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8th STUC Black Workers' Conference

**Saturday 9/Sunday 10 October 2004
Stirling Highland Hotel, Stirling**

CONFERENCE DECISIONS

I RESOLUTIONS CARRIED

Resolution No. 1 – Unions Work for Black Workers

“That this Conference notes with grave concern the continued disengagement and lack of representation of Black workers in the hierarchy and decision making processes of trade unions.

“Much of the information on the distribution of Black members in trade unions is not available, as many affiliates do not have monitoring and evaluation processes in place, or being progressed, that would provide this information or details on the concerns, issues and barriers the Black members face in relating to their trade union.

“Lack of equal representation of any equality group has several fundamental affects on the whole of the trade union movement, in that, there is a perception that:

- it continues a culture of discrimination and misinformation;
- it continues to exclude the development of policies and practices that meet the real needs of the members;
- it disempowers members from being part, or indeed, feeling that they could be part of the trade union movement;
- it gives no role models and support mechanisms that would inspire or support members wishing to become active in their trade unions;
- it overextends those members/officers that have been able to become active, yet still largely marginalising them to specific roles within equality Black issues and forums;
- it continues the culture of deprioritising Black issues.

“Excellent work has been done by many officers, shop stewards and other activists in working towards equality in representation for all equality groups. However, there is also a continued culture of discrimination, which perpetuates the barriers that exist for Black members in becoming trade union activists.

2.

“Trade unions may be failing their members in not exercising the value of diversity and in truly being equal and fair to all in presenting a collective voice for workers.

“To show that trade unions do work for Black workers, Conference calls on all trade unions to:

- a) identify Black members who have been active and/or are currently active in the trade union movement, who would provide role models, to engage with and inspire new members to become activists;
- b) look at involving Black members in developing rules and policies;
- c) put into place an agreed and standardised monitoring and evaluation system, to provide real information on the make up of equality groups throughout the trade union movement;
- d) take actions, such as mentoring or buddying, to support Black members into more active roles within the trade union movement; and
- e) work with voluntary sector groups to promote trade unions.

“Conference further calls on the STUC General Council to ensure that there is sufficient resources and support to make trade unions work for Black workers.”

Resolution No. 2 - Childcare Benefits for Trade Union Members

“That this Conference notes with concern the difficulty many Black trade unionists have in receiving support from their unions for childcare costs, when they are participating in authorised trade union activities. These exclusionary practices severely limit Black workers’ ability to maintain active union membership.

3.

“Conference calls on the General Council to obtain copies of the relevant policy documents from affiliates, pertaining to financial support for childcare for members serving as delegates to recognised and legitimate trade union committee structures or programmes, and to work actively to redress this inequity, which works against the interests of Black workers and the values of trade unionism.”

Resolution No. 3 - Improving Organisation of Black Workers

“That this Conference believes that self-organisation is a fundamental principle on which equality strategies should be based. We further believe that the organisation of Black workers in the workplace is a key component, if future progress is to be made in addressing the problems that Black workers face in the workplace and in encouraging increased participation in the trade union movement.

“Therefore, Conference calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to:

- develop a detailed strategy for organising Black workers across the trade union movement, increasing participation in trade union structures and increasing the skills and experience of Black trade union activists, to enable them to gain full time employment in the trade union movement;
- include in the strategy indicators by which its progress and success can be measured; and
- call on the STUC to promote the strategy among affiliates.”

Resolution No. 4 – ‘Unions Work’ for Equality in Scottish Industry

“That this Conference acknowledges the UK Government’s achievement in delivering low inflation and low unemployment and supports the long-term strategy for growth and stability in the economy.

4.

“Conference further welcomes the Scottish Executive’s commitment to the Smart, Successful Scotland and Fresh Talent strategies to support industrial recovery and improve economic performance overall.

“Conference is concerned that the focus on medium and long-term strategies for manufacturing, in particular, runs the risk of denying the need for immediate solutions for the sector. The loss of employment opportunities, the transfer of operations to locations overseas, disappointing export sales figures and the reduction in business investment are clear indications of a sector in decline with problems that must be addressed.

“Construction, hotels and restaurants, manufacturing, and real estate and business activity are the sectors employing most Scottish workers, Black and White. Health and social work also employ significant numbers of the Scottish population. Conference notes, however, that upon closer examination, access to and representation in these sectors reveal patterns of exclusion and varying levels of participation, even when Black and White workers are employed within the same sector.

“Manufacturing, for example, remains a significant force in the Scottish economy, contributing approximately one-fifth of our gross domestic product. Most recent figures show that the manufacturing sector accounts for 326,000 employees, around 14% of the total workforce in Scotland. Supply chain and ancillary services, involving hundreds of Black workers, provide more than 91,000 additional jobs. The continuing decline in this one sector alone will affect many Black and minority ethnic families in Scotland.

“Conference calls on the General Council to demand further action from the Scottish Executive, relevant UK-wide agencies and stakeholders by working with all the appropriate stakeholders to:

- campaign to prevent companies from outsourcing, offshoring and relocating manufacturing facilities outside of Scotland;
- ‘equality proof’ recruitment and selection processes to implement equal opportunity in the industrial labour force;

5.

- improve access to and transition to work programmes in national training initiatives, such as the Modern Apprenticeship and New Deal programmes;
- promote use of the procurement measures included in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, especially with regard to private sector sub-contractors, to ensure that Black and minority ethnic workers contribute to and enjoy the benefit of full civil participation in Scotland.”

Resolution No. 5 - Social Justice For Civil Servants

“That this Conference notes that the combined effects of the government spending review and the Lyons proposals will, at worst, culminate in thousands of civil service jobs being lost and, at a poor best, result in thousands of jobs being relocated from major cities. PCS believes that the combined impact of the two proposals will disproportionately and adversely impact on Black workers and their support structures.

“Even where Black workers are offered relocation packages, unless the area to where they will be expected to relocate supports ‘Black’ communities, individuals may find themselves isolated and feel unable to take up job offers. Alternatively, those who lose their jobs may find it difficult to find comparable work, as evidence from the “Fair Deal” government sponsored programme indicates that Black workers still face a disproportionate amount of discrimination in the labour market.

“Conference believes that the government has a social responsibility to all its citizens, including civil servants. Conference believes that the outcome of government policy must be assessed according to the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and, in particular, the regulatory impact assessment provision. Conference, therefore, calls on the STUC to work jointly with the TUC and Race Equality Councils to equip union negotiators with the knowledge and skills to conduct impact assessments with management over proposals to cut or relocate posts.”

6.

Resolution No. 6 - Race Relations Amendment Act and Education

“That this Conference commends those local authorities, which are not only working to comply with the terms of the Race Relations Amendment Act, but are also working to go beyond compliance with the law.

“Conference recognises the good advice issued in these Codes of Practice by the CRE with particular reference to the duties and responsibilities of public bodies.

“Conference is concerned at reports that the Race Equality Schemes of some local education authorities do not meet the requirements of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000), or match the advice contained within relevant CRE Codes of Practice.

“Conference believes that this situation should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

“Conference calls upon the STUC Black Workers Committee to:

- a) continue its campaigning work with affiliates;
- b) enlist the support of affiliates, particularly in the public sector to address this issue; and
- c) seek a meeting with appropriate bodies including e.g. COSLA, the Scottish Executive and the CRE to ensure the terms of the Race Relations Act are fully implemented by local authorities.”

7.

Resolution No. 7 - Extension of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act

“That this Conference believes that, although the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 provides the framework to make progress in the elimination of race discrimination, confining it to the public sector undermines its effectiveness in helping Black and minority ethnic communities. We reject the argument that, if the public sector is an exemplary employer in the way that it deals with the elimination of race discrimination, then the private sector will follow. We believe that the Race Relations (Amendment) Act should be extended to cover the private and voluntary sectors.

“Conference notes that unemployment in Black and minority ethnic communities is still three times higher than in the wider community. Whilst some private sector companies have been trying to make progress in employing Black and minority ethnic staff, there are still areas of the employment market where Black and minority ethnic workers are excluded.

“Conference calls on STUC Black Workers’ Committee to campaign within the Scottish Parliament and Executive for support to:

- extend the basic principles of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to all employers, i.e. the duty to eliminate race discrimination; and
- ensure that all employers carry out a basic level of ethnic monitoring, so that all employers can see the progress they are making in eliminating racial discrimination.”

Resolution No. 8 - Refugee Academics

“That this Conference recognises the important role played by CARA (Council for Assisting Refugee Academics) in assisting thousands of refugee scholars over the years.

8.

“Conference recognises the value this activity can have for individuals in their personal and career development and for the productivity of the economy and the cohesion of society.

“Conference welcomes the actions taken by CARA to develop their work to encourage more refugees as a whole to gain admittance to higher education.

“Conference further welcomes the enhancement of CARA’s activities in Scotland and the benefits that this will bring to Scotland-based refugees and asylum seekers with academic experience.

“Conference welcomes the Scottish Executive’s initiative to establish an atmosphere that welcomes people to study, to work and to live in Scotland

“Conference calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee and the STUC General Council to:

- work with its higher education unions to support the work of CARA in Scotland;
- work with the Scottish Executive, policy makers, leading academic administrators and employers to help realise the Scottish Executive’s initiative in relation to refugee academics; and
- build on the partnerships that already exist (for example those established by the Scottish Refugee Council) to improve the higher education experience of refugees.”

Amended Resolution No. 9 - Exploitation of Migrant Workers

“That this Conference notes with concern the continuing exploitation of migrant workers in this country and recognises that a lack of legal protection for the thousands of migrant workers, who arrive in the UK each year is giving the green light to unscrupulous gang masters, agencies and employers, to exploit foreign workers on a massive scale.

9.

“Conference believes that migrant workers to this country should be afforded appropriate legal protection and made aware of their rights, so that they do not fall prey to unscrupulous employers offering lower pay and conditions than the indigenous workforce.

“Conference also notes that many migrant workers, particularly the young workers and students are especially vulnerable and at a high risk of finding themselves employed within unregulated, illegal and the private sectors. These areas include construction industries, health and social care, domestic and cleaning, fruit picking, food processing and packaging, illegal textile factories and illegal prostitution with often very poor working conditions, exploitative wages below the national minimum wages and sometimes with disastrous health and safety consequences.

“Conference calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee and the STUC General Council to:

- a) formulate a strategy to recruit and organise migrant workers;
- b) campaign for the regulation of employment agencies;
- c) campaign to make it illegal for employers/employment agencies to hold the passports of migrant workers;
- d) campaign for proper education and welfare information for migrant workers when they are working in the UK;
- e) press the UK Government to ratify the UN Convention on the rights of migrant workers and their families; and
- f) press the Government to ensure that there is a Government department, which has responsibility for enforcing the rights of migrant workers.”

10.

Amended Resolution No. 10 - Anti-Racism

“That this Conference calls on the Trade Union Movement to keep up the campaign against the BNP and other xenophobic and racist parties and candidates.

“Conference notes with concern the increase in activity of the BNP and other racist and fascist parties in Scotland in the run up to the European elections and supports the actions of affiliates to exclude fascists from union membership and the introduction of legislation to accommodate this.

“We welcome the continuing work of the ‘Show Racism the Red Card’ campaign and encourage all affiliates to embrace this initiative as a means of raising awareness and combating racism in the workplace.

“Conference calls on all affiliated Unions and Trade Union Councils to re-double efforts to ensure a big turnout at the 2004 St Andrew’s Day March & Rally.”

Composite A “Commission for Equality and Human Rights” (covering motion nos. 11 and 12 and amendment)

“That this Conference notes with extreme interest the UK Government’s intention to establish the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). This new agency takes responsibility for the work of the Equality Commissions, as well as that of new legislation on religion, belief, sexual orientation and, in 2006, age. The CEHR would also develop the first institutional framework in the UK promoting a culture of human rights.

“Conference believes that the existing three statutory equality bodies have established solid networks with and links to a range of partners. Conference is concerned that this and other important aspects of their work should not be lost.

“Conference is concerned that funding for the new body should be commensurate with the volume of work required to establish and to maintain a fully functioning and credible Commission.

11.

“The outcome of the consultation process and the likelihood of legislation creating the CEHR are vitally important issues for Black and minority ethnic communities in Scotland. While Conference welcomes a national legislative framework for human rights, merging three well-established Commissions with different constituencies and priorities is an enormous challenge. Racial discrimination in our communities and especially in our workplaces remains an area of serious concern.

“Conference seeks assurance that the proposed CEHR is fundamentally committed to promoting racial equality in Scottish workplaces, as well as in the larger society. Conference, therefore, calls upon the General Council and the Black Workers’ Committee to:

- maintain effective monitoring and communication with relevant authorities regarding the possible development of the CEHR;
- monitor closely the progress of the consultation and subsequent legislation to ensure that affiliates are aware of the implications for their members;
- campaign to ensure that the new body matches the aspirations of those groups in society who are discriminated against;
- campaign to ensure that the new Commission has sufficient resources and staffing to carry out its role and that Commissioners are appointed with expertise in each of the equality areas;
- campaign to ensure that enforcement is a major aspect of the Commission’s work;
- campaign for the establishment of improved single equality legislation which covers the public and private sector to ensure that the Commission can successfully tackle discrimination in the workplace;

12.

- ensure that efforts to reduce racist behaviour and to minimise racial discrimination are not overtaken by competing priorities in the national equalities agenda;
- campaign to ensure that resources to implement the provisions of the Race Relations Act are not diminished.”

Resolution No. 13 – Representation in Public Life

“That this Conference believes that the current and continuing under representation of Black people in Scottish public life is shameful.

“In particular, we have deeply held concerns over the failure of all political parties to select a single Black candidate for a winnable seat in the Scottish Parliament.

“Conference calls for the Black Workers’ Committee and General Council representatives to meet with each of the major parties, building on the excellent initiative taken at the 2004 European Parliament Elections to raise with them the need for action before the 2007 Elections.”

Resolution No. 14 – Asylum Seekers and Refugees

“That this Conference condemns the new obligations on those seeking asylum, the removal of support from thousands of vulnerable people, the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers and the way that they are treated by some sections of the media, whose negative and stigmatising coverage fosters prejudice and bigotry.

“Conference calls for an end to the detention, deportation and dispersal of asylum seekers and believes that those who have their asylum claim refused, but cannot be deported, as there is no safe transport, should be given immediate financial assistance, housing and exceptional leave to remain.

“Conference demands full rights of residence, employment, education and benefits for asylum seekers and condemns moves to educate the children of asylum seekers separately from others.

13.

“Recognising that, in many cases, those seeking asylum have fled countries where poverty has led to oppression and persecution, Conference resolves to campaign for asylum seekers’ rights and the cancellation of third world debt.”

II MOTION FELL

Amended Resolution No. 15 - Exploitation of Workers in Developing Countries

“That this Conference notes with grave concern the continuing exploitation of workers in developing countries, in particular the exploitation of workers in the sportswear industry.

“Big sports brands are making ruthless demands of manufacturers to cut costs and deliver the latest fashions. Millions of workers are being forced to work longer and harder, sometimes in appalling conditions, and many cannot defend themselves, because they are denied the right to organise. Some leading companies recognise their responsibility to help solve this problem, but this has not led to much improvement. The entire industry and the International Olympic Committee can and must do more.

“The Play Fair Campaign has testimonies from workers and managers in Bulgaria, Cambodia, Thailand, China, Indonesia and Turkey, that:

- companies’ promises to behave responsibly are often superficial and lacking in credibility, and are ignored by company buying teams who use cut-throat tactics to reach their targets;
- factory managers are failing to meet the high-pressure demands from companies and comply with rules on respecting labour standards at the same time;
- some factories falsify records routinely in order to pass inspection and there is plentiful evidence of workers enduring abusive and exploitative working conditions or being sacked for joining a union.

14.

“The Olympic Games are supposed to be a global showcase of the best in fairness and human achievement. The worldwide sportswear industry is violating that spirit. Women working in this industry enjoy none of the respect that the athletes are shown, their rights are abused and ignored.

“Conference calls on retailers and manufacturers to work with trade unions in the UK and abroad to ensure fairness and equality for workers. Conference urges all affiliates to support the Play Fair at the Olympics Campaign. “