

stuc



1st STUC Disabled Workers' Conference

**Saturday 6/Sunday 7 November 2004
Milton Hotel, Glasgow**

CONFERENCE DECISIONS

I RESOLUTIONS CARRIED

Resolution No. 1 - Chip and Pin

“That this Conference notes that the proposed new Chip and Pin card being introduced by banks and building societies in collaboration with retail trade outlets is being developed in the interest of security.

“Conference welcomes any move to advance the interest of people conducting their financial affairs with confidence. However, Conference notes that there are access issues here which will need to be addressed with respect to the rights of disabled people.

“Visually impaired people, people with learning difficulties and elderly people, along with those with other disabilities, may be excluded from this provision.

“Conference therefore requests that the newly elected Disability Committee investigate this matter, and campaign with banks and large retailers to ensure they make provision for all consumers, irrespective of disability.”

Resolution No. 2 - Employment of Disabled People

“That this Conference notes with concern that, despite the best efforts of both the Westminster and Scottish Parliament, the appalling statistics relating to the employment of disabled people have barely altered, with disabled people still two and a half times as likely to be unemployed as non disabled people.

“Conference, therefore, requires that the General Council do all in their power to defend the jobs of any disabled worker at risk, and further to campaign to increase the number of job opportunities available to disabled people.”

Resolution No. 3 - Provision of Apprenticeships for People with Disabilities

“That this Conference calls on the General Council to campaign/engage with the Scottish Executive and employers to pursue the provision of apprenticeships for people with disabilities, in line with objectives set out when the standard’s based apprenticeship system was introduced in the Republic of Ireland and similar systems in the North of Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales.”

Resolution No. 4 - Job Accessibility

“That this Conference notes that more than 8% of people are disabled but a much lower proportion of the workforce is disabled, despite the legislation encouraging employers not to discriminate and to make reasonable adjustments for disabled workers.

“Conference calls on the STUC General Council to liaise with the Disability Rights Commission and with STUC affiliates with a view to monitoring the percentage of the workforce in each sector of the economy who are disabled, identifying those sectors and within these, major individual employers, where there is a clear need for action to make jobs more accessible to disabled applicants and to gain the commitment of leading employers to address the under-representation of disabled workers in their workforce.”

Resolution No. 5 - Work-Step

“That this Conference calls on Work-Step to make access to work more available and to increase capital funding for employers of disabled people. The use of this money should be monitored by the Work-Step department.”

Resolution No. 6 - Disability

“That this Conference calls on the General Council to keep disability issues at the top of the campaigning agenda.

“Although in-roads have been made since the DDA 1995, the measures needed to address the problems facing people with disabilities at the workplace are taking too long to implement.

“We must have a strategy to ensure provisions in the Act are implemented by the Scottish Executive in order that people with disabilities are allowed to fulfil their potential in the employment market.”

Resolution No. 7 - Lifelong Learning / Further and Higher Education and Accessibility

“That this Conference notes progress made to increase the number of people with disabilities to continue with learning. Conference commends the work of further and higher education institutions to address the issues of access for students with a range of disabilities.

“Conference recognises that funding needs to be increased to ensure that all further and higher education institutions are fully accessible. This funding should be to improve or initiate strategies to improve accessibility.

“Conference requests that the STUC Disability Committee seek :-

- means of highlighting this issue,
- the support of groups representing people with disabilities in any measure adopted by the STUC,
- discussions with the DRC (Scotland) with a view to promoting its education work.”

Resolution No. 8 - Draft Disability Bill and Public Agencies

“That this Conference notes that the Draft Disability Bill is progressing through Parliament. While this Bill does not deliver the full and comprehensive civil rights which disabled people and their organisations have been campaigning for over many years, nevertheless this legislation does seek to address some of the issues raised by the disability movement.

“Research has established that exemptions exist in Schedule 1 of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002, resulting in a lack of support for many of our colleagues. We would be concerned if this practice was extended to this Bill.

“Despite equalities remaining a matter reserved to the Westminster Parliament, there have been many positive actions on the part of the devolved administrations throughout the UK. It is important that this level of delivery is maintained.

“Conference therefore instructs the General Council to support disabled members by working with the Disabled Workers’ Committee and affiliated trade unions to:

1. Lobby the Department of Work and Pensions, the devolved administrations of the UK and any other relevant elements of government to ensure that the duties contained within the Draft Disability Bill remain a requirement on all public bodies.
2. Establish the depth of impact of those exemptions proposed in relation to trade union members, for example, members in the Non-Departmental Public Bodies.
3. Advise all activists and members of the impact of these exemptions on the bargaining agenda, to ensure wide ranging support for a campaign to ensure these exemptions are not imposed.”

Resolution No. 9 - Equal Rights for Disabled People

“That this Conference recognises that achieving equal rights for disabled people depends on constant campaigning by the union movement.

“Conference notes the continuing lack of access by disabled people to employment (including promotion, training and retention), and also to a wide range of services.

“These barriers are not just physical, but also due to attitudes towards disabled people.

“Conference, therefore calls for the draft Disability Bill to be enacted as a matter of urgency and for further legislation to:

- extend the definition of disability to cover all disabled people;
- introduce positive rights to counter disability discrimination in employment, education, housing, transport, the law, health and care provision;
- make disability audits mandatory for all employers;
- make improvements to accessibility compulsory for all public buildings including induction loop systems, information and signs provided in Braille/audio, e.g. in restaurants and other facilities.

“Conference also calls for:

- regular meetings between central and devolved government and appropriate disability organisations to identify further legislative improvements;
- no charges for lip-reading and sign language classes;
- disability awareness training in schools and workplaces.”

Resolution No. 10 - Education and PPP/PFI Funding

“That this Conference recognises that many local authorities have used Public Private Partnership and other private funding initiatives to refurbish the school estate. Conference supports the ambition that all services should be high quality and all buildings in which these services are delivered should be open, accessible to all in the community. It further supports the ambition to achieve a high quality teaching and learning environment.

“Conference, however, expresses concern about accessibility and inclusion issues for people with disabilities.

“Conference, therefore, urges the STUC Disability Committee:-

1. To seek information from affiliates affected by PPP/PFI funding to ascertain their concerns.
2. To highlight both concerns and good practice.
3. To enter discussion with the appropriate departments of the Scottish Executive.
4. To enter discussion with MSPs about accessibility issues.”

Resolution No. 11 - Two Ticks Disability Policy

“That this Conference is instructing the STUC to campaign to ensure the two ticks policy is enforced where it is found that employers are not adhering to its principles.

“If found lacking, the STUC should pursue with vigour to have the two ticks status revoked from the companies concerned.”

Resolution No. 12 - Disability Leave

“That this Conference calls for the introduction of statutory paid disability leave for workers who are or become disabled, or who have a progressive or recurrent disability, to undertake therapy, rehabilitation, recuperation or re-training, as a specific entitlement and not merely as part of employer-defined ‘reasonable adjustments’ ”.

Resolution No. 13 - Time off Work for Disabled Workers

“That this Conference calls for the statutory right to time off work for disabled workers to take part in trade union disability activities and support networks.”

Resolution No. 14 - Airline / Airport Access for Disabled Passengers

“That this Conference, concerned about the irresponsible, cavalier disregard shown by many airlines and airports (some more than others) in respect of safety and access facilities for disabled passengers in transit, calls upon the General Council to pressure central government to amend the Disability Discrimination Act to force all companies into line with the civilised provision and practice which current legislation seeks to promote in other cases enforceably.

“Static facilities apart, agreements made at the time of booking flights and transfers (and even later confirmed) are often broken without warning, leaving disabled passengers stranded at airports (without e.g. a wheelchair) to their often severe disadvantage – not just in terms of convenience, but of basic mobility, severe discomfort and additional financial cost. Compulsion alone will help.”

Resolution No. 15 - Statutory Right to Work

“That this Conference, conscious of the last half century’s advances on other issues, is perturbed that disabled people are two and a half times more likely to be, and remain, unemployed than non-disabled people in the UK. This ratio remains unchanged since WWII, despite strenuous efforts to train and access work. This type of ‘stability’ is a social, moral and economic indictment of our society, for which there can be no excuse. Employer self-regulation does not work.

“Conscious also, of the failure of the post-war 3% quotas, with their cynical ‘trawls’ for ‘voluntary’ self-outing, to meet official, rather than workers’ needs, Conference calls on the General Council to intensify pressure on central government to ensure that by ‘carrot and stick’, mandatory, enforceable, vigorously monitored legislative means, they are ... tough on the disability-related exclusive employment practice ... and tough on the causes of it.

“The existence of the Disability Rights Commission, with the required enhanced powers, and legislative sanctions, coupled with tax-breaks for evidence-based progress on inclusiveness in employment practice could do what earlier quota-based lip service failed to do - Work.

“A government / union / employer sponsored educational programme, starting in schools and followed up later throughout the community, would help, if run in parallel, to do what smooth words, and self-monitoring has signally failed to do in the past.”