

12 September 2023

# **Congress votes for an urgent view of the criminal justice system**

The General Council is to campaign for a royal commission with all political parties.

[Composite Motion C19](#), was moved by POA and seconded by NAPO, and was concerned with failings in the current probation service and criminal justice system

The motion noted that cuts to the criminal justice system have had a “disastrous impact” leading to unsustainable workloads and unfilled vacancies, cancellations and backlogs and a risk to public safety.

The motion called for a “a root and branch review of the whole criminal justice system...with emphasis on creating a justice system that is fully funded with improved terms and conditions so that we have a system that is fair, accessible and decent for all.”

The motion instructed the general council to campaign for a royal commission with all political parties to achieve these objectives.

Moving the motion for the POA, Mark Fairhurst described working in prisons as the “most hostile and violent workplace anywhere in the world” a description backed up by Lorraine Jakeman from Community who described a horrific attack on one of her colleagues in Peterborough prison as she told how the prisons are “overcrowded, underfunded and understaffed.”

Speaking in support of the motion for PCS, delegate Sharon Mclean said: “The reckless cost cutting and significant reduction in resource to the sector have impacted on our ability to effectively deliver justice, a cornerstone tenet of British society.”

She went on to describe how the workloads of legal advisers and court associates have significantly increased, meaning they cannot provide advice to defendants who cannot afford or supply their own legal counsel. She said “This compounds the cost of living issues faced by people who are struggling financially, leaving true justice as the preserve of those who can pay for it.”

“The attempt to mask the problems by the introduction of new technology to digitalise key processes is further exacerbating the issues highlighted by the motion...Fundamentally flawed IT, particularly in the Magistrates court has caused increased pressure on our members. Cases take longer and members have reported in overwhelming numbers that it is having a negative impact on the quality of justice delivered.”

She concluded “we must be equally concerned about the plight of our members in these sectors, as well as the impact that their treatment is having on the fundamental functioning of the British justice system. Justice cannot be done while our systems flounder.”

The motion was carried.

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