

No: 442/20

8th September 2020

TO: ALL BRANCHES

Dear Colleague

TUC Online Congress – 14th and 15th September

The purpose of this LTB is to remind branches of the online Congress being held by the TUC next week. As branches will be aware, because of the coronavirus pandemic and social distancing guidelines, this year's TUC Congress is taking place virtually with debates being broadcast online on the morning of 14th and 15th September.

The online Congress is a slimmed down event that is being structured around five statements from the TUC's General Council and there will be keynote speeches from Frances O'Grady (General Secretary of the TUC) and Keir Starmer (Leader of the Labour Party). The schedule is available at the following link: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/congress-programme>.

The CWU will have speakers during these debates over the course of the two mornings and it will be broadcast on the TUC website. Members can sign up for further information at the following link: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/CongressSignUp>.

Motions this year are being dealt with offline by the General Council so debates on these will not be broadcast. The CWU has submitted two motions on our key campaigns. Our first motion is on Campaigning for a New Deal for Workers and sets out a plan to mobilise trade union members, bring about greater co-operation on recruitment and tackle insecure employment through common bargaining agendas.

Our second motion focuses on the political demands we need to make in the wake of coronavirus and calls for unions to campaign for a new democratic economy, highlighting our key policies for public ownership of Royal Mail expanding the role of postal workers; the rollout of fibre broadband through a publicly owned BT securing good jobs in the telecoms industry; and for the establishment of a Post Bank through the Post Office. Copies of these motions are attached to this LTB.

Alongside these motions we have submitted amendments calling firstly for the TUC to campaign for the government to provide free broadband and computer equipment to all children living in poverty, tackling the digital divide that has been highlighted by coronavirus. And secondly calling for the TUC to campaign for the continuation of emergency measures that were taken by the government at the start of lockdown to end homelessness.

Again, copies of these are attached to this LTB and the full list of motions is available at the following link:

https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-08/Congress_2020_Final_Agenda_AW_Digital.pdf

We will be communicating further to branches on how we will take the above policies forward in due course and any queries on the contents of this LTB should be addressed to jdunn@cwu.org.

Yours sincerely



Dave Ward
General Secretary

CWU MOTION 1

Campaigning for a new deal for workers in the wake of coronavirus

Throughout the pandemic unions have shown they are essential to workers across the UK. This is the moment to harness our collective strength, grow our movement and confidently assert our industrial and political agendas to deliver a New Deal for Workers.

Congress recognises the work done on this by the TUC and the New Deal for Workers Working Group and believes this group should continue to drive this agenda forward.

Congress affirms the Organise 2020 pledge for greater co-operation to grow the movement and the commitments that:

- the General Council will review and publish progress annually;
- the TUC will convene and co-ordinate activity on a sectoral level; and
- unions will work together to root out insecure employment, including through the use of common bargaining agendas across sectors.

Delivering on this agenda for greater co-operation between affiliates is crucial to the movement's future.

Congress agrees that bringing about the biggest mobilisation of workers to fight for shared industrial and political demands in the wake of coronavirus pandemic is the key task in winning for working people. To achieve this the TUC will:

- develop the demands in the New Deal Charter asserting a distinctive trade union agenda to build a new economy and a fairer world of work;
- work with affiliates to support mobilisation in demanding higher employment standards within sectors;
- develop a mobilisation and action strategy, to be agreed by the General Council by the end of 2020, in support of the New Deal campaign.

CWU MOTION 2

Building a democratic new economy

Congress believes the coronavirus pandemic has not just created a public health crisis, but exposed an underlying crisis in our economic model and the world of work. It is little surprise that polling reveals widespread opposition to simply returning to the 'normal' way of doing things.

There is a growing consensus that essential workers have been underpaid, that trade unions have been crucial to ensuring workplaces are safe, that our work-life balance has been wrong, that the basic safety net of Statutory Sick Pay and Universal Credit is inadequate and that an unequal society is one that is vulnerable to crises.

Congress believes that just as there was a demand for change in 1945, this is the moment for the labour movement to assert an ambitious agenda rooted in our values of equality, collectivism and universalism.

Congress agrees that while arguing for a recovery that safeguards and creates good jobs, the TUC and unions must be vocal on the need to build a better future and put forward our vision for a green and democratic new economy underpinned by high-quality public services including:

- public ownership of Royal Mail to build a new role for postal workers rooted in their local communities with tailored services to support the growth of local businesses;
- universal access to full fibre broadband, through public ownership of BT and securing good jobs for all workers in the industry; and
- the establishment of a publicly owned Post Bank through the Post Office network, reunited with Royal Mail.

16 Child poverty

Congress condemns the rapid increase in child poverty across a decade of austerity. Research shows 33 per cent of all children in the UK live in poverty.

The pandemic has shone a light on the poverty gap in terms of employment, pay, housing and access to services, including the 'digital divide'.

Low pay and insecure employment have condemned 10 children in every class of 30 to "being locked into a cycle of poverty from which most will have great difficulty escaping" (Prof. Alston, UN Special Rapporteur).

Congress notes Black children are two to three times more likely to be trapped in persistent poverty than children in White families and believes racism and class stereotypes stigmatise and undermine working-class children.

Coronavirus is a natural phenomenon – how we react to it isn't. Failing to eradicate child poverty is the result of political failure.

Congress instructs the TUC to:

- i. work with the Child Poverty Action Group to campaign for government to
 - restore money lost through freezing benefits, tax credits and subsequent rises in line with inflation
 - end the tax credit two-child limit
 - abolish the £20,000 pa benefit cap
 - overhaul the benefits system, removing unnecessary obstacles and administrative delay
 - address the causes of structural racism that lead to disproportionate poverty in Black communities.
- ii. incorporate measures to end child poverty within TUC campaigns for a green economy and job-led recovery after coronavirus
- iii. build on increased community action to empower communities to be at the centre of campaigns to end child poverty.

National Education Union

CWU Amendment to P 16 Child Poverty

Add extra bullet at end:

- iv. lobby the government to end the digital divide, starting with the introduction of a publicly-funded right for free computer equipment and free access to broadband at home for all children living in poverty in the UK.

18 Ending the homelessness crisis

Congress notes that during the pandemic, the government found the wherewithal and resources to house the majority of homeless people previously sleeping on the streets to try to keep them safe from Covid-19.

Congress is aware that homeless people sleeping on the streets face a large number of dangers and threats in 'normal' times, not just when there is a deadly pandemic, ranging from violence and abuse to hypothermia.

Congress believes that it is completely unacceptable for society to allow people to remain destitute and without housing. Congress further notes that the UK has a chronic shortage of housing, with many families living in cramped and unsuitable conditions due to the lack available family homes, and young people struggling to get on by paying exorbitant rents but lacking the savings to buy a property.

Housing-first policies, such as those famously in place in Finland, have seen people able to rebuild their lives from homelessness to holding down jobs and participating in the community. It is clear that living in suitable housing underpins success in all aspects of life.

Congress therefore calls on the General Council to:

- i. campaign for a full programme of affordable home building, with safeguards to ensure that those in need of housing can access these homes
- ii. advocate for stringent laws against offshore property ownership and the kind of investment purchasing which results in hundreds of homes sitting empty
- iii. lobby the government to introduce a housing first policy for England.

CWU Amendment to P 18 – Ending the Homelessness Crisis

Add additional bullets at end:

- iv. lobby the government to extend the 'Everyone In' scheme, guaranteeing funding for and removing legal barriers to accessing emergency accommodation;
- v. lobby the government to increase housing benefit to the level of average rents and prevent evictions and cancel arrears for renters who have lost income due to Coronavirus.