected, they are disengaged from the political process, and we have a job of work to do to re-engage those people. What kind of world are we living in when *Question Time* is going to offer a seat to Nick Griffin to speak? *Question Time* on the BBC - our public sector broadcaster! What is going on? We should be protesting about that. There is legislation that applies to the public sector about equality duties and race relations. Does that not apply to the

BBC? Everybody in here should be making phone calls, sending emails, and protesting, and particularly the trade unions who work in the media.

I have to say that we have worked with Searchlight. If you or your branch, an affiliated union sat in this hall, are not affiliated to Searchlight, you need to do that because the work that Searchlight has done, the information it has given us, and the support, is just so invaluable. I hope everybody sat in here, if you were able to, supported Searchlight's trade union Friday events. The work we did around that was fantastic and my own union produced *UNISON Specific*, with ten reasons why you should join the union, why our values are different to the BNP, and we even had Eddie Izzard who spoke at a Hope not Hate function. That created a lot of interest. We were giving out the paper but a lot of people were saying that they did not want to take the paper. 'Don't you like Eddie Izzard? Read what he has to say.' They were so disgusted with politics they would never vote for the BNP but they were not going to cast *their* vote. That is the issue. There are a lot of disaffected people out there who traditionally support Labour, who could cast their votes but fail to vote. We have to do something about that.

I am very pleased in terms of the work that the PFA have done. For us as a trade union young people are the key. They are the key to our own activism, our own succession, but also in the work that our members do as youth workers. Young people are so disaffected that their voices are not heard loud enough and we have to do something to bring them on board, to engage with them. There is no difference actually between a young white male who supported the BNP because he does not see the mainstream politics representing his views and somebody who comes from a Muslim background and wants to join a jihad. The issue is that we have collectively failed our disaffected youth, and we have to do something about that. They are alienated. They are disengaged. Clearly, there is an abject failure in terms of social and economic policy but what is interesting about the vote for the BNP is the fact that some of the electorate are hardcore racists. There is no escaping that. Some people are disillusioned. They are not necessarily racists but they believe what the BNP say. We cannot escape from the fact some members of our own trade unions are hardcore racists. We know that in *UNISON* we have BNP members. It is unfortunate in our own conference we were not able to have a real chance to expel them but as a trade union movement we need to start doing things like that. We need to kick these people out because their values are absolutely nothing to do with our values. We have to get that message out there.

The other thing is *Show Racism the Red Card*. If your branches are not affiliated to that then shame on you, you really ought to be. The message is about getting it out to the wider community. It is not just about us defending our jobs and defending our values, but it is about talking to people who are unemployed, and that unemployment will grow in times of recession so those people do not have the opportunity to get that political education that we have access to. We work as a collective. That is what trade unionism is about. I am really pleased that we are here in Liverpool and with the film that we saw earlier. Liverpool has that proud history of trade unionism but, more importantly, the people of Liverpool did not buy *The Sun* for more than a decade. (*Applause*) So, what it shows us is that working class people can unite, can work as a collective; they can do it. It is up to us to tell them. This struggle is everybody's struggle. It is in our interests to defend our needs to fight for social justice and equality. We can do it and, as they say in Liverpool, you will never walk alone. Please support this composite.

Janice Godrich (*Public and Commercial Services Union*) seconded Composite Motion 6.

She said: Congress, we all agree that the BNP and the far right have no part to play in a civilised society. Their policies are anathema and run in direct opposition to the principles that underpin our Movement, namely, unity and solidarity. It is important that we discuss today how to develop the best policies to eradicate the BNP and then, vitally, put those policies in place as a matter of urgency in the run-up to next year's general election. In doing so PCS believes we need to look at what underpins the support for the BNP, what unions can do in the workplace, and what campaign activities should the trade union Movement as a whole be undertaking.

It is clear that the recent electoral success of the BNP was due to a collapse in votes for the Labour Party in traditional so-called stronghold areas. Mainstream parties urgently need to address the serious gaps in their policies that allow the BNP and the far right to exploit diversion and lack of investment to suit their own ends. Rising unemployment, poor access to decent public services, privatisation and bad housing all contribute to alienate people and allow the germs of the BNP to spread. But as importantly it is about building in the communities where the BNP exist, taking them on, on their own ground, and by taking them on defeating them.

Since the BNP was formed in 1982 trade unionists have opposed it. PCS believes that united action in many cases led by trade unions uniting communities and workers is a key to defeating the far right and vitally show those workers who are attacked by the BNP that we are firmly on their side: for example, opposing and defeating racist measures of ethnic monitoring, proposed by the Tories under Thatcher when they wanted to twist statistics to claim that black people were out of work because they were not looking for work; by organising a one-day strike of civil servants in London in 1988 when it came to light that Malcolm Skeggs, a leading member of the BNP, was employed in a DHSS office in Hither Green, which was a campaign that resulted in him being removed.

In PCS our most recent activity was focused around the *Make Your Vote Count* campaign in the European elections where we did numerous campaigning activities in conjunction with trade unions and community action groups in order to expose the true racist policies of the BNP, including organising a major protest at Home Office offices in Croydon where, disgracefully, the BNP were given permission to hold a demonstration. We must campaign to prevent fascists and racists working in the Civil Service as public servants. We do not think it is acceptable that you can be a fascist at weekends and then stroll into work on Monday morning and have access to sensitive information about citizens from across our communities.

Congress, inclusive and collective organisation in the workplaces and communities is a key to defeating the far right. We want a society that aspires to represent everyone who feels disenfranchised, alienated and excluded. Colleagues, we fight the BNP not just because their views are repugnant and based on ignorance, but because they seek to divide us, to separate worker from worker, when we know that unity is our strength and we need that strength to defend our jobs, our conditions and our communities. Please support.

Tim Wilson (*Napo*) supported Composite 6.

He said: Conference, I want you to picture a little girl running down BottleBank down to the River Tyne in Gateshead in the early part of the 20th century. She was Jewish. She was running because she was terrified. She was being pursued by anti-Semitic thugs with taunts,

threats and sticks. Fifty years later, she told her grandchild (a work colleague of mine today), 'Don't tell anyone you are Jewish. It might seem okay now, but you can't be sure. Things might get worse again.'

Well, Congress, things are getting worse with the election of two BNP Euro MPs and BNP local councillors. They are getting worse for Jewish, black and Asian people, eastern European, Roma, lesbian and gay people. Accompanying all this is a risk that we become desensitised through the mixed messages: 'Should the BNP be allowed on Question Time?' type of blandishments. These are the messages of mischief which strengthen the BNP's confidence and ultimately lead to full-blown corrosive incitement, dehumanising threats and hate crime attacks, the process of murmur to murder identified by the Stephen Lawrence inquiry. We should not indulge this weak-hearted agonising. Ours must be a solid shout - no platform for the BNP; no acceptance of their inhuman doctrines. (*Applause*)

Congress, our Napo probation staff work with the offenders who perpetuate crimes and hate against minorities in this country. Napo members challenge their distorted beliefs and victimising behaviour and yet it is still possible for a probation employee to be a BNP member. Why can this be? The police do not allow it for their staff. The prison service does not either. Such inconsistency gives a message of equivocation and serves only to appease the BNP and normalise them in the eyes of those who might vote for them.

As trade unionists, we should all be demanding that our employers ban BNP members from the workforce where they can spread their pernicious message. 'Not in my name' means us standing firm and not allowing a platform for the bigotry, hatred and violence of the far right. 'Not in anyone's name' requires us to unite all our anti-Nazi efforts to form an implacable wall against the BNP and its brown-shirt outriders, the English Defence League, the National Front and so on. We must unite and not repeat the mistakes of the anti-Nazi factions of early 1930s Germany.

Napo is working with, amongst others, 'Hope not Hate', 'Unite against Fascism' and 'Love Music, Hate Racism', which are supporting our AGM in a couple of weeks. We are joining in supporting rallies, protests, marches and other events. We hope to see all trade union comrades face down the BNP and stop the rot. Please support Composite 6.

Nick Cusack (*Professional Footballers' Association*) supported Composite 6.

He said: The emergence of the BNP in the last couple of years reminds us that the fight against racism and intolerance in our society is far from over. Our Movement has played a leading role in shaping our country and ensuring that the freedoms and liberties that we hold dear are every citizen's right. The fascists of the BNP want to dismantle these inalienable rights for all and establish a new order that is built on the discredited and wholly unjust ways of long-gone days when people from ethnic minorities faced terrible discrimination and virulent hostility.

Inequality still permeates our society, but we have made great strides in combating this and trade unions have been at the forefront in this crusade. We cannot allow the extremists of the right to seize the initiative and take our country back to the dark days of the past where racial hatred and division was endemic. Recent election success has provided the BNP with much publicity and a platform to promote their objectionable views and policies. The new way they present themselves and the playing down of their extreme credentials may fool some, but

behind the veneer of respectability that they are trying to portray as a party and ideology brings hate and ferments conflict and disharmony in cities and towns the length and breadth of the country.

Trade unions have always challenged the far right and fought hard to stop them gaining support and momentum amongst working people. This fight and struggle has taken place in football with the PFA showing true leadership and courage in rooting out the fascists and racists at every turn. In the days when black players were subjected to appalling racist abuse and ethnic minority supporters dare not attend a match for fear of violence and intimidation, the PFA stood up and demanded action. The campaigning work of the PFA in conjunction with our partners 'Kick It Out' and 'Show Racism the Red Card' has transformed the football landscape with players of all backgrounds, nationality and ethnicity now able to excite and thrill legions of multi-ethnic supporters free from abuse and prejudice.

This transformation has come about through player solidarity and the determination of the union to fight for all our members' rights irrespective of the mood, the times and the disinterest of the authorities. This pioneering work and the resolute way the PFA has pursued the cause of equality and the right to decent treatment on and off the field in football illustrates powerfully the influence of workers and their union in bringing about fundamental changes in an industry that then has a profound impact on society as a whole.

The PFA is a union full of individuals who have never been afraid to stand up for what is right and fight with all their might to oppose evil and poisonous elements in our midst. The role that our members have played thus far in the war on racism, and will continue to wage against the pernicious and divisive policies of the BNP, serves as a rallying call to all trade unionists to show similar strength of purpose and resolve in this fight.

I know that there are times when different elements within the Labour Movement cannot easily reconcile their opposing positions, but I am absolutely certain that in this fight we are all in it together. The PFA is determined to do all it can to defeat the BNP and their racist agenda and calls on all our colleagues within the trade union fraternity to join with us and not rest until the war on racism is won. I support the motion. (*Cries of 'Hear, hear' and applause*)

Julian Chapman (NASUWT) supported Composite 6.

He said: Congress, amongst those BNP candidates regrettably elected to public office are persons who have been convicted for denying the Holocaust and for inciting racial hatred. Adherents of the BNP have also been involved in violent attacks and in terrorism. The policies of the BNP run completely counter to the values and ethos of public service. Those values which we hold dear are about tolerance, inclusion, social justice and community cohesion. It is for these reasons that the NASUWT continues to prosecute the union's long-running campaign to amend the teachers' contracts to prevent members of the BNP from being employed in education and indeed in all public services.

This week, NASUWT launched an additional dimension to our campaign to prevent the BNP serving as members of governing bodies. We are also, on the basis of legal advice, preparing to mount a judicial review in circumstances where BNP councillors hold office on governing bodies. The role we must play is to expose the BNP's cynical use of the democratic process, whether in local, national or European elections, or when seeking election to school

governing bodies. They seek to cloak themselves in respectability while at the same time promoting the politics of thuggery.

The trade union Movement has a proud history. Congress has led the way during the past 70 years in the fight against fascism and the march of Hitler and the Nazis. The debate on this motion today highlights the critical role the trade union Movement must continue to play to create a society free from fear, intolerance and hatred.

Congress, in the interests of community cohesion, justice and fairness, please support Composite 6.

Colin Moses (*POA*) supported Composite 6.

He said: Congress, you may read on a daily basis about the industrial strife inside the Prison Service between the POA and its employer, but one thing we stand shoulder to shoulder with them on is to ban extremists from employment in the Prison Service. The reason I have come to the rostrum to speak today is to say that every union at this Congress should have its employer do the same. Why should we give sustenance to people to be employed, especially in public sector areas, who hold extreme views?

The workplace is shared by the employer and the unions. If the Prison Service can ban them, you can ban them and they should be banned. In regard to debates about whether the BNP should be allowed on *Question Time*, the answer is 'No'. That is what this Congress should be saying: 'No, no, no.' (*Applause*)

I am actually disappointed that there are not any government ministers to hear this debate today because we could send them a clear message as well. On a daily basis, as I meet employers - and more worrying for me as I meet elements of my membership - they tell me that the BNP is a recognised political party, but recognised by whom? Is it the extremist, the thug or those who wish to take their violence onto the streets? They are not the people that we want to stand alongside in employment. Their employer should be able to say to them, 'No' and we should also be able to say to them 'No' as a political party.

As regards the BBC, recently over your breakfasts on a Sunday morning, you had to watch Marr interviewing the head of the BNP and legitimising him. That was wrong. What we should be saying quite clearly is that the time has come, after much talk at this Congress, to stand up and say, 'No' to them solidly, to say that there is no place for them in our society, that there is no place for them in our employment and that it will end racism. We can end it if we stand shoulder to shoulder. Thank you, Congress.

Tim Lezard (*National Union of Journalists*) supported Composite 6.

He said: The NUJ's policy against the BNP is to challenge them. Let me be the second person this morning to refer to an egg in my speech. If there is any doubt of the need for journalists to challenge what the BNP say, remember that demonstration outside Parliament when somebody chucked an egg at Nick Griffin and it hit him right on the shoulder. The yolk was dribbling down his jacket. Even as he stood there and someone said, 'You have been hit by an egg', he said, 'No, I have not. It missed.' If they can be as brazen about that, what can they be about other things?

The trouble is that not all questions are as simple as that. Although savage cuts are being made in newsrooms throughout the country, these cuts do not need to be made. These cuts are made purely to satisfy the greed of shareholders. Journalists are finding it harder and harder to get out of their newsrooms to carry out investigations. Those who are free to do so face their own problems. They are intimidated and threatened by BNP members. This happened to me. I have written stories for the *New Statesman* about the BNP and I have been rewarded with phone calls from BNP members. One person called me on my mobile and was chatting. He said, 'You are Tim Lezard and you have written all this stuff.' He went on threatening me and he finished by saying, 'We have got your number. We will use that.' I said, 'I have got yours too, mate, because you have left it on the phone.' That shows how stupid they are. After one call to the police later, he has not bothered me since.

Journalists are in danger for reporting on the BNP. That is why the NUJ is stepping up to the plate. We are setting up, together with BECTU, the 'Reporting the BNP' website, which will be launched later in the autumn. This website is going to be a resource for all journalists whose job it is to write about the BNP. It will scrutinise the party's every move in Brussels when Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons bother to attend Parliamentary sessions. If they do, we will scrutinise who they talk to, what they say and how they vote. It will also carry background facts about the BNP, exposing the party's racist policies and its members' violent and criminal pasts. We are doing this because we believe that it is our responsibility that readers, viewers and listeners should know the truth about the BNP. The truth is that the BNP is a fascist party and we shall not tolerate them.

Colin mentioned *Question Time* and the BBC says that they have to invite the BNP to appear on it. No, they do not. Please support the motion. Thank you. (*Applause*)

Mohammed Malik (*Unite the union*) spoke in support of Composite 6.

He said: I am not going to be as eloquent as others. All I say is this. The BNP breeds on fear. If you let them breed fear, we will lose. We cannot afford that because, at the end of the day, look around you. We are from so many different backgrounds and with so many different things to offer each other. For that reason, I want you to support Composite 6. I am not going to say much more than that. Thank you.

Dennis Tufour (*Connect*) spoke in support of Composite 6.

He said: I am a first-time speaker and a first-time delegate to Congress. (*Applause*) As a delegate at a TUC Young Members' Conference this year, I spoke on this issue. The important issue this year is the terrifying level of support that the BNP has gained in the recent European local elections.

The young professional network of Connect wholeheartedly endorses the TUC's continued support of anti-BNP campaigning and will look to be involved in this campaign whenever possible. Countering the divisive and disgusting propaganda of the BNP is vital in ensuring that the fascists cannot gain significant support. With a general election coming next year, this should be a key area of work for all trade unionists.

The TUC Young Members' Conference unanimously supported the trade unions' Movement's involvement as a key player in anti-BNP work. An interesting discussion took place in relation to the European elections. Many felt that the BNP benefited from a lack of

knowledge about the European Union. It works because of the low turn out. This is particularly the case for young voters. Therefore, young Connect delegates supported the position that the TUC and the affiliated unions should adopt the position that education of young workers on the importance of voting, the electoral system and the reality of BNP policies is crucial in ensuring the limitation of BNP success.

Connect and the young professional network asks that Congress supports this position and continues to campaign against the far right of the BNP using the union's website and all workers on the issues when possible. Above all, let us use our people to defeat the BNP not only in the general election but every day. We call on all branches, with support from union head office, to be active in their local areas and in their workplaces in the run-up to the general election. Please support. *(Applause)*

The President: Colleagues, as there are no more speakers waiting, can we now move to the vote.

* *Composite Motion 6 was CARRIED*

The President: Delegates, we continue with Chapter 2 of the General Council Report, Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights on page 39. I call paragraph 2.7, Motion 12, Against racism, against homophobia. The General Council supports the motion.

Against racism, against homophobia

(Insert Motion 12 - Against racism, against homophobia)

Nick Day (GMB) moved Motion 12.

He said: Congress, it is well-known that the BNP is a fascist and racist party, but its views on women and the LGBT community are equally vile. Nick Erikson, the second highest candidate on the party's London list at the recent European elections, wrote in 2005 that women enjoy sex and to suggest that rape, when conducted without violence, is a serious crime is like suggesting that force-feeding a woman chocolate cake is a heinous offence.

The BNP leader, Nick Griffin, described homosexuality as a form of behavioural deviancy and that we should be pushed humanely but firmly back into the closet. He also warned of an almighty backlash which will result in the imprisonment of the LGBT community in Britain. The BNP Director of Publicity, Mark Collett, called gays and lesbians 'Aids monkeys' and said that Aids is a friendly disease because blacks,

drug-users and gays have it.

We need to widen the attack on the BNP's racism and fascism to ensure that women and the LGBT community are aware of the vile views that the fascists hold on them. Congress, affiliate your branches to organisations such as Searchlight. Have regular anti-fascist updates in your Branch newsletters. Work with organisations such as Schools Out to combat homophobic bullying in the classroom. The harder we work with schools in this area, the earlier we can tackle the prejudices that still blight our education system.

Up the pressure on the Tory Mayor of London, who has shown no respect for anti-racist initiatives. He cancelled the Rise Festival, which was founded by the TUC in response to the callous murder of Stephen Lawrence and promotes the coming together of different races in the forms of music and culture. Boris Johnson is no friend of the anti-racist movement. Same on you! (*Applause*)

We must be vigilant against the BNP in our workplaces. Their own supposed union is called Solidarity, which is linked directly to the BNP website, claims to be about uniting all workers from all backgrounds, but they do not believe in recruiting migrant workers. In reality, it is a so-called union for British workers only.

Congress, let us send a message to the BNP. The union Movement was built upon the belief that we represent all our members so let us fight for a better deal for those who are least able to do so themselves. We do not blame minorities for the problems caused by those in power. Please support this motion but, more importantly, go back to your unions and communities and continue to fight against the BNP. This Congress will send a unified message to fascism at noon today. 'Not in my name' say us all.

Maria Exall (*Communication Workers' Union*) seconded Motion 12.

She said: We must act to stop the BNP. History shows us that in periods of economic hardship fascist support grows. Instead of working together to change our society, fascists like the BNP preach their gospel of division and hatred. It is much easier, isn't it, to blame others who seem weaker than you than to challenge those in power. It is the most negative form of politics there is - stoking up fear and prejudice rather than promoting hope and progress.

Congress, if you are in a group which is a scapegoat of the BNP, you cannot help but understand their ways. They are experts in division and provocation. It has been so in the past and it is true in the present. John Denham, the Community Secretary, was right to speak out against the English Defence League marching through areas containing Muslim communities. It is as provocative now as it was in 1936 when Mosley's fascists were prevented from marching down Cable Street.

The BNP do not only use racism; they also use sexism and homophobia. As this motion says, we need a broad coalition to defeat the fascists, but this coalition has to be based on positive social and economic policies for working people. It is not enough just to say, 'Vote for anyone but the BNP.' Those of us who live in London know the results of such policies. We have to put up with the reactionary Tory Mayor, who is slowly but surely dismantling anti-racist initiatives and cutting financing for LGBT organisations and projects. We see Tory MPs in Parliament consistently voting against legislation on incitement to homophobic hatred. We are in danger of sliding towards a political consensus where free speech is an excuse for the respectability of fascism. Free speech does not feel like a liberal principle when you are on the receiving end of the senseless bigotry and violence of the BNP.

Let us be clear. When Nick Griffin was on the BBC and spreading his poison, it had nothing to do with freedom and it is nothing to do with the watchword 'liberty'. Congress, we cannot be complacent. We do have to act. We need unity in that action to defeat the fascists with black and white, women and men, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people as well as

straight people working together. We need working class unity and we all need to build it.
Support Motion 12. (*Applause*)

Zita Holbourne (*Public and Commercial Services Union*) supported Motion 12.

She said: The PCS welcomes this motion. It is important to recognise that the BNP is homophobic and sexist as well as racist and fascist. As an individual, the BNP does not like me for a number of reasons. They do not like me because I am black, because I am a working woman, because I am a single parent and because I am a trade union activist who stands up against racism and fascism. (*Applause*)

The PCS 'Make Your Vote Count' campaign challenges political candidates to respond to our members' issues such as pay and job attacks, but it also aims to combat the far right in elections. Members across all areas participated, including our LGBT, black, women, disabled and young members', at national and regional levels. As the motion calls for material regarding the BNP's racist, homophobic and sexist views, material was produced in different languages and we took the campaign to Prides and other community events, but not, of course, to the Rise Against Racism festival in London because the Mayor did not think that racism was an important enough issue to have a festival against.

We encourage people to register to vote, to use their vote and, acknowledging how let down by mainstream parties they might feel, to understand the importance of using their vote to keep the BNP out. We know the BNP masks their true politics when electioneering and exploits in times of economic and political upheaval. We know their most high-profile targets are on race grounds but, like the German Nazis before them, their hatred goes beyond race. In addition to Jewish people, Communists, trade unionists, disabled, Romany, black, gay and lesbian people were put into concentration camps. The BNP continues this Nazi tradition so it is important, when campaigning against them, to include their views on different groups of people. Once we start to look at all the people they hate, including black, Muslim, Jewish, LGBT, women, disabled, single parents and trade union activists, there are few people left who they like.

If people are in any doubt of their true politics, share with them these examples of their disgusting, evil views. At the recent BNP Red, White and Blue festival, they burned a golliwog they named Winston. They said he was charged and guilty of mugging, rape, drug-dealing and being black. Then they said, 'Let us go and get a real one.'

A BNP organiser said that for a woman to consider a job or career more important than having children is unnatural and that rape is simply sex. Women enjoy sex so rape cannot be such a terrible physical ordeal. It is like force-feeding a woman chocolate cake. A party spokesman said that lesbians who opposed him are in fear of their own repressed sexual feelings. A list of politicians on their website describes gay MPs as buggers and criminals and groups them with paedophiles. A BNP councillor said, 'Being gay is not a crime legally but it is morally.'

At the golliwog burning, they got a child to set light to it. She did it because she was raised on hatred. We cannot afford a new generation of the BNP. That is why we need to get into schools with our message.

I am glad to say that the PCS rule book stops members of fascist organisations joining PCS. We work hard to achieve fascist-free zones in our workplaces, but we need a fascist and discrimination-free zone across the UK. There is no place for the BNP in work or in schools, on our streets or in our communities. We need to come together across our movement and, as a member of the TUC Race Committee, I would welcome working with the other equality committees of the TUC. We need to engage all people in this fight against evil because it is urgent and we must win the fight. Please support this motion. (*Applause*)

Maggie Ryan (*Unite the union*) spoke in support of Motion 12.

She said: I live and work in the west Midlands and recently Birmingham has made the headlines in the press and on the TV for all the wrong reasons. The BNP, under another banner of the English Defence League, staged demonstrations in our city against Islam. Their intention was to cause widespread social unrest in our city which has not come to pass because it does not have the support of the vast majority of people who live there.

In fact, we are very proud of our city with its ethnic and multicultural diversity. We will not allow the fascists to win in our city, many of whom are not even from Birmingham or even the wider west Midlands.

I also work for one of the largest employers in our region and recently it became known that the councillor for one of the wards in Redditch was actually a BNP councillor. Back in 2008 he was in court for grievous bodily harm after attacking his wife and his mother-in-law. That just shows you the calibre of this so-called person who represents the people of that ward in Redditch!

On the day that our new owners, an Indian company, took over our company, David Enderby, this councillor, resigned his position after 16 years. That was no coincidence. It was a political statement that he was making. We are very happy to be rid of him. Our workforce is made up of many people from various different backgrounds and faiths so if that had spread to the shop floor, I think our Indian owners might well have changed their minds and wondered whether it was such a good idea to buy our company.

In the west Midlands, alongside our own union, Unite, we do really good anti-fascist work. With Birmingham Trades Council, Unite against Fascism and the Midlands TUC, we will continue the fight to combat the Far Right. We had a really good turn-out for the Stoke Love Music, Hate Racism festival and our Birmingham Pride event is one of the biggest in the country. It is well-attended by many people. We will continue to do that kind of work. I urge all of you to come out and support your Gay Pride events, whatever city you are from. Please support this motion.

Jane Rogers (*Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers*) supported Motion 12.

She said: Delegates, please come and protest against the BNP this year when they hold their conference in Blackpool. So far we have not had a great deal of support from other unions. The difficulty is that we do not actually have much notice of when they hold the conference, as you may well know. Searchlight and Unite Against Fascism between them let us know. It might only be two or three weeks prior.

The TUC are going to advertise the conference on their website so I would ask delegates or workmates or anybody to come and march with us and protest not only against the BNP but against them having a conference in Blackpool. We do not want them in Blackpool. We do not want them to have a conference anywhere. Please come. Please give your voice because it has a visual effect not only on the town, but on other people in the fight against the BNP. Thank you. (*Applause*)

The President: Congress, we have taken all of the speakers so I am going to move to the vote.

* *Motion 12 was CARRIED*

The President: That completes our business for this morning. Before we move into the 'Not in my name' speeches and the silent vigil against racism and fascism, may I remind delegates that there are various meetings taking place this lunchtime. Details of these meetings are displayed on the screens and can also be found on pages 11-14 of the Congress Guide or in the leaflet included in your Congress wallet. Please note that the Campaign for Fair Tax fringe meeting has been cancelled.

Delegates, as agreed earlier, I am now suspending standing orders so that we can listen to our speakers before we proceed to the silent vigil against racism and fascism outside the Convention Centre. First, I invite Gloria Mills, Chair of the TUC Race Committee, to speak.

'Not in my name' speeches

Gloria Mills (*TUC Race Committee*): Thank you, President. Conference, I would like to thank Congress for an excellent debate in the last session and also to thank you for the fact that trade union members have a long and proud record of addressing the major social issues of our time. Right now, there are many social issues and challenges facing this movement. Brendan Barber, our General Secretary, set them out earlier this morning in his address to Congress.

At the forefront of those many challenges is the need for the trade union Movement to mount a robust campaign against the growth of the far right, particularly the mushrooming of far right organisations recently. This will be needed now more than ever in the run-up to the next general election because the next election will be polarised. The BNP and the Far Right will be playing on people's fears of unemployment and job losses. The far right and the BNP will continue to peddle their politics of hate, poisoning and polluting public opinion on race, immigration, migrant workers and asylum seekers, to name but a few. Their politics are about creating fear in communities, sowing distrust and division and undermining community cohesion.

We will continue to challenge and expose them for what they are about, using racism and fascism to gain political advantage and for electoral gain. We need to challenge the notion that the BNP is the solution to the crisis of representation of the working-class people in this country. The mainstream political parties have been found wanting in offering credible solutions to the BNP's narrative of scapegoating minority communities. Trade unions are developing a robust economic and social programme to promote democratic engagement of disaffected and marginalised communities. We are standing up squarely against racism and

fascism and all other forms of intolerance, discrimination and bigotry, mounting effective campaigns against the growth of the far right.

Our movement will rise to the challenge of the far right. Our values of equality, solidarity and social justice will continue. We must be robust in supporting communities to rise from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope. That is why, in the Movement, we have signed up to Hope Not Hate. Trade unions are doing a lot in terms of trying to deal with some of the big challenges where there is a political vacuum that the BNP feels it can fill. Community groups will be putting forward progressive agendas of equality and fairness to ensure that we have no hate and no division in our communities.

I would like to thank delegates and particularly the PFA for all the work that it has done. I would also like to thank the TUC for launching the campaigns in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s to Kick Racism Out of Football and to Show Racism the Red Card. In the 1970s and the 1980s, many black people - I am an Arsenal supporter - could not go to a football match. You just could not go to a football match. We have come a long way because now I am able to go to any football match at any ground that Arsenal plays at without the fear of being attacked because of my skin colour.

We must recognise that we have come a long way, but we must not allow racism to raise its ugly head again. If you would like further information on Show Racism the Red Card, I know that Norma Stephenson is here and she will be able to give you further details.

I also want to say that the BNP does not reflect the views of the British people. They do not speak for the British people, not now, not ever and not in our name. Together, we can stop the far right and the BNP by having a credible and progressive agenda that is actually based on equality, solidarity and support for communities and which does not scapegoat communities. Thank you very much, Congress. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Gloria, for those stirring words. As we would say back home, 'Said with hail and enthusiasm.'

Congress, I now invite Gee Walker, mother of Anthony Walker, to speak to us about the campaign. Gee, you are more than welcome here today. (*Applause*)

Gee Walker: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I just wish I was here talking about something other than my beloved son. No one can tell me that racism does not exist because I am living proof that it does. What happened to Anthony has unveiled the division and the challenges we face every day.

My son and what happened to him is the result of extreme racism. I know that if he was white he would still be alive today. When hate destroyed my son's dream, our community in Liverpool, in the UK and indeed the world was outraged and shocked. We were left devastated and we still are. The positives are that, at that time, we all embraced cohesion and diversity in all its forms. It was a time when race, religion and class and even our own football teams, Everton and Liverpool, sat side by side comforting each other at Anthony's funeral. Unfortunately, that was short-lived and already many people seem to have forgotten my Anthony and they have resorted back to their own comfort zones.

I appeal to the hearts of everyone here today and as educators, as unions, as politicians, as parents and carers and those in their various professions to think about the positives. Instil positive policies and not just lip service. Help the workers in the workplace as many are getting abused. I appeal to your hearts and to the powers that be to make sure that these positive and effective policies are put in place and are followed through. These policies should reflect our multicultural society, not exclusive but inclusive. It should be relevant and universal. It should be sound and meaningful.

I appeal to the Government that they should reflect justice and equality for all. I believe that true equality should be instituted and maintained as a whole. Our generation is amongst the first to be faced with a decision to determine whether or not our children inherit a habitable and peaceful planet. If the powers that be can control the events in our community, you should listen to what the people are saying.

We should support families because I believe in the family and what constitutes it. Yes, we sit and debate but family should be the community's cornerstone. They should be the bedrock and unity in which our children should be raised. The family is there as it is necessary for children to become better people. It is a place where law rules, discipline and boundaries are born and taught and maintained. Somehow, 'family' has lost its meaning and tradition. Its values are threatened and it is diminishing very fast. It is overshadowed by vast changes, breakdown and major uncertainties surround it.

I believe that change can happen, but I am saddened because, at this rate, our society cannot survive the culture which is eroded by hate, division, violence and crime. I believe that decent people are sick and tired of this contemporary bad news on a daily basis. I am not sounding naïve or simplistic, but I cannot speak without mentioning forgiveness. I believe that forgiveness is a powerful tool. It is a weapon that I use to overcome this hate-filled world and what has happened to my Anthony and so many others.

My Anthony was raised on both God's and man's laws. I raised him in a simple way (Exodus 20). He could easily have been a killer, but he was raised in love. His upbringing was based on Godly principles. It saddens me because can you imagine that if we were to observe at least one of these laws (say Exodus 20, 'Thou shalt not kill'), so many of our young people would be alive today.

We have no difficulty accepting that if we break the law, there are consequences. However, on a daily basis, we break God's law without thought or regret or a 'take it or leave it' attitude. I believe change can happen. I cannot but mention the great man, Obama, and great men and women like Rose Park, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and recently the Rev. Jessie Jackson. If it was not for Jessie Jackson, who opened the door and ran for Presidency, President Obama might not have been where he is today. Somebody has to make a start somewhere.

I will conclude as I know I only have five minutes. Many things have been said here today. Let us address the issues that I have mentioned because they are not unobtainable. I believe that families make a community and communities make a nation. If we do not reciprocate but show tolerance and respect, coupled with creation and diversity, together these policies - and I cannot but say that love has to be a part of it - can become a reality.

If we unite, I believe unity is power and I believe it is down to every one of us here today to allow these changes to happen. God bless you and thank you. (*Applause and standing ovation*)

The President: Thank you, Congress, for that and thank you, Gee. As you see, we do stand with you and we do admire your courage in coming here to speak to us today. It was a hard task but a task that every one of us knows that you were doing in a wonderful, wonderful way. Thank you, Gee. (*Applause*)

Congress, we will now hear from the General Secretary. After his address, Brendan will also explain the arrangements for leaving the Conference Hall to take part in the 'Not in my name' silent vigil.

Brendan Barber (General Secretary): It is my job to tell you of the arrangements for the anti-racist, anti-fascist vigil which we are asking all delegates and visitors to join after this session.

But first let me spell out exactly what our message is today. This is a silent vigil because we want first to reflect on the victims of racism and fascism. Gee has just given a very moving testimony of the suffering that she has had to endure. We know that a lot of racist abuse and racist attacks go unreported and disregarded, but still have desperately traumatic effects on the victims. Thousands suffer every day.

We know that when the BNP vote goes up, it gives hate crime a boost - not just racism but homophobia too. Today, we are remembering all the victims of racism and fascism, not just those suffering in Britain today but throughout the world and indeed throughout history. Here, in the middle of what was once one of the biggest slave ports in the world, is the right place to do that.

At the start of the 19th century, more than 120 slave ships a year left this city. That was three-quarters of all the European slave traders. Historians tell us that Liverpool ships transported half of all the three million Africans carried across the Atlantic by British slavers. That deserves a moment of quiet reflection while we are here.

As well as an opportunity for solidarity and remembrance, our vigil sends another message. We will be joined by community leaders from Liverpool in the vigil. We are at the heart of one of the two constituencies which elected a BNP representative to the European Parliament. Our message today is that they were not elected in our name or in the name of the vast majority of the British people who utterly reject the politics of hate. Not in our name - solidarity, remembrance and that clear message. Never again should a mother have to suffer as Gee has suffered.

I ask you to join the vigil. It is taking place immediately outside the Convention Centre. You leave by the normal exits. Stewards will be available to guide you and there will be placards with that strong and simple message available to hold. At the front of the vigil, the General Council will be joined by community leaders to get that message across. We ask you to face the dock from which, no doubt, slavers left so that the cameras that are here will get everyone in their pictures. A whistle will be blown to indicate when the five-minute silence is to begin and when it is to end. So, let us all go out together to send that united message to the people of this country.

Congress adjourned until 2.15 p.m.

MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

(Congress re-assembled at 2.15 p.m.)

The President: Congress, I, once again, say many thanks to Nato, who have been playing for us this afternoon. *(Applause)*

Congress, I ask you, please, to give attention to people who are speaking at the rostrum. Give them respect, especially new delegates, who have never spoken at the rostrum. At least we can pay attention to them. Delegates, as you will have noted from the GPC Report, we had intended to have Michael Shields and his family with us this afternoon. Unfortunately, they cannot be here today. However, they hope to be here later in the week.

Congress, at this point, I was going to call Cath Speight, but as I cannot see her on the platform I am going to move on. I am going to turn to Chapter 3 of the General Council Report, which is Economic and Industrial Affairs. I am calling Composite Motion 10, Defending quality pensions, to be moved by GMB, seconded by Prospect and the supporters are Accord, Transport Salaried Staff Association, Connect, UNISON, Public & Commercial Services Union and the CWU have indicated that they wish to speak.

Defending quality pensions

(Insert Composite Motion 10 - Defending quality pensions)

Paul Kenny (GMB) moved Composite Motion 10.

He said: Congress, we find ourselves this week not just on the edge of the River Mersey but on the edge of disaster for pension provision in our country. Our trade union Movement led the way in winning occupational pension provision as part of working life for, literally, millions of men and women. The fights of the '50s, '60s and '70s to establish final salary defined benefit pension schemes was resisted by employers from John O'Groat's to Land's End. As those schemes matured for workers retiring in the '90s and beyond, the value of securing dignity in retirement became obvious to all. This trade union Movement rightly views occupational pensions and dignity in retirement as a cornerstone of decency upon which our values are built. No question, no argument, no muffling. The economics of saving for dignity and independence in retirement are faultless. So why are politicians so intent on running down and attacking decent pension provision?

We know the reason why some employers seek to lose, restrict or even scuttle schemes. They just do not want to pay towards the welfare retirement provision of their employees, even if they have worked for them for 25, 30 or even 40 years. It's an old story. Shareholders before social responsibility. But some employers have kept good schemes by negotiating with trade unions to deal with the problems caused by equity or bond markets. But make no mistake, Congress, all schemes - all schemes - are now under threat if Cameron gets his way. The Tory argument seems to be that as the majority of non-unionised companies in the private sector have poor or non-existent defined benefit pension provision, then everyone in a public sector scheme should have their retirement provision reduced. The truth is, of course, that all public sector schemes have been re-negotiated over the last five years. The con trick is short-

term jingoism. It is not about serious policy. It is the politics of cutting pensions - the economics of nonsense - by attacking savers, attacking people who seek to make provision for some self-reliance in retirement. Never forget who de-regulated the pension industry. Never forget the misery and chaos brought about by the Tories in the mis-selling scandals. Now they seem to be telling us that they have aspiration of even lower living standards in retirement. It is a pension policy based on a limbo dancing strategy, with no desire to lift people up, just a thin disguise to attack working people. That is the real politics of envy.

Does anybody believe that quality schemes in the private sector will survive if decent public sector schemes are wiped out? I am talking about public sector schemes which are currently providing retirement savings for millions of people, schemes which will provide for the retirement of millions of today's working people. I am talking about more than five million people, from midwives to classroom assistants, who are providing vital public services, working people from Dover to Derry, who GMB is proud to represent, and who pay in millions of pounds each year to their pension schemes, money that in the Local Government scheme gets invested in UK businesses, supporting workers in all industries throughout the economy. I am talking about more than £100 billion of investment from one scheme that is under threat from Tory attacks on public sector pension schemes. Those are attacks that would make millions of future pensioners reliant on State benefits, costing the taxpayer dearer in the end.

Sadly, it is not just employers, politicians and the media who seem intent on distorting and destroying workers' retirement provision. Industry regulators are having a go, too. Ofgem has just started its annual attack on final salary pensions in the gas and electricity industries. Once again, occupational pension schemes are being threatened to make a weak regulator look tough when utility bills go up.

I have some words for the Prime Minister before he comes tomorrow. Do not go down the short-term route of following Cameron in attacking workers' pension schemes in the private or public sector. Following that route lies disaster. (*Applause*) Those cutbacks will damage any recovery.

I would like to pay tribute to the work of the National Pensioners Convention for all the work they have done through the years as a pressure and lobbying group in the Movement. They deserve our recognition. (*Applause*)

Conference, please support this composite and fight for the basic quality pension provision that is a right for people. Do not feel embarrassed about arguing that it is right and proper that people make provision for their retirement and they retire in dignity, that every working person in this country should have that right and every employer should have the responsibility of making a reasonable contribution to ensure that people can do that. Let's not apologise for the battles that were fought and won before. We have a duty and obligation to ensure that the people who come after us do not inherit a pension provision system on an occupational basis that is a disaster. I move. (*Applause*)

The President: Thank you, Paul. Prospect.

Alan Grey (*Prospect*) seconded Composite Motion 10.

He said: Congress, when pensions were invented, they were not for ordinary working people. Indeed, the story is told that the first pension age was set by Bismarck who, on hearing that life expectancy was 69, set the pension age at 70. Not many enjoyed comfortable retirements then, but trade unions set about improving that situation, and until recently we could claim pensions as one of the great successes of our Movement. But now, Congress, members' pensions are under the most severe pressure regardless of the sector or industry they work in. In the public sector there has been a co-ordinated campaign of mis-information about pensions, a series of reports, articles and publications by many of the usual suspects which have peddled half-truths and myths about public sector pension provision. Liabilities are exaggerated, costs inflated and risk reduction measures ignored.

Prospect welcomes the recent TUC report that explodes those myths and says it could hardly have been more timely. The greatest threat to public sector pensions is, of course, the upcoming General Election and the policies of both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrat parties. We need to stand together to resist these coalition attacks on occupational pensions.

Congress, pensions in the private sector are under even more immediate pressure. Three-quarters of companies with final salary schemes have shut them to new entrants. Prospect members and organizations such as RWE, Nord Anglia and the Forensic Science Services are currently facing this threat and latest research shows that half of firms with such schemes expect to close them to all members by 2012. Even well-meaning companies are seeing their attempts to keep good value, defined benefit schemes open, threatened by a combination of the economic crisis and the regulatory regime.

In the electricity sector, for example, Ofgem is interfering to try to drive pension provision down in companies that have relatively secure pension schemes.

Research by the National Association of Pension Funds earlier this year showed that the current climate is causing significant numbers of organizations to re-evaluate their ability to keep defined benefit schemes open. As we know, Congress, those in defined contribution schemes are unlikely to have a sufficient pension provision to enjoy a timely and comfortable retirement. We would much rather focus on improving the provision for those workers but that will have to wait. Let's fight to halt this downward spiral, and then we can look to campaign for improvements.

Congress, the more employers withdraw from contributing to their employees' pension, the greater the future burden on the taxpayer. Employers have to, and many want to, contribute their fair share and we need to convince the Government to intervene and make this possible. The TUC needs to lead on developing a consensus of, in the short-term, measures the Government should take to prevent defined benefit schemes from closing down. We also need to ensure that the regulatory regime is not unnecessarily forcing organizations to close schemes that they would otherwise keep open. I second.

The President: Well timed, delegate. Accord.

Ged Nichols (*ACCORD*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 10. He said: President and Congress, *ACCORD* is the union standing up for secure jobs, fair reward and dignity at work in the Lloyds Banking Group. Reference has already been made today to the banks, the bail outs and their fat-cat bankers. Given what has happened in our economy and society, they are

quite right, but to use an old refrain: what about the workers? Most bank workers are not fat-cats. They never took excessive risks. They were never paid enormous bonuses and they are not responsible for the actions of their employers. In fact, the average salary of frontline bank staff is around £16,000 a year. Many bank workers have already lost their jobs and more will follow. They have lost their savings because of the collapse in bank share prices and now they are facing the prospect of losing their occupational pension schemes.

Staff at Barclays and at the Royal Bank of Scotland already know that their pensions are under attack and staff in other financial institutions fear the same. ACCORD supports the actions of Unite in seeking to defend the occupational pension schemes in Barclays and RBS. But on the principle that an injury to one is an injury to all, we need to look ahead. The continued decimation of occupational pension schemes in the private sector will make the maintenance of occupational pensions in the public sector increasingly difficult. Congress, in our view it would be quite wrong if the banks that have benefited from taxpayer bail outs running into billions of pounds now seek to take opportunistic advantage of the recession, a recession that their actions helped to create. They must not break the pensions promises that they have made to their long-serving, hard working and long-suffering staff. Occupational pensions are long-term commitments and their sustainability should be judged over the economic cycle and against the long-term financial stability of the sponsoring employers.

So, Congress, we call upon you to support Composite Motion 10, to end the attacks on occupational pension schemes and to continue to campaign for decent pensions for all. Thank you.

Amarjit Singh (*Transport Salaried Staffs' Association*) speaking in support of Composite Motion 10.

He said: Congress, pensions are our deferred pay. When we retire from work we would like to have a reasonable pension so that we have a decent standard of living. The defined pension benefit scheme is under threat from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties, who have already identified that this is a major area for cuts in the level of public expenditure. Such measures are likely to receive backing from the Confederation of British Industry and the Taxpayers' Alliance. They are driving a wedge between the workers in the public and private sector. We should be campaigning for good quality, affordable defined benefit pensions for all workers in the run-up to the next General Election and beyond. We should be making clear to members before the election what the impact of the main political parties will be on their occupational pensions so that they can take this into account when casting their votes.

To the Prime Minister, I say, Gordon, please note that pensioners and future pensioners have a vote. Conference, please support Composite Motion 10.

Adrian Askew (*Connect*) supported Composite Motion 10.

He said: President and Congress, as we know now, we now have the worst recession in living memory decimating our economy, taking unemployment back to levels not seen for over a decade and putting a huge strain on the public finances. Whilst the economy will recover, we hope, and hopefully levels of unemployment will start to fall, there is a very real danger that the long-term legacy of this downturn will be a further irreversible erosion of decent pension provision. Our pensions are under attack, but we cannot allow these regressive employers the opportunity to capitalise on the misery of working people in this time of economic hardship.

We are already facing concerted lobbying and relentless scaremongering that decent pensions are no longer an entitlement but an unaffordable luxury in these austere times. The debate about public sector pensions shows a cynical approach of many with daily headlines about the so-called drain that public sector pensions are having on public finances, when our members' taxes are propping up the banks which failed at a level which is simply breathtaking.

As a union representing members in the private sector, let me be absolutely clear. We have no interest whatsoever in public sector pensions joining the race to the bottom. As a movement, we have to campaign together and share the ambition of raising the bar for everyone at work, demanding decent provision for all, not lowering the bar, leveling down to serve the bottom line.

The challenges we face now mean we must focus with more determination than ever to defend pensions. We need to work together to ensure that everyone at work really understands the critical role of occupational pension provision. We have to confront the negative messages, building coalitions with organizations committed to eradicating pensioner poverty, and those who share our vision, influencing the political and media agenda so that the voice of people at work is listened to.

Congress, we face a very significant challenge but we cannot stand by while employers privatise profit and nationalise poverty, where the State and taxpayer have to step in to pay for the failure of employers. We must fight to protect defined benefit pension provision and for those who have already lost access to good DB schemes, or for the growing number of those with little or no pension provision, I am afraid we must also campaign for significant improvements to defined contribution schemes. This is a fight for decent pensions and for this to be a country that treats its people with respect in retirement. Support the composite motion.

Gerry Gallagher (*UNISON*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 10.

He said: President and Congress, with the recession threatening nearly every good defined benefit scheme in the country, the need for the Government to deliver on its commitment to regulate, to increase member nominated trustees from a third to 50 per cent on trustee boards has never been greater. Members are taking the risk of losing their pension expectations every time scheme deficits increase so they deserve to have at least an equal voice to that of the employer on how the scheme monies are invested. We are being told that paying for the bailout of the banks is one of the reasons for cutting the incomes and pensions of our members. It really is ironic when you consider that millions of union members hold shares, via their pension and saving funds, in the same banks, so it is a double hit for them. We own the banks, they caused the recession, we bail them out and our incomes are hit to pay for it. How can this be?

Fund managers have the power to move markets, to intervene in companies and to influence decisions which can have either positive or negative effects for millions of working people. Any organization wielding such great power should be required to account for their actions. The failure by fund managers to scrutinise and monitor board decisions and hold management accountable have been major contributions to such things as the upsurge in directors' pay, particularly in banking. The lesson for us all is clear. We must make sure that we know what is happening to our money. We, the fund members, are the ultimate owners of

these companies. Our pension funds own about 20 per cent of the UK stock market. When you add investments by pension funds from around the globe, we become the majority owners. So we need to look at this more closely, namely, the fact that our pension funds now own the banks and the major corporations. CEOs and managers work for us and we should be setting their agenda. We should not give away our rights to the fund managers, so we can tell them how to vote. Then we will have a chance to curb the excesses of directors' pay. To do that we need more effective and trained trustees in the local and global government pension reps. We need the 50 per cent of seats on pension boards and we need a legal requirement for our member representation on the Local Government Pension Scheme, and we need more effective means of governance for our money. We, the fund members, should have more power and involvement in the decision-making process.

Congress, pension fund investment legislation is clear. Pension funds must invest in our interests and if there is a conflict of interest, invest in our sole interests. So let's make happen. Let's get moving together, Congress. We certainly cannot afford to be fooled again. Please support the composite.

Hugh Lanning (*Public and Commercial Services Union*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 10.

He said: First, congratulations to the TUC in coming up with what Polly Toynbee described as the 'killer fact', namely, that £37.6 billion of tax relief goes to the rich 1%, which is £2.50 for each one of us. That is money that our members in HMRC would love to collect rather than give away to the rich, and it also demonstrates that this is about politics not money.

In 2005 pensions were saved and, as a result, there were negotiations. In the Civil Service that meant a new deal for new staff of a whole career pension; it meant an increased pension age and it meant protection for existing staff. We want those deals honoured. In 2005 we showed we could do it if we worked together. If we are honest, it was not just talk. It was a willingness to take action together that made a difference. It was when we balloted for industrial action that ministers listened. We can do that again, if it is necessary, if we are not fatalistic, if we do not assume that the worst is going to happen, but we need to break the consensus view that public sector pensions are expensive. We have got to take on that challenge now and not wait until later.

Parliamentary questions show that Civil Service pensions average about £4,200. Over 200,000 pensions are less than £5,000 a year. Low pay means small pensions, not gold-plated pensions. It is not just the civil and public servants who are affected, but it is their families, their communities and the society they live in. If they go, do not think that we will get them back. It will be impossible to rebuild the sort of public sector pension provisions we have. Just look at the battle in the States where the vested interests over healthcare are fighting to stop new provision. It is about the sort of society and the Welfare State that we want.

We know it is not easy to take action so we must work together now to make it a possibility. This is going to be a battleground in the future, so let's prepare, let's organize together and make it clear that we will take action if it is necessary. Hopefully, Gordon will make the pledge to honour the deal that was done in 2005 and show there is a difference by investing in his staff and promising not to cut their pensions. But let us support the motion now. More importantly, let's mobilize and get ready for action should it be necessary. Support the composite motion.

Matt Wrack (*Fire Brigades' Union*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 10.

He said: Our Movement has fought a long and hard fight for pension rights and those pension rights are now under attack. We are frequently told that it is due to rising costs and rising life expectancy. So let's look behind some of the facts on life expectancy because they mask huge differences. Where men in Glasgow have a life expectancy of less than 70, men in Kensington & Chelsea have a life expectancy of over 82, which is more than 12 years difference. Look at women in Hartlepool, who have a life expectancy of 78, whereas women in Kensington & Chelsea have a life expectancy of more than 87. So this is not down to geography, nor is it down to the cold winds of Hartlepool or Glasgow. This is down to class and this is down to inequality because the fact is that the poorer you are, the lower your life expectancy and the more affluent you are, the higher your life expectancy. (*Applause*) So if we applied the logic of that fact to the debate on pensions, what we should be seeing is a call for the most affluent and well-paid people to see reductions in their pensions and their pension age raised, whilst our lowest paid people see improved pensions and earlier retirement ages, but we do not see that anywhere set out in the comment pages of the *Daily Mail* and we don't hear it from David Cameron. I think we need to ask this question. If we can put public money in, as has been said, to bailing out the banks, where is the bail out for our pensioners? We can spend billions on war but we still have pensioners who freeze to death because of poverty. So we don't accept the arguments that rising life expectancy justifies attacks on our pensions. We do not need to apologise for not dying early enough for the pensions industry, and that is the message they are trying to tell us. (*Applause*) We need to fight to protect our pensions in the public and the private sector and reject attempts to drive wedges between us on that issue. We can expect a huge onslaught on the issue of pensions during the next few years, and this Congress needs to put a marker down to whoever is in government that we will fight to defend pensions in the public and private sector, and we will build a Movement the like of which they have seen never seen.

Our parents and grandparents fought for the right to retire in dignity. We are now seeing the attempt to turn the clock back on that debate, and we need to say that we are not seeing the clock turned back and we will fight to defend our pension rights if that is what is required. Thank you.

Bob McGuire (*Communication Workers Union*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 10.

He said: I want to support this motion wholeheartedly on behalf of my trade union. I want to do that from the background of what is happening in the postal industry at this moment in time. You heard Matt talking about how you need to support each other in this argument that we are going to have with the Government in regard to the pensions across the whole of the country. At this moment in time, there are nearly 400 offices taking industrial action across the whole of the UK in a bitter postal dispute. That is from Cornwall to Scotland, London to Middlesbrough. Within that dispute, there are many issues. There are unfair workloads, impossible targets, breaking of national agreements, a pay freeze, even though the company announced £321 million profit, bullying and harassment on a day-to-day basis of postal workers and, on top of that, we have our pensions. We know what Royal Mail has done, with the support of the Government, to our pensions and our members. You have probably seen mention in the press about the deficit in the pension plan for postal workers. The last guess was £3.4 billion. They are going to announce the deficit at the end of September, and we are expecting them to announce a deficit of £8 billion to £10 billion.

Royal Mail for 13 years, from 1990 to 2003, took a pension holiday. Year after year for 13 years they never paid into our members' pensions. That was nearly £100 million every year for 13 years when they did not put any contribution in towards the postal workers' pensions. What is Royal Mail's response now to the deficit of the pension? I will tell you what their response is. They have closed the final salary scheme to all new members. All new workers who come into the postal service now do not have a final salary scheme. They have raised the retirement age to 65 from 60. That is compulsory. If you want to take retirement before 65 you lose 5% of your pension year on year before you retire at 65. They have switched from the final salary scheme and have imposed a career average re-valued earning scheme, all without the agreement of the postal workers within the industry. And we've got a Government that is supporting the industry! This Government have bailed out the banks to the extent of £1.3 trillion. They have re-nationalised the main East Coast Line, which is not a bad thing, so they helped out when that industry was in struggle. They have a duty. This Government have a duty. This Government still own us. We are still a 100 per cent publicly owned industry. They did not privatise us.

The President: Colleague, I ask you to wind-up, please.

Bob McGuire: I am going to wind-up with this. I have a clear message. Mandelson, stop sulking! The dispute does involve you. We are not going to be the proverbial football that's kicked into the long grass with your hope that we are going to get lost. I can tell you that 140,000 are relying on the Government getting round a table with our trade union to have the dignity and respect for a pension in retirement. Thank you.

Lindsey Adams (*Unite the union*): President and Congress, to begin with, I would like to make it clear that I am not a general secretary. I am a lay member. I am a banker and I do not receive a huge bonus and neither do my colleagues at my grade or at grades above me. We are worlds apart. It is a bit like comparing the pay of somebody who served you the coffee on the train coming to Liverpool yesterday with that of a certain Mr. Branson. It is worlds apart.

I stand here today as one personally affected by the closure of my employer's defined benefit final salary scheme. The closure of this scheme is going to affect some 18,000 members. I can tell you that 33% of the UK workforce will have their future quality of life severely compromised. Our pension is deferred pay. They have mismanaged our expectations and they are leaving us feeling extremely vulnerable going forward.

I also stand here as one of the many hardworking, long-serving lower paid women who will be hardest hit by these imposed changes. (*Applause*) Thank you. I am one who has voted in favour of pay deals that do not benefit me because we have always been encouraged to look at the bigger picture. You have got a final salary scheme to look forward to; they haven't. Actually, Congress, not any more I haven't. I haven't got a final salary scheme any more. I am so worried that I have not been able to look into what the change is going to me. This is me! I don't know what is going to happen in my future. Some of my colleagues have said that they would need to put at least 20% of their monthly salary into the new scheme. I could do that but I wouldn't be able to eat. It is not like my employer is making a loss. My employer has recently reported billions of pounds of profit for the first half of the year. They have not taken money from the Government. They went elsewhere, yet they have still ploughed millions into sponsoring the Premier League. Is that fair? I don't think so. I am guessing that some of the money they clawed back from my state pension and my colleagues' state pension will be there. Unite is trying to get the bank back around the table. I say to the bank today, speak to

us. We represent your employees and they don't want these changes. 92% of our members voted in favour of industrial action. For those who say that conflict gets us nowhere, well, 92% of us feel that it will. Conflict got us somewhere in 1997, so let's hope it does again in 2009.

Congress, if we do not fight against the closure of the defined benefit salary schemes then capitalism wins and we can never, ever accept that. Please support.

The President: Congress, as there are no other speakers sat to my right, I am going to move to the vote.

* *Composite Motion 10 was CARRIED*

Attacks on terms and conditions

(Insert Motion 25 - Attacks on terms and conditions)

Roy Rickhuss (*Community*) moved Motion 25. He said: President and Congress, we gather here in Liverpool after a difficult and challenging year for us all. I am sure that every delegate here could tell a story about friends, family or colleagues who have suffered during this recession. All unions have had to engage with employers in an attempt to mitigate the impact of the downturn. But amidst all of this, some companies who are the worst kind of employers have been seeking to take advantage of a situation to attack working people's terms and conditions. Our members in betting shops have all seen their terms reduced. Overtime rates and premium pay have been ended. Workers were given new contracts and the choice: accept or face dismissal. Community is currently pursuing legal action on behalf of those members. But working people should never have to face this sort of pressure and bullying. That is why we are here today and I am going to name and shame some of these companies, although I believe that some of them are beyond shaming.

Their disgraceful behaviour is made worse by the fact that these betting companies have continued to rake in the profits despite the recession. Take Betfred. They could find millions to sponsor a snooker event yet saw fit to pick the pockets of their low paid employees. Consider Ladbrokes, the biggest player in the industry. In the first six months of the year they made £130 million profit while cutting their workers' terms and conditions. It is not just the betting industry that is taking advantage of the recession. We know it has been a difficult year in the steel industry, too.

As a union, we have shouldered our responsibility and tried to work with employers to ensure that we get through this current recession, and with some companies it has worked, but with others they were not prepared to meet their responsibilities to their employees. There is certainly no excuse for the kind of short-term unnecessary action that Corus, the former British Steel, is taking at the moment. They are pressing ahead with their plans to close the British Steel Pension Scheme to new entrants, but we know that is not the real plan. We know that the real plan is to close the scheme altogether, just as Tartar, who now own Corus, did at Tetley Tea when they acquired that business a few years ago.

Corus revealed their pension plans on the same day that they announced thousands of redundancies. It was a line buried at the bottom of the announcement. There was no discussion, no consultation. You cannot get a more cynical example of taking advantage of

the difficult times than that, trying to make a fundamental change to a pension scheme that has given security in retirement for generations of steel workers by hoping that people will be too worried about their jobs to notice or, indeed, to do anything about it. Well, we've got news for Corus: our members noticed, and we are going to do something about it. We could be heading for the first national strike in the steel industry for 30 years.

So, Congress, let's send a clear message. We will not let cynical and devious companies like Corus and Ladbrokes to take advantage of the recession. We will not let these companies chip away at our members' pockets, at their pensions that protect them in retirement. Let us all today reaffirm our commitment to defend pay, defend pensions and defend the quality of life for all our members. Thank you.

Len McCluskey (*Unite the union*) seconded Motion 25. He said: Congress, as Roy has just said and as the previous debate exposed, we highlight the reality of everyday life for millions of working people, who are unsure of their future, worried about their families and how the collapse of the market economy has affected and devastated them. All of this is an indictment of the casino capitalism that has dominated the world economy for over 30 years. Our indictment is a simple one: your system doesn't work! Congress, again, as Roy said, the true nature of capitalism can best be seen by the way some employers have seized their opportunity, as they see it, to exploit workers' fears in order to make a faster buck. Such an example is Diageo, the multi-national that makes world famous brands of spirits, including, of course, Johnny Walker's whisky. The company has announced the closure of plants in Kilmarnock and Port Dundass in Scotland with nearly a thousand job losses. This is a company that last year made £2.2 billion worth of profit! -- I repeat: £2.2 billion! -- and whose chief executive is on £5 million a year. Now this faceless corporate giant wants to destroy the historic roots of their no. 1 premium product and decimate a small Scottish town in the process. They have no hesitation in destroying the lives of individuals and their families, blighting communities and condemning them to a lifetime of decline and despair. That is the true nature of the beast that we are dealing with.

This proposal by Diageo is driven by one thing and one thing only - greed! They have even had the arrogance to reject the Scottish Executive's proposal to save the plants before formal consultation has ended. That's the confidence that bosses currently feel. Such arrogance is a task that organised labour needs to counter, because when workers are confident anything is possible. It is the job of progressive union leaders and organizations like ours to build that confidence. That is why in supporting this motion, Congress, Diageo and their ilk need to understand that we mean what we say. They need to understand the consequences of their actions. Attack our people, attack our communities and we'll attack you. Please support.

Harry Donaldson (*GMB*): Congress, I am speaking in support of the motion but in particular of the amendment in support of the workers at Diageo. We have all heard about the real consequences of the economic climate, job losses in companies that simply cannot continue, pay freezes and reduced hours for employees of firms that are trying to last out the recession in a difficult period of time.

Unions and workers know when flexibility is needed by the workforce and when hard decisions have to be made. But, Congress, we also know cynical exploitation when we see it, just like Diageo, and you heard Len McCluskey speak. Len and I shared a platform in Kilmarnock which started off on a windy and wet day. The skies cleared, the sun came out and 20,000 people took to the streets of Kilmarnock - 20,000 people! - a community who

were enraged at a decision by a multi-national ruining the lives of others. This is a company that reports, as Len has said, £2.2 billion profit. That is two thousand, two hundred million pounds of profit! But still they are intent on slashing nearly a thousand jobs in Glasgow and Kilmarnock. Diageo claims to be a company of high morals with corporate social responsibilities. If you scrape beneath the veneer and you can see real corporate social responsibility. It is only all gloss and shine. There is nothing there. They are uncaring as to the impact on individuals, families and communities and the Scottish economy. Paul Walsh and his board have shown themselves as dismissive of the Scottish Government as they were of their workforce. Having been offered a rescue package for the plants at Kilmarnock and Port Dundass, Diageo rejected the proposals out of hand, claiming that the plan to save jobs would not be good for Scotland. Well, I think it is Scotland that should decide that actually and not Diageo.

Another company joining the bandwagon of slash and burn is Business Management. We have seen this approach from so-called responsible employers time and time again, cutting jobs, cutting pay, cutting pensions and destroying lives, proclaiming that there is nothing they can do because the market is all powerful. But they are still managing to rake in millions for themselves. This recession should have taught politicians and others the consequences of corporate greed and slavish devotion to the market. Sadly, instead, the look to punish the victims.

Only last week the Conservative propagandists, the Institute of Directors and the Taxpayers' Alliance published yet another diatribe against pensioners, families, low earners and public sector workers. Only by ruining more lives can the economy be saved, according to the right.

This Congress has a message for the right. Labour and the trade union Movement will continue to demonstrate and campaign that there is a better way, a credible, rational and more socially acceptable way with policies to match. Gordon, we hope you are listening when you come tomorrow.

Congress, please support the motion and show Diageo that you believe retaining 900 local workers in a successful company in Scotland is a far better way than destroying communities and working lives. Thank you.

The President: Congress, there has been no opposition so I shall move straight to the vote.

** Motion 25 was CARRIED*

Public sector pensions in the UK

(Insert Composite Motion 11 - Public sector pensions in the UK)

Christine Blower (*National Union of Teachers*) moved Composite Motion 11.

She said: President and Congress, let me go back to pensions just for a moment, because public sector pensions are under attack from politicians and in many sections of the media. We persistently here the mantra, don't we, of those copper bottomed, gold-plated pensions for feather-bedded public sector workers.

These attacks, as the composite says, '...are economically illiterate and are driven by an unacceptable agenda to seek to eliminate defined benefit pension schemes.' The composite notes that cuts to public sector pensions would 'disproportionately affect women'. Women make up the large majority of the teaching and education workforce. The average pension for a woman retiring from teaching in the last couple of years after 30 years of service, bearing in mind that pensions are deferred pay, was around £8,500. But, of course, for a woman in local government service, who was also working in a school, the average pension she would only be about £1,600 a year. Neither of these pensions is a fortune, and if these pensions are too high and too generous, as our critics would suggest, what would they think was acceptable and could they live on it? Fred Goodwin levels of pensions these are not!

We in the public sector stand together with workers in the private sector. The answer to poor private sector provision is not to cut the public sector. It is to boost the private sector, leveling up, Congress, not leveling down. Public sector unions must vigorously defend public sector pensions. Of course, as you heard from Hugh Lanning in the previous debate, we have already had the renegotiation of our pension. The 2005 agreement set out a sustainable future for public sector pensions, and that agreement is affordable. It was hard won. Brendan, this morning, called it 'an honourable deal'. But it was achieved after public sector unions stood together and said we would take action to prevent cuts to pensions. Some attacks are so serious that we require concerted action on a united front to repel them.

We all know that the current economic situation was created by an unregulated profligate banking system and unbridled corporate greed, not by our members. We cannot allow public sector workers and their families in retirement to be penalized for this. Brendan this morning spoke quite passionately against pension relief for the highest earners whilst many public sector workers still have wholly inadequate pensions.

Please support this composite, Congress, and a co-ordinated campaign to defend public sector pensions by industrial action if necessary. Thank you.

Jonathan Baume (*FDA*) seconded Composite 11.

He said: Members across the public sector unions are united in their anger and despair at the looming threat to their pensions, and not a week goes by without an attack from a newspaper or a politician. Myths are being peddled, distortion is rife and most of the criticism is economically illiterate. Let's be clear. Britain's economy can well afford existing public sector pension at 1.5% of GDP. Despite people living longer - surely, that is a cause for celebration - that figure will rise to less than 2%.

As we have already heard this afternoon, the real problem with UK pensions is that the majority of private sector workers are not in a pension scheme at all, and those who are have their benefits slashed far too often. It is this rapid erosion of private sector pensions which has led to the criticism and resentment of those in the public sector. The collapse of private sector pensions is a scandal. Pensions are simply deferred wages, and companies across Britain have spent a decade cutting the wages of their workers and expecting the state to pick up the consequences through the benefits system, or witness a dramatic increase in pensioner poverty in the decades to come.

It is not surprising in these circumstances that some people feel resentful given the lies which are being spread, but we must make the argument day after day that the critics are simply

campaigning for equality of misery. We must be willing to work constructively with political parties in future as we have in recent years to ensure the sustainability of schemes if and when further changes are needed. But politicians should also remember that there are no quick fixes or short-term savings. Any future government must also understand that if it seeks to destroy our members' pensions, there will not only be anger but a determination to resist. However, I would say that we must think carefully about how we would face any such challenge. We cannot afford a fight to protect pensions to become the public sector's equivalent of the miners' strike. We must also avoid divide and rule.

A great strength of the public sector schemes is that permanent secretary or clerical officer, nursing assistant or chief executive, you are in the same pension scheme with the same benefits. Of course, some pensions are bigger than others, but that is a consequence of pay levels and length of service. The attacks do come across the parties. Last week it was Terry Rooney, a Labour MP, arguing that no-one should earn more than £50,000, and that is a lot of money but very few public sector workers, even FDA members, earn that kind of pension. But once you cut the benefits of the chief executive, sooner or later the nursing assistant will have their pension savaged, too.

Decent pensions and security in old age is the mark of a civilized and just society. Public or private, we must unite in their defence.

Charles Ward (*Association of Educational Psychologists*) supported the composite. He said: The issue of pensions is exceptionally complex, but there are, I have heard, some simple solutions. One thing I learnt as a psychologist was for every complex problem there is a simple solution. The next lesson I learnt was they are all wrong. Let me give you an example. This is a nice simple market philosophy that has brought us to where we are. 'We'll let all of you borrow more money, we'll make more money and we'll all get richer together', and we all got richer together until Lehman Brothers. What happened? We all had to put our hands collectively into our pockets to bail out the banks.

What concerns me and the reason why the AEP has put forward this motion is the concern not only that they will be coming for public sector pay cuts to pay back that money that the Government had to pay out, but also they will be looking at public sector pensions. We hear that simple solution to our problems from dear Mr. Cameron. He has got a couple of them, hasn't he? One is that you cut down the cost of an MP's cup of tea and that is going to solve the economy. Then he is also talking about that great lie: golden public sector pensions. Well, there is nothing golden about public sector pensions. They are a right that has been earned and paid for. They are not paid for by the taxpayer. Certainly the Local Government Pension Scheme is not. It is a funded scheme that is met fully by contributions and its own investments.

Public sector workers have traditionally taken less pay because they have been promised security and a pension at the end. Most people who go into public sector work do so because they care and they want to contribute to society. So let's nail that lie about golden public sector pensions. Let's tell Cameron no. Let's also tell Gordon Brown, no. Public sector pensions have been paid for and they are a right and sacrosanct.

Congress, I ask you to support this motion and to say with me to all who want to hear: Hands off my pension. Thank you.

Gail Cartmail (*Unite the union*) supported Composite Motion 11.

She said: The composite states that Congress deplores the resumed tax on public sector pensions by politicians and the media which are economically illiterate and driven by an agenda to eliminate defined benefit pension schemes in the public sector. I want delegates to be aware, if you are not already, of the absolutely excellent publication that the public service unions put together with the TUC, *Exploding Public Sector Pension Myths: A Briefing for Trade Union Members*. It is a repost, a rebuttal, against the economic illiteracy on this pensions issue. The quotes in terms of the attacks come from of course David Cameron, the CBI, the Institute of Directors, the Liberal Democrats and, of course, the Taxpayers' Alliance. In contrast, the Cabinet Office publication *Public Services Forum: The First Five Years*, praises the framework agreement that we negotiated with government in 2005 that has introduced reforms to the pension schemes that are currently being rolled out.

It is absolutely crucial that we understand there is a distinction between the politics of despair, the race to the bottom with the opposition parties compared with the position that is still being adhered to by our government notwithstanding some renegades, and I very much regret the statements made by Terry Rooney last weekend. Those statements led to a huge amount of publicity and television programmes, radio programmes, etc., and I make this plea to you, delegates: use the briefing and express your views. Numbers of us do media interviews, we do phone-in programmes, and so on. I am afraid it is the *Daily Mail* readers, the people that believe the lies that are peddled by the Tory press and the right-wing politicians, who are the ones that phone in, so for goodness sake get on the phone and support your decent pension schemes in the public sectors more vocally.

I would end by saying this. The reason we were able to negotiate with government the framework agreement was because all the TUC affiliated unions worked together, stood together, and pledged that we would take action together. Thank you, Congress.

* *Composite Motion 11 was CARRIED*

The President: Delegates, staying with Chapter 3, Economic and Industrial Affairs, we now turn to Public Services from page 76. I call paragraph 3.13 and Composite Motion 21, Public Services and the Economy. The General Council support the composite.

Public services and the economy

(Insert Composite Motion 21 - Public Services and the Economy)

Dave Prentis (*UNISON*) moved Composite 21.

He said: Good afternoon, President. Congress, I want to make it very, very clear right at the outset that my UNISON delegation here today will not allow our public service members to pay the price for bailing out the banks, not this week, not next year, and never. (*Applause*) We will not allow our members to suffer for something they played no part in, the breakdown of a greedy financial system, the breakdown overseen by the rich and powerful, the self-serving elite given freedom, less regulation, more contracts, more privilege, the super-rich actually believing themselves to be super-special, abusing their position and when we challenged them, and we did, we were always told the City knows best, the markets know best and the consultants know best. In the end they drove our economy off a cliff, with a soft

landing for the banks but ordinary people, our people, were left injured, their hopes, their dreams, shattered.

Our people suddenly found themselves in a job centre with thousands of others, worried about their homes, their families and their pensions. In times of need, Congress, in times of crisis, it is our public services which keep our fabric of life, our communities, together, getting people re-housed and giving benefit advice. Our members in social services looking out for the most vulnerable, caring for the elderly, our children and are a lifeline for those struggling with family breakdown. Our members in schools, colleges, helping people to re-skill, not to lose hope, and our members in the NHS, in mental health are making sure, unlike America, that everyone, everyone in our society, gets the care that they need.

Congress, it is our public services that will pull us through and it is our members who will rebuild communities. But what do we get? The spotlight rapidly turned from City excess to cutting our essential services, so-called backroom services demeaned, expendable, to be sold off just like in Thatcher's Britain when cleaners were deemed to be non-core. Remember, the jobs were halved, low-paid women workers sold off to the lowest bidder, and what did we get? We got dirty hospitals, MRSA, and C.diff. Make no mistake that whichever political party is in power 20 years on UNISON will defend our cleaners and our dinner ladies just as much as we will defend our nurses and our social workers. A Tory Party, egged on by the Taxpayers' Alliance, is calling for savage cuts using the crisis to dismantle the state, and our Treasury is pushing outsourcing as the only way to make efficiency savings, with councils falling over themselves to take up the services of private companies, multinational companies and invading every single corner of our Health Service.

It is not just about the Labour Government warning us of what the Tories will do to cut spending, we know that; it is about Labour convincing us that it will not do the same. (*Applause*) It is not about Labour warning us that the Tories will privatise all our public services. We know that. It is about convincing us that Labour will not continue to privatise our services. (*Applause*) It is not just about attacking the Tories. That is easy. It is about convincing us that our people, the people who we represent, working people, have a political party in Westminster standing up for Labour values, standing up for a Labour vision, standing up for our public services, standing up for a fairer society, and ending the market madness. This is what this motion is about.

Congress, we will not take lectures from discredited City bankers, nor from politicians who should know better. We will work with all public service unions to fight job cuts, to save our National Health Service, to defend our services and to bring fairness back into our society with a united plan of action. If we do need to balance the books, if we do need to get the money back, do not close the local nursery or the SureStart centres. Do not sack the healthcare assistants and do not put the brakes on meals-on-wheels. Instead stop the tax avoidance by the rich, make the banks honour their obligation to our society, stop their obscene bonuses, stop the excess and make them honour their debts to us. Make them pay and not our public services!

Mark Serwotka (*Public and Commercial Services Union*) seconded Composite Motion 21.

He said: Let me start by paying tribute to a group of public sector workers who often do not get any praise from anywhere, that is, the army of people, PCS members, working in the Department of Work & Pensions who are currently on the front line helping those who are

losing their jobs, the pensioners, the sick and the disabled. These people currently are working excessively hard in difficult conditions to help those who are suffering.

Congress, in seconding the composite we have actually to see things as they are. We have to be prepared to speak the truth and we have to warn all of our members about the difficulties that are coming. We are quite clear that after the general election we are going to see an unprecedented onslaught on the public finances the likes of which that none of us will ever have seen before. If we know that onslaught is coming it falls to us to be able to work out a strategy about how to defend our members, our communities and the public services that in a recession are more important to people than ever before. Therefore, like Dave in moving the motion, I think we have to recognise something. Tragically, there is a political consensus at the moment in all the mainstream parties; it is a pro-privatisation pro-public expenditure cuts consensus. It is not always popular to say these things but we have to face up to the reality that a Tory government will be disastrous, that a Tory government will unleash an onslaught against the public sector, but also the reality is so will a Labour government if it acts like it has done in the last 10 years or if it acts on the words of Lord Mandelson this morning. Lord Mandelson is clearly someone who is not elected and clearly does not seem to care about the working people in this country. He has been very clear in what he has said this morning on the Radio 4 *Today* programme, he has said there will be spending cuts, he has said there will be more efficiency cuts and he has said we have to cut back on public spending.

In fact, we know these people mean what they say. In the Civil Service under Labour in the past 10 years we have seen 100,000 job cuts, we have seen thousands of offices closed, and we have seen more privatisation than the governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major combined. We have to be clear. We must advocate an alternative and we must advocate a defence strategy, and that alternative is not to cut public spending but is to collect tax. It is to make the rich pay their share and it is to do something about the outrage that sees up to £100bn of tax that is currently due and is avoided by the rich. How can it be right that banks in which we own a major stake there are still whole sections set up to advise the rich on how to avoid paying their share? These are the scroungers, these are the spongers, and they should pay for our public services, not our members with their jobs and their livelihoods. (*Applause*)

In summing up, not only should we say we will fight any party that seeks to cut public spending, but we have to declare how to do it. One is to raise taxes, one is to make the rich pay, but the other one is to act in unity. If all of us pledge that we will take industrial and campaigning action to defend schools, hospitals, job centres and nurseries, we can win. In 2005, eight unions threatened to take industrial action together and we won on public sector pensions. Last year, despite a motion at this Congress, we did not take joint action to defend our members' living standards. The result is we all lost on public sector pay.

So, Congress, let's be united, let's take the action required, let's argue for the rich to pay their share, but ultimately let's pledge that whoever wins the next election privatisation, cuts and an onslaught against our communities is unacceptable and we will fight whoever tries to do that.

Chris Keates (NASUWT) supported Composite Motion 21.

She said: Public services are fundamental to our way of life and wellbeing and never more so than at a time of recession. Health and social services are supporting and caring for those damaged by the recession; education is developing the skills and expertise needed to rebuild

the economy; emergency services are protecting communities from the worst consequences of the recession, union members in the education, health, justice, emergency social, and Civil Service, and in local government are achieving ever-improving standards and often in the most difficult of circumstances. It is therefore incomprehensible that anyone could believe that the economic crisis can be resolved by battering public services. There is no slack in public services to cut, but if you want to maximise investment why not outlaw the siphoning off of millions of pounds of public money to line the pockets of private sector consultants?

There are those who continue to argue that public service is not compromised by turning public services over to private and independent providers but they could not be more wrong. There is a great difference. A fundamental difference is the ethos and values which public service workers espouse. Public service workers will be there on Monday, on Tuesday, whatever day, to deliver the service. They do not walk away because the contract is no longer profitable. They do not walk away because the ambitious targets set to maximise funding cannot be met. They do not walk away because company priorities change. There are numerous examples of private companies walking away usually when they realise that public service is not about turning a fast buck. Public service is about people, not profit. Relying on the vagaries of market forces is no way to run public services.

There is a stark choice facing our members at the next general election between those who are for public services and our welfare state and those who will dismantle them. Many in this room still bear the scars of 18 years of Tory rule which decimated public services and attacked our Movement. There are many others who have forgotten and are too young to have lived through it. We must redouble our efforts and educate every one of our members about what is at stake at the next election; the threat to jobs, communities, and the trade union Movement. We must equip all our members to understand the intentions of political parties and to mobilise our members to vote. Congress, we must not assume that all is lost. We can and we must make a stand to defend the future of public services. Congress, support Composite 21.

David Drever (*Educational Institute of Scotland*) supported Composite Motion 21.

He said: We are very happy to associate ourselves with this broad-ranging composite motion. Colleagues, I read the General Council statement on the economy with some interest before I came here and I was very interested to hear what Brendan Barber said about the economic case for increasing public spending. That statement talks about the importance of increase in salaries and wages within the public sector and opposition to pay freezes at a time when we need to push spending, and when credit has collapsed the public sector will provide an important basis for that. This will be very important, we think, in the coming period. In Scotland we are hearing some of our local authority employers speaking boldly of a five-year pay freeze in the public sector in order to pay for the crisis that has not been of our making. I think we need to make clear that pay deals that have already been agreed and pay deals in the future cannot be held on the basis of a freeze, and that unions standing together in support of a pay policy that is not frozen will be useful for future investment.

I want to focus on the need for other types of investment in the coming period, and that is in training and infrastructure. If we are to pose alternatives to the baleful voices that are calling for cuts then we need to be specific about it. EIS identified training as being an important aspect of that. We have seen as unemployment has risen that applications for further and higher education and training increase massively. We need to see enhanced training and

education provision in all sectors but particularly in the further and higher education sector. This we believe will be good for those coming back into the education system but will also provide long-term economic benefit that will speed economic recovery when it comes. We also need to see improvements and refurbishment in the educational estate. We are sorely in need of it throughout the country and let this be one of the major tasks alongside that, of course, of rebuilding the social housing sector of our hard-hit construction section.

There will be many challenges facing us in the coming time as we have heard from the speakers already here this afternoon. The labour and trade union Movement must hold its nerve in this difficult period. We need to hold together. We need to ensure that those rising voices that are calling for division between private sector and public sector workers, indeed division within the public sector workers, are not heeded. We need to teach our members and the wider public that unity will be key in the coming period if we are to succeed in carrying forward the needs that this composite motion lays upon us. I ask you to support. Thank you.

Brian Caton (*POA*) supported Composite Motion 21.

He said: President, Congress, comrades, the POA is delighted to be associated with the full content of this composite, and particularly we are looking at a range of issues. I am not going to deal with our privatisation; that is later on in the agenda. However, the National Offender Management Service, those who run our prisons, both public and private, are clearly losing their way and it is hardly surprising with their inability to be able to secure funding for what is a rising prisoner population expected to top 100,000 people, more than anywhere else in the civilised western world. While Rome is burning they are on their violins practising, doing little about it, saying little to the Treasury, and not securing the money that we need to run a civil society and on your behalf, making sure that our prisons are safe for prisoners and staff, and that when we release prisoners, they are safe for the general public. They have failed all the way along the line in doing so. We have reached the stage where the Prison Service in its best intent stands and says, 'We're actually now reaching a point where we are sending people out who are worse than when they came in.' What an absolute disastrous attitude to take and why aren't they driving it forward? They will not fight for the service.

When people condemn my union for being robust, upfront and fighting for its members to be safe, I say that if no one else will fight for prison officers my union will, and if that means taking on a government of whatever political persuasion we will do that as well. It is all about one thing. This Government and the government before it have been determined to support prison privatisation and they want to create a circumstance where that is made easy. So, what we are seeing now is against everything that this government promised, that when particular businesses are transferred from public to private and back again there would not be an element of a two-tier workforce. The Prison Service is now going to recruit prison officers doing exactly the same job as those in the existing jobs but at £3,000 less in their wages, and another grade under that on even lower wages doing the vast majority of the work. I have to say the Labour Government's promise of no two-tier workforces they have absolutely kept because we are going to have a three-tier one.

The efforts to drive down cost will deskill and make prisons less safe for everyone. I have said from this rostrum on a number of occasions that when they make us do our job badly, and when we send people out to our colleagues in the Probation Service ex-prisoners should be ready for release and where possible rehabilitated and their offending behaviour

addressed. I have to say this to you now, we are going to continue sending them out so that they can rob, rape, and murder people, and that ain't right. Please support this composite.

Niki Constantinou (*Unite the union*) supported Composite Motion 21.

She said: With these challenging times it is all the more important to invest in education and public services and support the transition to a low-carbon economy with focus in the areas essential for supporting those most affected. Education has the potential to generate knowledge and creativity that will drive economic recovery, adapt to climate change, green jobs, low-carbon technology, and renewable manufacturing.

It is essential that education, transport, health and welfare, are not influenced by the stock market or be profit focused. We need to expand in public sector education and training provision, infrastructure investment and green job creation. We need renewable manufacturing. We need the incentives and industrial vision for success with union involvement in efficiency programmes, with defined benefit pension schemes being supported; proper funding for all adults seeking access to training and education a priority, creating a skilled national workforces, with redundancy providing retraining and education opportunities.

There should be no lack of opportunities among people to gain further learning, and addressing social economic problems. We need to tackle inequality in our society. Women's poverty is linked to child poverty. We need a fair tax system to address the poverty gap, affordable childcare facilities and flexible working. For working people to prosper in the global economy we need thoughtful strategies for public services at a national level; strategies that work for all of us, social and economic justice, and fair opportunities.

Colleges, universities, and government departments can have an economic and social role. Their facilities, venues and spaces can provide engagement with learning opportunities for regional communities, engaging and inspiring, building on individual interests and passions with informal learning reaching out to people who are disadvantaged, supporting the community, creating a fair society through training, jobs and services by the way in which they use their funds.

Equality and fairness is what trade unions are about. It is what we aspire to with the banner of equality. We need employers to provide leadership, commitment and training, public procurement, and a purchasing power to promote and improve equality. Public services must meet the needs of our diverse society, to provide housing, transport, infrastructure, and adapt for an environmental sustainable future. Public services are essential for supporting strong and cohesive communities, essential to the economy, and to put people into jobs.

This economic crisis threatens to become a social crisis. If we do not have thoughtful strategies for public services, appropriate investment, tackling education and equality issues, we cannot aspire to a cohesive society or a strong economy. Thank you.

Brian Strutton (*GMB*) supported Composite Motion 21.

He said: Congress, the war of words over post-election public spending is already upon us. During the summer we saw scare stories in the right-wing press about public sector pay and pensions, stories about an alleged need for wage repression and the dismantling of pension

entitlement. Only last week the Taxpayers' Alliance and the Institute of Directors jointly published a report calling for immediate retrenchment by taking £50bn out of public spending. They propose swingeing benefit cuts, including the abolition of Child Benefit, 10% job cuts in schools and in hospitals, freezes to state basic pensions and public sector pay, a hike in pension costs for all public service workers, the withdrawal of guaranteed education and training for 16 and 17-year olds, and a score of other hatchet measures.

The line they peddle us is that the private sector cannot afford public spending but we know that public spending is the one thing that has prevented the bankers' credit crunch from causing outright economic collapse. Any enlightened economist will tell you the same. The current level of public spending is counteracting the recession. It is sustaining jobs and consumer demand and thereby stimulating the much needed recovery. This fiscal stimulus must be maintained. Immediate retrenchment would invite a slump and mass unemployment, instead of coming out of recession we would head straight into depression. The idea that we could take so much public spending out of the economy in one go is economic illiteracy.

We are still in recession and far from safety as the Chancellor, Alistair Darling has said. If they got their way, the right wing 'idealogues' and bosses clubs would tear up whatever green shoots of recovery there are but for them, of course, it is a political agenda. They are the think-tanks of the Conservative right. What they saying now is what the Conservative Party would do if it got into power. Cameron and Osborne, the twin Tory toffs, have already threatened a new age of austerity, re-enacting the policies of the 1930s which set economic recovery back a generation. Our first line of defence has to be very, very clear: to ensure a Labour victory at next year's election, whatever it takes - whatever it takes! - because there is no other game in town and because if it fails Conservative elements are already planning the coming assault on our members, our public services and our economy. We cannot let that happen.

Jane Loftus (*Communication Workers Union*) supported Composite Motion 21.

She said: You will have heard earlier about the difficulties Royal Mail has with pensions. Today as part of supporting Composite 21 I want to talk about Royal Mail postal services being part of the public sector. Sometimes we forget it and I think it is convenient for a Labour Government to try and portray that postal services do not matter to the country and do not matter to the economy. If you look at the dispute that we are involved in, it matters to every person in here, to every small business and to people in the communities whether they get their mail or not. It matters to them whether they have a Post Office counter that is available to them, and it matters about services that we provide.

The CWU may be portrayed as militant and wanting to fight but we have fought privatisation under a Tory government, we called it then, *Stand by Your Post*, and Alan Johnson was our General Secretary. We then had to continue under New Labour to fight against privatisation and we called that *Keep the Post Public* when Billy Hayes was our General Secretary. We have won a reprieve but at a vital cost. It is a disgrace for the Government to have played off pensions and regulations and said that they would only deal with the situation if we allowed privatisation! That is a disgrace. It is a disgrace from Mandelson and it is a disgrace from Gordon Brown. But we continue to fight now. We will be on the demonstration on the Sunday of the Labour Party Conference alongside fellow trade unionists and we will be saying, 'No more.' We will not bear the price of this crisis.

It does matter and the CWU have provided what they want to do with the postal services. We would like to see an expansion of our public services and we would like to see a Post bank. We would like to see financial services secure for people where they can deal with them in their communities. We want to see postal services that deliver to all, that are good valuable jobs. There have been recent press reports that the CWU just has Spanish practices that are outdated and outmoded. Well, I will tell you what those Spanish practices are, they are hard-earned union agreements that keep the terms and conditions of all postal workers to a decent standard, and we will defend them.

It is proven that the economy needs us. In the last dispute we had in 2007 the Federation of Small Businesses said that a cheque delayed in the post can mean the difference between life and death of a small business. That is millions of workers, the millions of workers who are organised and organise. That is the people we want. We should defend public services, expand them, and part of that is the postal service. I would like to say unite and fight, support Composite 21, and let's see a victory to the postal workers.

* *Composite Motion 21 was CARRIED.*

The Vice President: As Vice President, it actually gives me great pleasure to ask Sheila, our TUC President, to address Congress.

President's Address and vote of thanks

The President: Congress, it is a great honour to stand before you both as a lay member and as the first Welsh woman ever to be President of the TUC. (*Applause*) It is fantastic to be here in Liverpool, a great trade union city, for what is the highlight of our year. Colleagues, as I am in charge this week can I begin with a simple house rule. The owners of any telephones going off during Congress will be subject to a strict but fair system of fines based of course on ability to pay: a £5 fine for lay members, a £15 fine for union employees, and for the media £20 (*applause*), a £50 fine for politicians, and let me make one thing clear, they will not be allowed to put that on expenses. (*Laughter/applause*) In fact, colleagues, all proceeds will go to a charity very dear to me called *Brick Pakistan*, a charity for bonded labourers, many of whom are children who work in the brick manufacturing industry. All the monies collected could help build a very different future for some of the most vulnerable workers anywhere in the world.

Colleagues, I want to start today by saying thank you to all those people who have made this a memorable year for me. My thanks go to the staff of the TUC and my fellow members of the General Council. Of course, thanks to everyone in the GMB for their support throughout the year, in particular, my own regional secretary, Alan Garley, who has always been totally supportive, an excellent mentor, and a great friend, and of course my General Secretary, Paul Kenny, who has been unstinting in his support and unwavering in his commitment to everything that I have done. Thanks to all of you for giving me the privilege of representing this Movement. I have been proud to travel to Ireland, Spain, and Holland on behalf of the TUC, and a few weeks ago I was in Zimbabwe, a deeply moving experience, and let this message go out from this Congress, that every Zimbabwean worker can count on our solidarity and our support. (*Applause*) Last but not least let me thank Mark Serwotka not just for sharing my Welsh sense of humour but for bearing the brunt of it. To me Mark is the Ryan Giggs of the trade union Movement, Welsh, good looking, and one of the finest left-wingers of his generation. (*Applause*)

Congress, when I left school at 15 without any formal qualifications I could never have dreamt that one day I would stand before you as I am now but everything I have achieved as a working-class woman I have achieved because of our Movement. I have worked in a variety of jobs, in a shop, in a food processing factory, in a carbide works, and in a textile plant, and throughout my working life wherever I have worked I have experienced firsthand the true value of workers joining together to speak with one voice. That is why I became involved with the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers back in the late 1970s. Three decades on and I am as convinced that there has never been more need for strong effective trade unions as there is now. What matters most of all, too, is not what happens here in this conference hall but what happens on the ground, in our offices, in our factories, shops and schools, power stations and prisons, hotels and hospitals, town halls and transport hubs, in the workplaces that make up Britain. That is why the work of our 250,000 lay reps, the unsung heroes of our Movement, is so hugely important. They are the difference between a job lost and a job saved, between a worker treated fairly and a worker exploited, between a workplace where safety, equality, and learning matter and a workplace where they do not. So, let me pay tribute to the work of our activists. They work day in and day out, not just supporting colleagues, not just speaking up for workers, but making our Movement what it is today, the largest voluntary organisation in Britain.

Congress, this is a hugely difficult time for all of us. The recession is having a devastating impact on jobs, living standards and aspirations of the working people that we represent. The public services we all rely on are facing a decade of cuts thanks to the mess greedy bankers have caused, and the billions that the government has squandered on expensive consultants and needless reforms, and some of our most vulnerable communities are being preyed on by the cynical opportunists of the Far Right. The election of two BNP MEPs in June was a deeply disturbing development. It must be us, the trade union Movement, that leads the way in the battle against racism and fascism. We have a long and distinguished history of speaking up for all working people, regardless of colour or creed, and we are not about to give that up now. Let it be the politics of hope not the politics of hate that shape our future.

But while we face some pretty big challenges here in the UK let us not forget the wider struggle for working people across the world. The consequences of economic crisis may be bad here but they are worse elsewhere, measured not in numbers and statistics but in the brutal calculus of starvation and squalor. The theme of Congress this year is *End Global Exploitation*, and together we must keep fighting for a global economy that puts people and planet first. Out of the wreckage of the neo-Liberal crash needs to come a new and very different kind of globalisation where fairness comes before a fast buck, sustainability comes before shareholders, and public services come before private excesses. And as we rebuild the world economy let us take this opportunity to remove once and for all the abomination of child labour.

I am proud to have worked closely with a number of anti-exploitation charities over the years and there is one story that will always stay in my mind, the story of two young girls in Pakistan, barely more than five years old, denied the chance of an education, forced instead to do dangerous backbreaking work in the carpet manufacturing industry, and repeatedly raped by their bosses. They featured in a video produced by one of the charities that my union, the GMB, supports. I will never forget the look in their eyes, the look of hopelessness, nor how they said that they wished they were dead. The story did not end there because thanks to the work of that charity those two girls are now free enjoying the basic human rights that we all take for granted. We are not powerless to act. Together we can change things for the better.

This year we celebrated the anniversary of the moon landings, a moment of hope for the world when we saw just what science, technology, and human endeavour could achieve, but if we can scale those heights then four decades on surely it can be within our gift to take children out of work and put them into school. Let us be clear about this, Congress. Education is a right, not a privilege, whether in Britain, in Pakistan, or anywhere in the world. *(Applause)* So, let none of us rest until that ugly scar of child rape and labour is eradicated permanently and irreversibly and every child is free to achieve their true potential in life.

Congress, what unites all our campaigns is that one simple principle, solidarity, the core belief that together we are stronger, that you are my keeper and I am yours, and that we do not walk on, on the other side. That is what makes me proud to have devoted my working life to this Movement, that is what makes me proud to be a trade unionist, and that is what makes me proud to stand here before you today. Thank you. Let's have a great week. *(Applause)*

The Vice President: Thank you, Sheila. Now I would really love to invite a great friend of Unison to move the vote of thanks to Sheila but instead Paul Kenny will be coming to the rostrum!

Paul Kenny (GMB): President, you don't mind if I use the term, Sheila; I hope you don't. It is a pleasure and an honour to move the Congress vote of thanks to you, Sheila, really, for the inspiration, the spirit, the humour (some of which came across I hope) and the comradeship that you have given us all, and not just you in your term of office. Sheila is a person of incredible determination with hurdles that she has overcome in her life which would have stopped most of us in our tracks, and no challenge is too daunting for Sheila as she proved by getting Mark Serwotka to speak for less than three minutes or when she challenged Derek Simpson to introduce himself when he actually turned up at a meeting of the General Council. Hi there, Tony, stop clapping!

Sheila left school at 15, as you have seen. Her school record, as she said when you look at these things will tell you that she had no qualifications but even in her first foray into the world of work the first thing Sheila did was to join a trade union. Sheila was forged and has held the values and passed them on, she was forged in a family and a community where social values and fairness were the currency in personal standing. Sheila, I know you have a wonderful supportive family that you care about deeply: husband Clive, children Jonathan, Tony, and Wayne, granddaughters Sarah, Gemma, Kirsty, and grandson Simon. I think Sarah is here. Stand up and wave. That's it, I can see you. Very proud. *(Applause)*

Sheila's working life has been from 15, as she said, in various factories, in manufacturing, mostly in the clothing and textile industry in later working life. She has led an active and positive role in organising every workplace she has ever been in, active in her own union as a lay member, for many years the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers and since the early 1990s I am proud to say the GMB. I personally, and her region, and our executive, know how much she has done for members and for our union.

There were lots I could choose from but this is a typical story of Sheila's work. In 2005 a young man called Daniel Dennis, only 17, went off to his first job, his first day of work, and they brought him home in a coffin. His parents, Peter and Anthea, sought justice and some understanding about why their son in his first piece of employment had been entrusted to an employer and killed. They wondered why, how it had been brought about an employer could kill their son. They were told it was an accident and one of those things. They went through

all the official channels, as people do, just to get frustration. They had lost a son, they were empty, and they were destroyed. Then as Peter was a GMB member and shop steward they turned to Sheila. She met them and she promised them support. She pushed for an inquiry and an investigation, and Sheila persuaded the GMB -- believe me, when Sheila is in persuading mood you go along with it -- to fund a private prosecution. The final outcome, we could not obviously change what had happened was that that employer finally pleaded guilty after all the legal pressure we applied and that employer went to prison. (*Applause*) That family knows that without the trade union and the work that Sheila has done their son would never have obtained justice and they could finally start to rebuild their lives.

Sheila is like millions of rank-and-file trade unionists up and down the country. She said in her speech that she does not think she does anything special, she just knows the difference not just between left and right but between right and wrong. She stands up as trade unionists do the length and breadth of the country every day in the world of work and fights for working people's rights. Your work, as you briefly touched on and I know it is a lot deeper than that, in the international field in fighting exploitation and child labour has been an inspiration.

Finally, Congress, for those of you who are not Welsh or are not familiar with the Welsh language, you need to understand that in the Welsh language - Sheila, I am reliably informed - there is no letter or sound that corresponds with the letter 'W'. Is that correct? I did think about making a joke here but I thought it may not go down particularly well so I dodged it, to be truthful. I am going to go round it.

President, Sheila, just in plain English, really, you are warm and you are welcoming, and you are wonderful, you are well liked, and you are a bloody great trade unionist as well as being very proud of being Welsh, and we are incredibly proud of you. You are a role model for us all. Thank you very much. Have a great week.

The Vice President: I now call on Brenda Fraser to second the vote of thanks to the President.

Brenda Fraser (GMB): It is an honour to be seconding the vote of thanks to our President, Sheila Bearcroft, a friend and a colleague for what seems, and probably is, a lifetime. Sheila and I first met when we were both very active members of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. Then in 1991 our union amalgamated with the GMB and our activity and commitment grew. There are so many stories over the years that I could tell you about our worthy President. Sheila is probably saying to herself, 'Please, Brenda, don't tell 'em that one, or that one, or that one, and especially not that one.' But, colleagues, the stories I am going to tell you today are good. They are a testament to the resistance Sheila and I, and other colleagues, put up with against the worst employers in Britain, the rag trade bosses, and also a testament to how well-deserved is her position as President of the TUC.

Colleagues, we see her here today as an imposing figure having just delivered an impressive address. Thirty or more years ago she was a shop steward. She would stand at factory gates in South Wales at five in the morning in wind, rain, snow, and hail, recruiting members. She was representing union members in the clothing factories against criminal low pay, discrimination, bullying, harassment, and primitive facilities. We both think there must have been a special school for clothing employers because nobody could naturally do the greedy evil things they did. Sheila, you and I and our colleagues, fought them at every turn. When

some of our high street retailers thought it a good idea to have garments manufactured abroad by child slaves - sorry, bonded labour - you were instrumental in drawing attention to the scandal of children as young as five or six chained to a machine, beaten, malnourished, forced to work up to 18 hours a day for a miserable pittance, and of course at the same time sent our members to the dole queue to increase dividend and bonuses. You put that scandal in the public domain. You publicised the bonded labour liberation front and gave them a platform at our section conferences. You made sure the world knew.

When Marks & Spencer were sending work abroad ethically or unethically, causing the closure of hundreds of factories and the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, you were lobbying MPs and ministers to try to halt it. Nobody in this Congress will be surprised to hear they did nothing. However, by being heavily involved in the Marks & Sharks campaign you made sure everybody knew the joblessness and despair was small compared to corporate greed.

Colleagues, Sheila was behind the wall of shame, a list of every clothing factory supplying Marks & Spencer which had to close because of greed. Congress, Sheila made people aware British governments did nothing. Today, colleagues, there are a few bad clothing employers in Britain but that is because there is only a few clothing employers left. Congress, Sheila and I spent a lifetime fighting them and I think we both wish we could still do that now, don't we, Shee?

Colleagues, there are more light-hearted stories to tell. As President of the GMB Clothing & Textile Section Sheila would lead the pay talks with the BCIA. One year the president of the BCIA made a derisory pay offer and made a remark along the lines of, 'The workforce is only women working for pin money.' Sheila said something which could be obscene in the phonetic alphabet and marched the union delegation out of the room. The BCIA delegation sat there white as ghosts with mouths wide open. I have to say so did some of the GMB officers. But her actions won the day and we were invited back in to a much improved pay offer.

There was a trip to an international conference in Melbourne. At the time, Sheila was a heavy smoker and of course smoking was banned on planes. The first leg was a 12-hour flight to Bangkok. After five hours Sheila thought it was a doddle and said she could stop smoking, no bother at all. After 12 hours the plane landed in Bangkok and she made the distance from the plane to a smoking area in the terminal in the time that you saying 'bolt' could not even aspire to. So much for stopping smoking; but she has stopped now.

The epitome of Sheila's commitment to the trade union also happened on that trip. Female workers in the factory in Melbourne were involved in a recognition dispute and were picketing the factory. Sheila joined them, got in the middle of the line, and all linked hands. A burly police inspector well known as a strike-breaker got out of his car and approached the line obviously thinking he was only dealing with a bunch of women and he had nothing to fear. Sheila shouted, 'Forward', and the picket line advanced relentlessly with herself at the apex. The police inspector found himself being crushed and spread-eagled on the bonnet of his car screaming, and I mean screaming, for help. His reputation was in tatters, a cartoon character in the next day's papers. The GMB national officer whilst cheering Sheila on was very worried about how he would tell Clive, Sheila's husband, that Sheila had been clapped in irons and sent to Botany Bay. But she was not arrested. That lightning speed worked again.

Those are just a few stories, colleagues, about a remarkable trade unionist and there are many, many more.

In closing, I must pay tribute to Sheila's family: Clive, her husband, and her sons and grandchildren. Nobody can make the contribution Sheila has made without the unstinting support her family have given. That support has been staunch and constant and they should be thanked also. Colleagues, I am proud to call Sheila, President. I am even prouder to call her my friend.

The President: Thank you, Paul. Thank you, Brenda. I am proud to call you all my friends, all trade unionists united together to get for our members decent working conditions and decent terms to go along with them. Thank you, Congress. Thank you, Dave.

TUC Equality Audit

The President: Congress, the TUC Equality Audit is one of the most important pieces of work that we do at the TUC. It allows us to examine what we are all doing to promote diversity and equality within our own organisations. Unions have already received copies of this year's Equality Audit. I now call on the Assistant General Secretary to introduce the Equality Audit for 2009. Kay?

Kay Carberry (Assistant General Secretary): Thank you, President. Congress, this is the latest report of the latest TUC Equality Audit and once again it is telling a very good story so I hope that everybody will find the time to read it. It is telling us about the work that all of you are doing in your unions to give a very high priority once again to equality. It is a very impressive report and it is a tribute to all the hard work of union officers, union reps, and also to the leadership that is being provided by union head offices. I think it is important that we all underline that this report gives a very true and accurate picture because the responses from unions to the audit survey cover almost the entire 6.5 million members in unions represented in the TUC. This time round the focus of the audit report is on collective bargaining and we find that the top priority for bargaining on equality is women's pay and employment, and maybe that is not surprising as women now are over half of all union members and the pay gap is still stubbornly with us. It is also worth noting that over half of the unions that replied to the survey reported that they had succeeded in winning more support for working parents and carers. I think what is most interesting about this is that unions are achieving workplace benefits in this area over and above the statutory legal entitlements and that has been even during this period when those legal entitlements are much better. So, what this does is underlines that the union premium is still a very significant feature of unionised workplaces but it is also striking, Congress, that unions are getting bargaining successes in all the other equality areas bringing real benefits to disabled workers, younger and older workers, black members, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender workers. But I do not want to give the impression that any of this has been easy.

The audit also asked about future prospects for equality bargaining and here unions gave mixed responses. On the negative side the worsening economic climate is clearly having an impact on what unions are able to gain for women and minorities in the workplace but on the positive side we now have the stronger anti-discrimination laws as a firmer minimum floor of rights to build on and soon we will have the new equality bill in law and that is going to give us more opportunities, particularly in the public sector. What we need this new equality bill to do is to give statutory rights to equality reps and the TUC and unions are campaigning very

hard on this. We are very grateful to the government, and to Harriet Harman in particular, for the financial support that we have been given that helped us train hundreds of equality reps, but just like any rep equality reps need time and facilities to do their job. As you know, delegates, we can have all the equality laws we want but they will not necessarily change much without fairer workplace policies and practices. We do not want our members having to challenge discrimination in the courts after it has happened. We want changes in workplaces so that discrimination does not happen in the first place and this is where equality reps come in. There is a huge job for them to do so let's make sure they get the backing to do it. This equality audit shows unions' determination to fight discrimination and advance equality. As I said, it is a very good read and I commend it to Congress. Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Kay. Let me thank all of the unions that participated in the audit and which have worked so hard for equality. I call paragraph 2.4, Equality Audit. Delegates, we stay with Chapter 2 of the General Council's Report, Equal Rights, the section on disability, from page 41. I call paragraph 2.8 and Composite Motion 7, Disability Discrimination. The General Council supports the composition motion.

Disability Discrimination

(Insert Composite Motion 7 - Disability Discrimination)

Gary Gibson (*Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists*) moved Composite Motion 7.

He said: As a trade union representative, I am passionate about the importance of equality, the principle that every person should be treated equally whatever their culture, religion, sex or age. It goes without saying that this also goes for those who have any form of disability, whether it is a physical or mental impairment that has an adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out day-to-day duties as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act. That means that equality should be mirrored through any situation in our society, not more so than at work, and that dignity in the workplace should mean for everyone and not just a few. That is the reason why trade unionists, on behalf of any person with any form of disability, have fought for that privilege, both in the workplace and in society, through equality of employment rights and other recognisable standards.

Congress, one of those is the two-tick disability symbol, which is widely used both in the public and private sector. This symbol, together with the words 'Positive about disabled people', is meant to show that an employer using the symbol is positive about employing disabled people and is keen to know about the abilities of disabled people and their needs. This is strongly linked to the Disability Discrimination Act, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against anybody with a disability, and that reasonable adjustments should be made to enable an individual to carry out their day-to-day duties.

Within the remit of the two-tick symbol, itself awarded by Job Centre Plus, there are five key areas that employers should seek to achieve in recognition of this award. These are in relation to recruitment of employees, training, retention of employees, consultation and disability awareness. Congress, where I work in the public sector and more specifically in the NHS, all of the three organisations that I work across have been awarded the disability two-tick symbol which identifies that, in principle, they are signed up to these five commitments.

It is an interesting fact that whilst they have this symbol, a lot of people in the organisation are completely unaware of it or unaware of what it means. Considering that awareness is one of the key planks of this standard, you would think that quite surprising. In fact, a number of managers who work in our area are unaware of the true meaning of the disability and have difficulty in identifying how to make reasonable adjustments to a member of staff's working environment in order to enable that individual to maintain their work profile. Most of them think that a disability is something that is clearly visible.

Congress, this latter issue has meant that locally we have had to include clear, identifiable references to the Disability Discrimination Act within our absence policy. This is in order that managers ensure that they attempt, wherever is practicable, to take into account the issues that may affect an individual due to their disability and where it may affect their day-to-day activities at work. This was not something introduced by the organisation or people in HR. This was devised and developed with trade union activity that worked within them.

That issue does not run through recruitment and retention processes and every aspect of the organisation. Similarly, within the area of work, staff had to challenge the issues relating to their own disabilities. There is no clarity on how such a challenge can be made nor is there any mechanism for recording such information. The organisation does not do it for them. Such things should clearly be uniform in any organisation awarded the two-tick symbol, but these are local issues. That may be marginally better in other organisations, but in some instances, it may well be significantly worse.

Locally, trade unionists have encouraged change, but that is not monitored appropriately in a way that we should wish. It is true to say that some organisations have an external audit on the two-tick symbol, but it is not that meaningful and, relatively speaking, does not cut any teeth. It does not look how far down the organisation issues have been communicated, encouraged or benefited individuals with a disability. In reality, the two-tick symbol has become a paper exercise rather like saying to a football manager, 'It's a good team you are playing on paper', but the manager would say, 'We play on grass.' If a policy is good on paper, it has to be good in practice and proved to be so.

This is why the Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists believe that to many employees, the scheme is just like a paper exercise. Although there are policies and procedures in place to retain the symbol, the practices relating to those five commitments are not. These result in workers with disabilities being both discriminated against and without decent career prospects. Currently, it is left to disabled workers or their trade union representatives to monitor the commitments.

Congress believes that the only way to ensure that the five commitments are put into practice is if there is regular review by government or an independent awarding body on an annual basis. This would ensure that commitments are meant, standards are kept to the highest level and disabled workers would have confidence that they will receive the right to equality and good career prospects in their workplace. I move. Congress, please support. (*Applause*)

Sarah Guerra (*FDA*) seconded Composite Motion 7.

She said: I am first-time delegate and this is my first time speaking at Congress. (*Applause*)

The FDA is pleased to be seconding this motion. We are fully committed to doing all we can to ensure that those with impairments are able to access good-quality employment and are not prevented from doing so or from participating effectively in the workplace by unhelpful or unnecessary work practices.

In one demonstration of its commitment, the FDA has appointed me as the Executive Committee's equality champion; in another it has actively invested in all its equality networks. This means that we now have an active network for members with a disability which helps issues and concerns to be heard and addressed.

The kite mark nature of the two-tick symbol is intended to give applicants and employees confidence in the employer's commitment, understanding and integrity. This must be a reality. One element of the two-tick regime is the guaranteed interview scheme. Our members have mixed views about its usefulness. Some are unhappy at the perception that they are not being interviewed on merit. Others are frustrated that they are wasting their time as a jobholder has no intention of properly considering them. However, whatever individual views over particular aspects, all agree that the two-tick badge has to be meaningful. It has to affect behaviour and not just be a toothless policy.

My day job is at HM Revenue & Customs, one of the biggest public sector employers. There, we had repeated problems with the guaranteed interview scheme. HMRC decided in its wisdom to create its own guidance which allowed a job to be advertised and then after the applications were in, vacancy holders could choose new, different selection criteria. Guess what? That's right. Candidates with disabilities were sifted out. It has taken two grievances from the same member and a year of dogged negotiations to get HMRC to fix it. This really should not be necessary. Had HMRC felt that there was any chance of their failings being publicly exposed, I am sure they would have behaved differently. That is why we need Job Centre Plus to effectively monitor the system and publish the outcomes.

Our colleagues in Job Centre Plus are under the cosh, as we are in HMRC. Enacting this motion may require the TUC lobbying government for funding. I should mention here that access to work funding has already been withdrawn for civil servants. Departments are supposed to fund that themselves. How high a priority do you think that is in a time of continuous cuts?

The two-tick symbol represents hope and fairness. It needs to be significant and trusted. Please support the motion so that we can work towards ensuring this. (*Applause*)

Shirley Rainey (*Chartered Society for Physiotherapists*) supported Composite Motion 7.

She said: Talking to our amendment and about access to work, the government-funded Access to Work scheme was set up to provide the vital support to disabled employees and their employers by removing the practical barriers to work. Access to Work can meet the costs of additional support needed by employees and can be used in a variety of ways, i.e. providing special aids or equipment and for adaption of premises and any additional equipment that may be needed.

Last year at conference, there was a big debate about Access to Work and the unions feared that whilst the money was being ring-fenced for the private sector, within the public sector the ministerial government departments were required to fund the disability adjustments

needed by their staff from their general running costs. In other words, the ethos in the public sector was that they would support their disabled workers whether they had the money or not whereas, as we all know, if you are a manager in a public sector, you still have concerns about your staffing budgets and they are constantly being cut following efficiency reviews.

When the government implemented the funding changes for the ministerial departments, they agreed that they would evaluate the impact the changes had on disabled staff working in these departments. The results were to be published this summer and yet we are still waiting for them. The Government are saying that it has all been successful whilst those trade unions who have members directly affected dispute this claim. They state that they find it more difficult to argue for the recruitment and retention of disabled members, especially when budgets are being cut.

Our real fears when we submitted our amendment to this motion was that the Access to Work would be withdrawn from more public sector employees, but very recently we have had written assurances from Jonathan Shaw, Minister for Disabled People, that 'Extending the NGD changes to other public sectors' employees is not something that we, the government, are currently considering.'

So, many, many thanks to the TUC and the other unions who have campaigned strongly over the last year, but let us not be complacent. Let us not forget that disabled people are, on average, twice as likely to be unemployed as non-disabled people and therefore very vulnerable in this difficult climate. We must continue to give our support to the civil service unions still struggling with the ministerial department funding. Please support.

Paul Brown (*University and College Union*) supported Composition Motion 7.

He said: Of course my union welcomes the two-tick symbol with its emphasis on fairness, equality and making provision for disabled people in terms of employees and the interview application process. However, the crux of the matter is that it is, in our experience, a paper exercise. No one can fail to support the five areas that it covers, as the previous speakers have mentioned. I went to a special school, but it does not take a lot for me to know that unless employers are forced to keep to the commitments that they make, they are going to ignore them and it becomes a pointless exercise.

We need a two-tick system that we can trust and believe in. As the motion says, there are no arrangements for monitoring our governments. We all know what happened in the banks when they were not monitored and governed properly. We know how things went there. The same happens with the two-tick symbol. Disabled people are sifted out of the guaranteed interview process.

I was speaking to a colleague on our delegation who was telling me that at her particular university, two days after the equalities manager brought in the two-tick symbol, what happened? They were out the door. They were out the door for being too radical, too supportive of disabled staff and other staff from diverse groups.

So, we say, yes, we support the two-tick symbol, but it must have teeth. It must be enforceable. The Government must monitor and review it and publish the results or set up an independent agency to do so. Congress, please support the work of Job Centre Plus in giving the two-tick symbol some teeth.

In terms of Access to Work, I think we should congratulate ourselves on the victory in keeping Access to Work in the public sector. The TUC have been brilliant in that as well as a number of affiliates. Let us not forget that our colleagues and comrades who work in government departments and PCS have been left without Access to Work. Let us see what happens there and whether government departments will put their hands in their pockets to provide what disabled people need to remain in and gain employment.

In a recession, we know that disabled people are amongst the first casualties. A scheme which gives some sort of guaranteed interview but then provides no support for people to stay in jobs and does not come up with the goods is not good enough. Support the motion. Support the right of disabled people to have a scheme which we can trust, which is fair and which delivers what the employers say. I move. (*Applause*)

Hayden Trollope (*Unite the union*) supported Composite Motion 7.

He said: Everybody supports the two-tick symbol. Everyone is against discrimination and yet we all know it happens. It is all right supporting something, but without proper monitoring, it is a useless exercise. By that, I mean monitoring which is open to public scrutiny with the word 'public' being at the forefront.

If you will bear with me, I will tell you about my first Wales TUC Conference. It was a long time ago. When I stood there (excuse my language) I was shitting myself. I told conference that I was not going to speak in English. Most put their headphones on because they thought I was going to speak in Welsh, but I pretended to do sign. I pretended because, to my shame, I cannot do sign. The reason I did that was to show how easy it is to assume this and unknowingly discriminate.

To assume that the two-tick symbol means that companies support disabled people will lead to disaster for our colleagues. The two-tick symbol needs proper and just scrutiny and it should be a living charter, amended as times change. If the government does not have the resources to ensure effective monitoring then all aspects of disabled discrimination can take place. I suggest that a change in legislation is needed to give more power to our equality reps so that they can highlight the shortcomings in a company's policies. In other words, we know that if you want a job done well, do it yourself. Only by bringing equality reps up to the same legal standing as health and safety reps can you honestly say that we have an open and transparent monitoring system.

Conference, I will leave you with a riddle. What is the difference between an able-bodied person and a disabled person? The answer: I do not know. The reason I do not know is because my great advocate was my mother. She spoke up until I was old enough to stand up for myself. Not all disabled people have the luxury of such an advocate. That is why it is so important that the two-tick system is recognised as a symbol where disabled people will know that they will be treated fairly and with respect. That is why we must lead the way and say that this system needs to be monitored. If we do not, forget the two-tick system. We will be putting up two fingers to our disabled colleagues. Congress, support the motion.

The President: Congress, as there has been no opposition to Composite Motion 7, I am going to move to the vote.

* *Composite Motion 7 was CARRIED*

Discrimination, recession and welfare reform

(Insert Motion 17 - Discrimination, recession and welfare reform))

Sasha Callaghan (*University College Union*) moved Motion 17.

She said: I am proud to be moving Motion 17 on behalf of the TUC Disability Conference. Congress, I am going to talk about fantasy and about reality. The fantasy is the Government's welfare reform agenda and the reality is about the lives of disabled people in this country.

The reality for disabled people is that generally they live poor and they die poor. It does not have to be like that, but that is how it is right now. The Government fantasy is that a magic wand of welfare reform can be waved and those really difficult little problems will just go away. The fantasy is that there is not systemic discrimination against disabled people. The fantasy is that all employers are fair, just and kind. The fantasy is that employment is the only route out of poverty if you are disabled. The ultimate fantasy is that the private sector is always good and public services are always bad.

The Government are laudable in being aspirational. It wants to raise disabled people out of poverty. Of course, particularly as an education union, UCU supports that aspiration. The difficulty is that the Government did not actually listen to disabled people when they set those aspirations on our behalf. Had they done so, they would have heard us saying loudly and clearly that without a safety net, welfare reform will not do the things that the Government have said and it will isolate and marginalise disabled people even further.

If the Government had chosen to hear our voices and if they had chosen to listen, they would have heard us say that doubling Access to Work is simply not enough. They would not have made us wait a long and agonising two years before they could give us the assurance that Access to Work would not be removed from our members working in the public sector. It should never have changed the funding mechanisms of the Independent Living Fund where the priority now is only to give funding to those people who are considered employable, or almost employable, leaving the people who are most in need to be the most left behind. They should have listened when we said that what we needed was not more means testing, but more universal benefits and more support.

Lastly, they should have listened to us when we said that compulsion would not work when the Government decided to hand over our public services to the greedy wreckers and grabbers and, in the education sector, downright criminals who have exploited disabled and unemployed people just to make profits and line their own pockets. The Government should have listened to us there.

Coming back to reality, we have six months to stop this sleepwalk into a Tory nightmare. We have to say that enough is enough. For the brave there is everything to win so we have to be brave. As trade unionists, we must stand shoulder to shoulder with organisations of disabled people fighting the welfare reform agenda. We do not want to say to the Government, 'Don't do this' as we do not want to be pathetic victims. Disabled people are not pathetic victims. We are fighters and we are campaigners. We have to say to the Government, 'You can, you shall and you must defend the people who put you into power and you must stop this welfare reform agenda now.' Congress, it is time for us to say, 'Stop, think and work together in

solidarity to ensure that welfare reform becomes social justice.' Congress, please support motion 17.

Mandy Hudson (*National Union of Teachers*) seconded Motion 17.

She said: Colleagues, I want to speak today about the root causes behind the difficulties of disabled people finding employment. It is not that we are scroungers. It is not that we are not willing to work necessarily. It is a fact that we meet barriers on a day-to-day basis in order to stay in work.

We have talked a lot already today about the kinds of difficulties that workers are facing. Often disabled people are seen to be the problem. Somehow it is us who do not fit into different workplaces because of our medical conditions and we cannot expect to find work. The reality is that what we are facing is discrimination and oppression.

I believe in the social model of disability, which seeks to dismantle the barriers that are put in our way. It is things like the low expectations in terms of our education, the poor environment that we are expected to work in and something that all workers in this country share at the moment - that we are just expected to be slaves in our workplaces. We are not expected to expect good working conditions.

Much of this motion is about the fact that we need to maintain things like Access to Work. Our PCS colleagues who have delivered that have faced ridiculous cuts over the years. I have been a recipient of Access to Work support since 1997. When I first began accessing that support, it was through my local Job Centre in Ealing. It then moved to west London. Now when I have to talk to Access to Work, I am talking to colleagues who are working for the whole of London. That cannot possibly be a system which is going to work very well to support individuals in employment.

Two years ago, I faced career-ending fatigue and I had to go back to my local Job Centre to try and work on how I could go back. The only support they could really offer to me was through a charity. Now I am not a charity project and I am not a market commodity. I am a worker who expects to be able to have the right to work. (*Applause*)

We need to be able to celebrate the fact that disabled workers have a contribution to make. We are not expecting charity and neither do we want to just sell out to private systems in order to get us back into work. We do want fair, equal and publicly accountable treatment. Comrades, I ask you to support this motion.

Jane Aitchison (*Public and Commercial Services Union*) supported Motion 17.

She said: President, Congress, the Government's current strategy for improving Access to Work for the disabled people of Britain is plainly wrong. It is based on the insulting tabloid myth of a sick note Britain. It based on a strategy of cutting benefits to pitiful levels for those who cannot work and introducing for those who can the compulsion they dread rather than the help and support that they need.

Merchant banker, David Freud, sold this idea to the Government in 2006 by suggesting that disabled workers could be forced to fill the one million job vacancies that existed at that point. How very different it is now with dole queues growing daily and dozens chasing every

job vacancy in this country. Would you not think that the Government would decide that it was time for a re-think? Well, apparently not. The Welfare Reform Bill will become law very shortly.

On behalf of PCS and my members in DWP, I am proud of the campaign that we have mounted to build a broad alliance of trade unionists and unemployed and disabled workers to oppose this Bill, which will deny support to many vulnerable people and condemn them to live in poverty. In these recessionary times, the Government need to find ways that work. Jobcentre Plus works. It has consistently out-performed every private sector competitor that the Government have pitted against it. We need to help people back into work rather than helping big business and their shareholders to help themselves to the profits from people's benefit money. We need proper training and occupational support as well as quality-supported employment such as Remploy provide. We need enough resources for Jobcentre Plus with enough trained staff not strait-jacketed by ridiculous targets to give a truly personalised service to every unemployed person in this country.

In short we need to stop closing Job Centres and Remploy factories and we need to start re-opening them again. If the Government continue along its current path then all that will happen is that the current dole queues will be swollen to record levels by the addition of another one million disabled workers. When David Freud first started this piece of work, he admitted freely, 'I don't know anything at all about welfare benefits.'

Congress, I call upon the Government today to stop listening to those who do not know what they are talking about and to start listening to those who do. Listen to the workers who provide those services. Listen to the unemployed and disabled workers who use those services. Invest in the welfare state. Keep it public. Support disabled workers and all workers. Support this motion.

Elaine Daley (*GMB*) spoke in support of Motion 17.

She said: President, Congress, many of our members live and work with disabilities. Many of our members are in supported employment in what remains of Remploy. We are adamant that welfare reform is misplaced and mistimed. There is no point in compelling disabled people to work. The jobs do not exist.

These proposals should be dropped. They are based on factors no longer prevailing - economic growth, low unemployment and the ready availability of finance for investment in new jobs. The economic landscape has changed utterly in recent months. The Department for Work and Pensions gravely underestimates the difficulties of securing adequate employment in the current economic climate. We know that the recession is having a disproportionately large impact on disabled workers who have fewer chances of securing alternative work when unemployment rises. A tremendous financial and social investment would be required to open up new opportunities for disadvantaged people.

This motion is right. We need decent welfare provision, we need help with disability employment costs and we need accessible workplaces for disabled people to help them get and keep secure worthwhile jobs.

Remploy has played a major role in providing services and support for disabled workers who face real barriers to working in outside industry. This year's TUC Disability Conference

discussed the plight of Remploy workers after the unnecessary closure of 29 Remploy factories. These closures have blocked the opportunity for many disabled people to find sustainable work. Disabled people who are looking for paid work should be helped to get jobs. This should be about helping and not harassing. The Government should be gearing up and re-equipping Remploy factories to provide enhanced employment opportunities for disabled people.

Public procurement is a golden means of boosting their job prospects. Instead, the Government have forced thousands of Remploy workers out of employment just as the recession gathered pace. Most are still out of work despite assurances of help into mainstream employment. The venture has caused immense hardship as we warned it would.

The Government talk of carrots and sticks. What we get is cutbacks and sticks. It is entirely unreasonable. We will not allow this important issue to be forgotten or ignored. Congress, the destruction of Remploy must be reversed. Please support this motion.

Kim Silver (*UNISON*) spoke in support of Motion 17.

She said: UNISON has long argued that those disabled people who can work and want to work should be supported to do so. They should work in decent jobs with good terms and conditions, with training and career opportunities and with expanded support from the Access to Work scheme.

Congress, this motion talks about concerns for the Access to Work scheme. We shared those concerns until recently when we met with Jonathan Shaw, Minister for Disabled People. I am delighted to tell you that he has written to Unison. In this letter, he says, 'I can reassure you that extending the ministerial government department changes to other public sector employees is not something that we are considering.' That is excellent news for people like me. It means that I stand a better chance of staying in work. I have no intention of becoming an unemployed statistic. (*Applause*)

The mover of the motion talks about welfare reform. I would like to stress that we believe that inadequate attention has been paid to real barriers that stop disabled people getting paid work, but there are other government plans that we need to talk to each other about. The Government's Social Care Green Paper contains a suggestion that older, disabled people should have their benefits removed. The suggestion is that attendance allowance or possibly the care component, the disability living allowance, should be re-directed from individual receipt to the local authority so that it can fund social care directly or through personalisation. Another proposal in the Green Paper suggests that we fund social care by insurance.

Alternatively, they suggest that we make a one-off retirement contribution from tax-free cash lump sums of between £17,000 and £22,000. This is worrying. How will a person with an average local government pension worth £3,800 be able to afford social care? The proposal is even starker for the average woman's local government pension at a meagre £1,800.

There is plenty of evidence about what is happening to the state of the nation during this recession. The Government's own statistics tell us that if disabled people are long-term unemployed for two or more years, they are more likely to reach retirement age or die than get one day's paid work. That is the shocking fact. Our members are telling us dreadful

stories about having to take annual leave when they are sick or receiving treatment. Please support this motion.

The President: Congress, there is no opposition. We will move straight to the vote.

** Motion 17 was CARRIED*

The President: We now turn to Chapter 6 of the General Council Report, Protecting People at Work, page 145. I call paragraphs 6.1, 6.5 and move to Composite Motion 20, Working temperatures. The General Council supports the composite motion.

Working temperatures

(Insert Composite Motion 20 - Working temperatures)

Pauline Nazir (*Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union*) moved Composite 20.

She said: Platform and delegates, I would like to thank the TUC for the work that they have done on heat in the workplace. Whether your workplace is a bakery, a deep freeze, a foundry, an office or a music pit, thermal discomfort can be a major hazard and a major battleground for the unions concerned. The difference between a bakery and a deep freeze, besides the blindingly obvious, is that we workers who work in cold environments have an approved code of practice that offers both guidance and advice on how to control a hazard. It is not a piece of legislation, but is enshrined within health and safety good practice and adhered to by most reasonable employers.

The lower approved Code of Practice figures of 16 degrees Centigrade or 13 degrees Centigrade where heavy physical work is involved have never been a trigger for stopping work, but they have been a consistent signpost to control measures kicking in. In general, it is guidance that works very well and offers protection to those working in this potentially dangerous environment.

The question is why there is no maximum temperature and why has the Health and Safety Executive and the Government have consistently dodged calls for similar protection for those who work at the higher levels of temperature? It is a big question for a big organisation, but one that the Health and Safety Executive has failed to answer logically despite years of pressure. While they have failed to act, workers suffer the consequences year in and year out. It seems illogical that we have regulations that limit the temperatures at which cows and pigs can be transported around the country, but offers no protection other than the general health and safety legislative offerings. It is true that if you move livestock in Britain, there is a maximum level of 35 degrees Centigrade within the carrier, but poor old human beings can regularly carry out physical and strenuous work at temperatures that far exceed these levels. Why have we failed to get the Health and Safety Executive to act?

At present, we have legislation that gives pointers as to what should be done without going the extra few yards towards placing absolute duties on the employer. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 obliges the employer to provide a workplace that is safe and without risk to health. Other countries can operate guidance which limits maximum working temperatures and the World Health Organisation sets the maximum temperature of 75 degrees Fahrenheit

for workers to work comfortably so why do we have to have this debate every time the thermometer start to rise?

Our union has been protesting about inadequate measures to combat excesses of heat in the workplace back to the days of cellar baking and that campaign continues today. We had an Early Day Motion by Kelvin Hopkins MP promoting the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union campaign which gave rise to James Parnell asking the Health and Safety Executive to re-look and report back by October.

In July, a meeting took place between Lord McKenzie of Luton, Kate Hare from the Health and Safety Executive (who was leading the project) and MPs John McDonnell and Dave Crosby. At this meeting, Lord McKenzie told Kate to report back to the Secretary of State by October and that the consultation time should be cut to enable the drafting of secondary legislation by April 2010 prior to a general election.

The minor heat wave that we had in early July demonstrated the inability of some companies to prepare for the protection of their workers irrespective of the health consequences associated with working in extremes of heat. Let us be clear that these consequences to health can range from lethargy, dehydration, fainting and heat stress to heat stroke when the body's core temperature reaches 39 degrees. The absence of a maximum working temperature does not allow the employer to abdicate their responsibilities. The problem is the question of consistency: when do control measures kick in and what are those control measures?

We are looking at the temperature range of between 27 and 30 degrees and so cannot be charged with being unrealistic in our aims. We start from the position that it is likely to be hot in summer and cold in winter and we will develop an action plan that can be put into place as and when needed, preferably before someone's health is impaired or we have the threat of industrial action. We are not looking for a legal crutch to empower us to stop the job, but as trade unions we have the right to expect legislation that gives the ultimate protection for workers. Please support.

Jeff Broom (*Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers*) seconded Composite Motion 20.

He said: USDAW is pleased to second this composite. It aims to protect workers from very warm working temperatures. Congress, over the last few years, we have seen a sharp increase in the number of workplaces where hot temperatures have become an issue. A lack of clear legislation concerning maximum working temperatures is a major area of concern.

As we know, the law does not specify a maximum temperature, but it does state that employers should maintain a reasonable temperature in the workplace. Experts say that this is normally in the region of 26 to 24 degrees Centigrade. However, we know that temperatures in the summer can soar to over 30 degrees Centigrade in some warehouses and distribution centres. In workplaces which are often very well air-conditioned such as supermarkets, there can still be sections such as bakeries and kitchens where it is unbearably hot. The damage which may impact from very high working temperatures is very well-documented. It can result in fatigue and a rise in accidents.

The law leaves it up to employers to take reasonable steps to deal with the situation. We know also that reasonable steps are not always taken. Some employers refuse to take even

simple steps such as relaxing the dress code during very hot periods. Leaving it up to employers to decide what is reasonable is not good enough.

Legislation on maximum working temperatures will enforce workers' rights to a healthier and safe working environment. USDAW has lobbied the Government on this issue and the Government have asked the Health and Safety Executive to review regulations on workplace temperatures, but we need to ensure that the trade union Movement plays a full role in this review. We need to campaign to publicise the need for maximum working temperatures. Congress, on behalf of USDAW, I ask you to support this composite and let us campaign for a maximum working temperature in the workplace. Thank you.

Mick Carney (*Transport Salaried Staffs' Association*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 20.

He said: Congress, excessive temperatures, humidity, poor lighting and inadequate ventilation are all major detriments of comfort in the workplace. Departure from satisfactory conditions can have harmful health effects. Dehydration, fainting, confusion, light-headedness, short temper and ultimately heatstroke are just some of the effects that excessive heat can have on the body.

In railway workshops, inadequate ventilation can lead to excessive working temperatures and a safety critical environment where accidents can prove fatal. Employees have legal duties to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. This includes a comfortable working temperature for all, but without legislation to enforce a maximum legal temperature, this is toothless.

More and more electrical equipment is being placed in railway booking offices. This generates heat making working conditions more and more unbearable. Often these offices are listed buildings and without legislation it is all too easy for rail companies to hide behind this and not put in proper air conditioning or ventilation.

When challenged recently over the excessive heat, management in a rail company responded that once the temperature had reached 28 degrees Centigrade then staff could remove neckties. This is a wholly inadequate response and clearly demonstrates why employees must be forced into taking satisfactory action by legislation. At 28 degrees air temperature, the body is already showing signs of distress due to excessive heat. Accidents increase and productivity drops. The World Health Organisation calls for a maximum work temperature of 25 degrees and we should support this. Congress, I ask you to support the composite.

Ian Murch (*National Union of Teachers*) supported Composite Motion 20.

He said: This summer in Bradford a pupil collapsed while taking a GCSE examination. She had to be taken to hospital where thankfully she recovered. She was suffering from heat stroke, not all that surprising as the temperature in the classroom was 38 degrees Centigrade. That is 100 degrees Fahrenheit. It was a warm day. The outside temperature at the time was 25 degrees. The classroom was a lot hotter than this because the exterior of the school building is predominantly glass and plastic. It does not have opening windows and it has a computer-controlled heating system which could not be manually prevented from adding to the heat in the examination room.

Following the incident, we issued our members with thermometers. Temperatures were regularly in excess of 30 degrees on warm days. These are not conditions in which children can learn. This school is brand new, one of the three flagship schools opened last September in Bradford in the first wave of the Government's 'Building Schools for the Future' programme. We contacted our members in the other two. There were the same problems with the same temperatures. We refused to work in the worst bits of these buildings and in some of the others we had to struggle with air conditioning units the size of aircraft engines while teachers tried to make themselves heard.

We did want to know what could be done to put right these £25 million new buildings. It is not as simple as you think. BSF is like PFI. For people who are not familiar with these New Labour initials, they meant that the school buildings do not belong to the local authority. They do not belong to the governing bodies. They belong to a consortium of builders and outsourcers. You have to persuade them that your problem and your pupils' problem is their problem and that they need to spend some time and money putting that problem right. They will defend themselves against doing this every step of the way.

'Comfort cooling was not in the building specification' said a letter which the local authority received from them when they complained. 'You must not try putting openers on any of the windows', schools were told, 'as they do not belong to you.' 'You must not try re-setting the central heating system. That is part of a facilities management contract. You have to pay us to do that. If you do not like the contract do not renew it when it runs out in 25 years' time.' We, and our colleagues in other education unions, end up harrying and embarrassing the contractors to try and get things out of them. Meanwhile, children's learning is extremely difficult. There are lots more of these schools in the pipeline with the same design and the same arrangements.

Congress, keeping public services publicly owned and publicly controlled is a question of everyday practical common sense as this example demonstrates. It is very long overdue now that a Labour government learns this lesson before it is too late.

John Rimmer (*NASUWT*) spoke in support of Composite Motion 20.

He said: The Workplace Regulations 1992 provide a recommended minimum temperature of 16 degrees in workrooms. Whilst this legal minimum temperature applies to employees in school buildings, there is no legal maximum. All the existing regulations provide for working temperatures to be 'reasonable', whatever that means.

Congress, this is not good enough. The lack of appropriate regulatory safeguards to limit working temperatures is an issue that the NASUWT is campaigning to address. The NASUWT is continuing to lobby the Government and the Health and Safety Executive to impose a legal maximum. Under the Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, schools and other employees have a duty to assess the risks to health and safety of workers and to take practical action. However, a recent NASUWT survey of teachers and headteachers in schools and colleges across the United Kingdom found that the majority of employers were flouting their statutory responsibilities in this respect and they are doing so with impunity. In schools and colleges, this means that the health and safety of workers is being put at risk. It also means that pupils' learning is being undermined as a result of working conditions in schools and classrooms that are not conducive to learning. This is a health and safety issue and it is also an education issue.

The last decade has been witness to a massive programme of school building and refurbishment after decades of underinvestment. This investment has transformed our schools and created improved conditions for workers and for learners. The Building Schools for the Future programme, which was referred to by the previous speaker, is intended to benefit children and young people today and for generations to come. We need to ensure that this investment stands the test of time and that the new school buildings of today remain fit for purpose in the future. This can only be secured if there is a change in the law governing excessive temperatures which must be met in all

new-builds and refurbishments. Congress, support Composite Motion 20.

The President: Once again, Congress, there is no opposition. We will move straight to the vote.

* *Composite Motion 20 was CARRIED*

The President: I now call paragraphs 6.2, 6.3 and Motion 78, Asbestos. The General Council support the motion.

Asbestos

(Insert Motion 78 - Asbestos)

Mary Bousted (*Association of Teachers and Lecturers*) moved Motion 78.

She said: Congress, I am not going to pretend to be an expert on asbestos. No, mine is a teacher's tale. I worked in comprehensive schools in London for 11 years in the 1980s and the early 1990s. My first school was built in the 1950s with a large extension in the 1960s. My second school was a class-built 1950s structure with pressed concrete floors, long corridors and metal window frames. Both school buildings were in a poor condition with leaky roofs and, in one classroom, a growing gap where the gap in the external wall was measured every six months. In this classroom, we baked in the summer and froze in the winter.

One of the ways in which we used to brighten our surroundings was to put up colourful displays of pupils' work. Indeed, this was a requirement rigorously enforced by the senior management team, particularly before open evenings when there was frenzied activity. In both schools, I now know that as I toiled to double-mount displays of my pupils' work, I was sticking drawing pins into asbestos walls so I have, like so many of my colleagues, been exposed to asbestos. I did not know this at the time and indeed I cannot ever remember the word 'asbestos' being used. It is only since I have become General Secretary of ATL that I have looked back in bewilderment and realised that I have been exposed to a substance which could be deadly.

I know that I am not alone. My union, ATL, maintains a database which has almost 500 members who believe that they have been exposed to asbestos in schools and the list is growing daily. There are two points to remember here. These are 500 members who have given some thought to the matter. There are many more members who have not given it any thought, but that will not have stopped them being exposed.

The other point is this. For every teacher who has been exposed, there are hundreds if not thousands of children who have been in the same classrooms breathing the same air, bouncing balls at lunchtime off the classroom ceiling, banging into walls and knocking holes in doors. Then we need to remember all the other people who work in schools: the caretakers, the cleaning ladies, the classroom assistants, the dinner supervisors and all the other professional people working in schools who have also been exposed.

We know, in the case of children, that the younger you are when you are exposed to asbestos, the greater the chance of contracting an asbestos-related disease. There is a serious problem with asbestos in schools. Most schools contain asbestos in one form or another. All of it is old and much of it is deteriorating. Successive governments have had a policy that it is safer to manage asbestos rather than to remove it. However, frequent asbestos incidents in schools have proved that on many occasions this policy simply is not working. The incidents frequently cause widespread contamination and exposure of teachers and children. The hazard is not the asbestos within the structure of the building but the airborne fibres.

Present systems of surveying asbestos in school buildings only identify the easily-accessible materials. They do not identify the hidden asbestos and almost never identify whether there are airborne fibres. Comprehensive and widespread air and static sampling needs to be carried out in schools. Our campaign is calling for this to take place in 100 schools on an anonymised basis and the ATAC ('Asbestos Testing & Consultancy') say they will do this at no cost, so what are we waiting for?

The end result is that the occupants of schools are dying from mesothelioma. As the asbestos materials deteriorate, the number of school teachers dying from mesothelioma has increased year on year from 15 in the period 1980-1985 to 64 in the period 2001-2005. Although there are figures for the number of teachers known to have died from asbestos-related illnesses, because of the long latent stage it is not known how many children have been exposed to asbestos in school who have subsequently died.

In the USA, they made an estimate that 1,000 teachers and children would die of asbestos exposure in their schools of which 90% would be children. The teachers' deaths, therefore, are the tip of the iceberg. The disease devastates the lives of my members. The widow of an ATL member and senior teacher who died after asbestos exposure in the school science lab was awarded £290,000 in compensation. Her husband, a former chemistry teacher, died aged 61, just a year after retirement.

The time has come, Congress, to take urgent action on this silent killer in schools. ATL will work with all the unions involved in education to campaign to this end. Please support this motion.

Alan Garley (*GMB*) seconded Motion 78.

He said: Congress, the GMB is proud to second this motion as our members have a long history of suffering from asbestos-related conditions caused by negligent employers. We have a proud history and tradition of campaigning against the horrors of asbestos exposure. This is a key issue not just for a generation, but for our children as well. There are already cases where young people are dying from asbestos-related diseases such as Leigh Carlisle, who tragically passed away last year, aged 28, and who may well have been exposed to asbestos

while at school. This is no longer a condition that only affects men in heavy industrial jobs. We are beginning to see those in services and the public sector dying.

We know that the guidance from the HSE is to survey for asbestos and where it is found to ensure that it is covered and left undisturbed. We also know, of course, that many years of Tory non-investment in our schools has left a legacy of school buildings in poor condition as money is funnelled into providing equipment for pupils.

We do not want a situation where our teachers, support staff and students are expected to wear breathing apparatus and body suits, but we must protect those who are working and learning in this environment. We already know, as has been said, that 228 teachers died from asbestos-related diseases in the period from 1991 to 2005. This figure will rise unless action is taken to prevent it.

Congress, we fully support all of the actions outlined in the motion. We need inspection of schools and we need that inspection now. We need enough NSE inspectors to ensure that every school is properly inspected and remedial action is implemented. More than anything else, we need prosecutions to send a message that the risk of exposing children and teachers to asbestos is too high a price to pay and cannot be tolerated. Congress, those 228 deaths must not be forgotten and the death of Leigh Carlisle must never be allowed to be repeated. We must ensure that decisive action is taken now. Please support Motion 78.

Lawrence Hunt (*Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians*) spoke in support of Motion 78.

He said: It has been known for decades that asbestos can lead to horrific illnesses where people suffer agonising deaths. This motion rightly points out that many children and teachers are exposed to asbestos on a daily basis. The school my wife teaches in is absolutely riddled with it, but you will not find any asbestos in the House of Commons. It was removed ten years ago by our members.

Building workers are also particularly at high risk to suffer from asbestos-related diseases. They come across asbestos dust in many forms and situations on building sites. Many of the workers breathe in asbestos dust while doing refurbishment work in schools. This type of work has increased recently due to the Building Schools for the Future initiative and yet fears remain as to exactly how safely this work is being conducted.

Earlier this year at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, a firm of carpenters was heavily exposed to asbestos before they were 30. They have a 1:10 chance of developing the incurable lung disease mesothelioma. Week by week, at least 20 construction workers die from asbestos-related diseases in the UK.

UCATT has been working very hard to try to improve this situation for a very long time. In June of this year, we published a new hard-hitting report on asbestos and it raised many questions into the persistent dangers to which building workers employed in social housing providers are exposed. It also revealed the high risks suffered by social housing tenants doing DIY work in their own homes. We support the calls for the action of this motion, but UCATT asks for even more wide-ranging changes. There needs to be training for all building and maintenance workers who come across asbestos at work. Studies have found that the level of ignorance among building workers about asbestos is shockingly high. Many workers do not

know what asbestos is, what it looks like, where it is likely to be found or, even more importantly, when they should stop work if they find it.

We had an incident on the particular site that I work on where two lads were in a trench working away and they actually found some of this stuff. They picked it up and the foreman came running along. The guy jumped down and said, 'Let me have a look at that.' He picked it up and he smelt it. I do not know how you can smell asbestos, but he just threw it out of the trench and said, 'Just crack on with it.' That was that. That was his analysis of asbestos.

Not only should all asbestos be proactively removed from schools, but it should be securely removed from all public buildings. We want asbestos legislation to be amended so that the duty to manage is extended to internal parts of every domestic building. Trade unions have been a key driver to pushing for better protection for asbestos exposure, but we cannot rest on these improvements if thousands of people in the UK and tens of thousands worldwide continue to die from this killer. We support this motion. (*Applause*)

The President: Congress, there is no opposition. We can move straight to the vote.

* *Motion 78 was CARRIED*

The President: Delegates, you will see that unfortunately we will not be able to take Motion 79 on North Sea Safety or Emergency Motion 1 on Pleural plaques. I will take this unfinished business later in the week and will give you more information on this tomorrow.

Congress, that concludes this afternoon's business, but may I remind delegates that there are various meetings taking place this evening. Details of these meetings can be found on pages 14 and 15 of the Conference guide or in the leaflet included in your Conference wallet. I would also like to remind delegates to complete and return the Equality Monitoring form that has been sent to you. Delegates should have received pink forms which should be returned to delegation leaders. If any delegates have not received a form, they should see their delegation leaders. Delegation leaders should return their mauve forms to the TUC Information Stand.

Colleagues, it is the 25th anniversary of Unity Trust and they send best wishes to Congress. I am sure you will join me in returning their best wishes. Congress stands adjourned until 9.30 tomorrow morning. Thank you.

(Congress adjourned at 5.45 p.m.)

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Other update

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