

GMB's 100<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS Plymouth

Sunday 4 June 2017

## **PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS – MARY TURNER**

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Thank you, President. Congress, it gives me great pleasure to call on our President, Mary Turner, to address Congress. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: I am going to try and walk to that rostrum! (Applause) Congress, I cannot tell you how delighted I am to be here. As many of you may know, it has not been an easy year. I have been like a cat with nine lives, although I only have five left now!

First, can I thank my region, Warren Kenny, and all the support staff have given me through my long illness, and all those who have taken the time to ring me and ask me how I am, plus all those who decided to find my number and insult me but then that goes with the trade. I would like to give a special thank you to Tim. Tim, thank you for all the support you have given me and for visiting me in hospital, at my home, and special thanks to Malcolm, my Vice President, for holding the fort. You know, he is one great guy. I do thank you sincerely. (Applause)

I know it will be remiss of me if I did not thank the region, every single one of them, who have enquired. I have had calls from people that I have disagreed with on this platform, but they have rung me. I do appreciate all that I have been given and while I might not be a steady on my feet today you can bet your bottom dollar I will be steady in keeping Congress moving, so you had better all behave yourselves.

You all know that if you cut me I bleed GMB. Our union runs through me like a stick of rock. I am so proud to be welcoming you all to our 100th Congress and before anyone says it, no, I was not there at the first one. We have come a hell of a long way as a union. There have been good times and tough times but our GMB family will always stick together.

We are meeting this week at a shortened Congress because there is a general election and this is the second time since I have been involved with the union that it has happened. It is sad for the new delegates, they have been looking forward to coming, but now is the time, more than ever, to stick together because we need a Labour government on Thursday. No one but us will deliver that to support our movement, and our colleagues and members deserve that right. Go out on the doorsteps and speak to people. In our branches we owe it to our members. The Tories who told you to buy your house on right-to-buy now want to take it away if you care for people with dementia. How disgraceful can you get?

Congress, they want to sell our NHS and saddle our young people with debt. They want to take food from our kids' bellies and lay off thousands of hard-working school catering staff, and support staff, this year. I was a dinner lady and this union fought to get healthy free school meals. Well, Mrs. May, we will fight you again. We fought Thatcher on the milk and we will fight you. (Applause) There are 13 weeks that those who are rightly on free school meals do not get fed at all. This is worrying so we will be adding that. This union raised this and were the first to do so. I cannot believe how you treat those who live on the minimum wage and zero hours, and landlords raising rents that we cannot afford. It is the landlords who should be stopping. How dare you insult those who use food banks, who have to decide to feed their children and they go without. What a dilemma.

Congress, I used to say that they would rob the eyes out of your head and then come back for the lashes. Well, they have just come, setting the young against our senior citizens. This union has a view of our young members and we have never lost it. This we raise for the first time. If you do the same work as anyone else irrespective of your age, you should get the rate for the job. (Applause) And we need a living wage, not what is paid now. Why should you be penalised because of your age. I give you a promise that this union will fight until we achieve that goal for you.

Now I come to not a few insults but a few rights, the public service workers whose pay increases have been blocked at 1%. Well, Mrs. May, we do not want your praise. We work delivering services to the most vulnerable because we care, so stick your fine words where the sun doesn't shine, in other words, up your arse. (Applause) Give us what we deserve, respect and a decent pay rise. Now the attack on carers who look after their loved ones saving you millions over the years, caring for those with dementia and Alzheimer's is a 24-hour not an 8-hour day. Remember that. I have a great deal of feeling for anyone, irrespective of

who they are, getting this terrible, terrible disease. You intend to rob them of their homes and leave them without. How generous of you. I am praising her now. Oh, god, what will happen! Congress, they have told us they will give us £100,000 but will take the rest.

Congress, we celebrate 100 Congresses today and I am proud to be in Plymouth. We have achieved a lot over the years, an 8-hour day, minimum wage, fighting to save our NHS, we were the first to raise issues on the misselling of pensions, the crisis in care homes, and the first to highlight those who have raided company pension schemes. Congress, we were the first to raise the issue on the thieving landlords who have robbed so many people. We have now finally a commitment to have an inquiry on the justice of Cammell Laird. For 34 years we have fought this issue. (Applause) Can I thank sincerely, and I was there, the Liverpool, North West and Irish Region, you have done well. We will make sure that that inquiry, irrespective, takes place. Well done to you, and this union. May I give a special thank you to Kathleen Walker Shaw, who runs our Brussels Office and has done a great deal to help. Kathleen and I between us have moved that. It is in the manifesto of the Labour Party.

I want to thank each and every one of you for everything you do, and all staff in the regions. It is people like you who built our union. It is you who keeps it growing today. We truly have a past to hold dear and we are proud of how we have a great future ahead.

Last but not least I want to thank my family for the time and effort they have given up to look after me, and especially one here today, my granddaughter, Lisa, who has given her unstinting support to look after her Nan. Lisa, thank you. (Applause) I could not do without all the support, just as you cannot do without the support of your family. Sometimes it gets a bit rough but, you know, we stick it out and we are still there.

I say to you, welcome to Congress, have a great few days, and let's go out there and fight for a Labour government. Thatcher never broke us and I am bloody sure May won't either. (Standing ovation)

Congress, at half past one in the morning I was still trying to put this together. If you saw my eyes closing you wouldn't believe it. Congress, don't be fooled. Listen to her words. I have had plenty of time to do that. A message to you and your party, Mrs. May, don't insult our bloody intelligence. (Applause)

When one thinks about it, they could teach the bank robbers a thing or two about robbing but they do it with their eyes open. This is nothing but a dementia tax. Well, you can stick your £100,000. We will fight for what is rightfully ours.

We will support our NHS staff and we will fight you all the way. As I said, Thatcher never ruined us and she tried very hard during the miners' strike. You ain't gonna do the bleeding same, I can assure you of that. Thank you all, Congress. Thank you. (Standing ovation)

#### VOTE OF THANKS TO THE PRESIDENT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: President, colleagues, could I now call on Penny Robinson, the CEC member from the London Region, to give a vote of thanks to the President.

SIS. P. ROBINSON (CEC, London): Congress, I am delighted to be moving the vote of thanks to Mary Turner, our GMB National President. Congress, it is a testament to Mary's fighting spirit that she is here in Plymouth today. Mary, it is great to see you here at Congress leading the union you have given so much to over the years. We can all name many inspirational trade union leaders through our lifetime but, Mary, you come top of this list as far as we are concerned. There is no one who has given as much time and passion in the trades union Movement as you. You are the shoulders we all stand on today. Your knowledge of the trades union and labour Movement is second to none. I have personally learned so much from knowing you over the years.

Colleagues, you may not be aware that Mary and her family not only had to deal with the loss of her beloved husband, their father, Denny, but while coming to terms with this loss Mary has had to deal with the A-Z of health problems with the same determination and fighting spirit she has demonstrated over the years. Most ordinary people would have given in with the amount of health issues not only that she has had to endure but she has also had the worry of her grandson's ill health. Fortunately, he is now back to good health and, like Mary, he is on the road to recovery.

Colleagues, Mary is no ordinary woman. She may have started life in an ordinary family, working in an ordinary workplace, and she may have had an ordinary job, but our Mary has done many extraordinary

things: women's rights are now at the top of the GMB's agenda. However, when Mary was elected as our first woman international president this was not the case. There are so many people I have met and admire within the GMB, too many to name, people that started at grassroots level and have spent all their lives fighting for the rights of the working men and women of our great union.

Then, of course, there is you. If this is your first Congress, believe me, Mary will have noticed you and will make sure she has reassuring and encouraging words for you. If you struggle at the rostrum do not worry, Mary will be right next to you encouraging and helping you, something delegates who have been here before will have seen on many occasions. It does not stop once Congress is over. I can tell you from personal experience if you have your own work or health issues, Mary will be the first on the phone offering support and encouragement, always looking out for others. That is her nature.

Congress, one of the first issues that Mary had to deal with as a trade unionist was a local rent strike. However, she forgot to tell her husband, Denny. Denny was shocked and surprised to open the pages of his local paper to see Mary's picture holding up a banner demonstrating about the rent strike. He was even more surprised when he got a summons from the council telling him he was in rent arrears and was about to be evicted. There are many other stories I am sure but I am going to leave Mary to tell them.

Mary, you have sacrificed so much throughout your lifetime and we all love and respect what you stand for, what you represent, and your love for this trade union. Colleagues, on behalf of Congress, it gives me the utmost pleasure to move this vote of thanks to a very special person. (Applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Penny. Congress, I could not fulfil the role that you have bestowed on me, none of it, without your total support. I personally thank you all for that. Before I hand over to my colleague, I just have one comment in relation to American elections. You know, when I was a kid my Dad used to say, "Ooh, I just trumped." (Laughter) But he blamed the dog! Well, Mr. President, you have the right name because you smell in the same way.

Congress, before we begin our first debate, I would like to explain a few points of procedure. Please listen carefully. To save time, I will take motions in groups. Your session programme will show the grouping. If you are speaking on any of these motions, register at the desk in front before going to the chairs here in front of the rostrum ready to speak. This saves a vast amount of time. I will call movers and any seconders, and any one who wishes to speak against a motion, if we are opposing will only be called. I will call the CEC speaker to reply at the end of the group rather than deal with each motion individually. Where the CEC is supporting a motion, I will advise Congress. Where the CEC has any other position, the CEC speaker will give the reasons for their decision. We will then move to the vote on all those motions in that group. Where there are no speakers against the motion, I will call for the votes on motions in a block. Should any delegate wish to take separate votes on an individual motion, please make this known to me in good time, and from the platform.

Finally, could I remind Congress that as you have voted on the SOC Report No.1 all existing policy motions will now be debated.