

**SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS**

**64<sup>th</sup> STUC YOUTH CONFERENCE  
SATURDAY/SUNDAY  
3/4 JULY 2004**

**DECISIONS**

# **1. MOTIONS CARRIED**

## **Composite A (Covering Motion Nos. 1 & Amendment, 4 & 5) Unions Work for Young People**

“That this Conference welcomes the Unions Work Campaign launched at the 2004 STUC Congress. In particular, Conference welcomes the recognition of the importance of recruiting young people into the trade union movement, and calls for resources to be targeted to this end.

“Conference notes with alarm that only one young member under the age of 20 is joining a Scottish trade union for every six who are leaving through retirement; the average age of a trade unionist in Scotland is now 47; and only one in five workers in the private sector is a member of a union.

“Conference believes that trade unions must put more effort into reaching out to and involving young people and commit real resources towards meeting the enormous membership and organisational challenge faced by our movement in Scotland. As well as simply promoting union membership and its benefits, trade unions need to understand and be relevant to today’s workers and the issues and problems they face.

“Conference also believes that modern, growing trade unions need to be:

- taking more campaigns into the workplace;
- consulting with, empowering, and involving more members;
- recruiting more young people, women, and ethnic minorities and supporting their access to key positions;
- training and supporting more activists;
- making structures and practices more inclusive;
- using modern technology in new and imaginative ways to communicate and organise;
- engaging dedicated Organisers, and investing at least a third of their total resources into organising and recruitment.

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“Conference notes that young people’s attitudes towards unions are not negative, although much more requires to be done to build awareness of the role of trade unions. According to a recent STUC research report:

- 63% of workers under 30 said strong unions were needed to protect the working conditions and wages of employees compared with just 47% of over 30s
- 37% of 16-24 year olds had very or mainly favourable attitudes to unions, compared with only 9% who reported unfavourable views
- 42% of 16-24 year olds felt they knew nothing at all about trade unions

“Conference calls on the STUC Youth Committee to work with the General Council, the TUC, individual affiliates and NUS Scotland to deliver the Campaign by:

- Taking a strategic approach to promoting the role of trade unions to young people entering the workplace, within schools.
- Developing of Campus based trade union recruitment campaigns.
- Developing a network of young members across affiliates, so that young members don’t have to be ‘on the Committee’ to be active in the Campaign.
- Developing capacity by offering Youth Weekend Schools for building organising, recruitment and campaigning skills and developing campaigning activities.
- Working in partnership with the Workers Beer Company to take teams of servers to music festivals.
- Working/.....

3.

- Working with the Workers Beer Company to develop the 'Leftfield' concept in Scotland.
- Encouraging those affiliates who do not have a youth network to conduct a survey of young members.
- Monitoring levels of young member activism and sharing best practice in young member recruitment and retention.”

### **Composite B (Covering Motion Nos. 2 & 6) Eradicating Low Pay Among Young People**

“That this Conference, whilst acknowledging that the introduction of the National Minimum Wage has been vitally important in tackling low pay among the UK’s poorest workers, recognises that low pay is still a major issue facing many workers, with young people and women being particularly affected.

“Conference believes that the current level of the statutory Minimum Wage is set too low and it is opposed to the on-going age discrimination that exists, through the lower level payments to young workers. This situation is a major factor in the exploitation of young people at work.

“However, Conference welcomes the decision by the Government to introduce Minimum Wage protection to 16 and 17 year olds. This announcement means the principle of pay protection for young workers has finally been established. It is an important step forward for young workers and a vindication of the campaigning and lobbying work undertaken by the trade union movement since the first Minimum Wage was introduced in 1997.

“Conference believes the priority now will be to campaign to raise the wage to a decent level. At the proposed £3.00 level, a 17 year old could be earning almost £10.00 per day less than an 18 year old work colleague and this is unacceptable.

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“Conference re-asserts its position that all age discrimination within the Minimum Wage should be eliminated and that the Minimum Wage should be paid at the full adult rate to all, regardless of age. Conference believes that a Minimum Wage paid at the half male median formula, would immediately:

- increase the Minimum Wage to a decent level for all low paid workers;
- banish discrimination from Government policy in this area in line with the new legislation on age discrimination and the long-standing equal pay legislation;
- eliminate the widening pay gap between young workers and older workers;
- link female to male earnings – tackling gender inequality in pay;
- ensure that the wages of the lowest paid workers rise as earnings go up; and
- offer strong protection to those aged below 16, ensuring those of school age cannot be exploited through low pay.

“Conference welcomes the recent STUC Congress decision to make tackling low pay a key aspect of the Unions Work Campaign and to work with the Youth Committee in campaigning to promote awareness of this issue. Conference also supports the calls for the STUC General Council to organise a national demonstration on the issue of tackling low pay.

“Conference urges the STUC Youth Committee to continue to promote the Equal Wages for all Ages Campaign to ensure awareness of the continuing problem of low pay and for the setting of a decent level of statutory Minimum Wage based on existing STUC policy, to apply to all workers irrespective of their age.”

5.

**Composite C (Covering Motion Nos. 3 & 10)  
Working Tax Credits and Support for Students**

“That this Conference notes that there are now two systems of Tax Credits in place – the Working Families Tax Credit and the Child Care Tax Credit.

“Conference notes that to claim the Working Families Tax Credit an individual must work 16 hours or more per week for a period of four weeks or more whether a single parent or as part of a couple, with a couple designating one individual to claim. To qualify, claimants must be in remunerative work and therefore being a student nurse does not count.

“Conference notes that over 75% of students in Scotland will work during their studies and that students on placements as part of their Degree do not receive remuneration for their work. This often means that student nurses, for example, are required to work on placement but also in paid employment to support themselves, which often does not meet the requirement of the Working Families Tax Credit threshold.

“Conference calls on the STUC Youth Committee campaign to:

- End the disparity between the Child Care Tax Credit and the Working Families Tax Credit, so that work on placements can count towards the required 16 hour threshold.
- Bring an end to exploitative practices within higher and further education, where student nurses, vets, doctors and other professions do not receive payment for their labour.
- Reduce the threshold of Tax Credits for working students to take better account of their work/life balance.”

6.

### **Amended Motion No. 7 - National Minimum Wage for Young Workers**

“That this Conference welcomes the decision of the UK Government to extend Minimum Wage protection to all 16 and 17 year olds from October 2004.

“Conference congratulates all affiliates who have campaigned hard to extend protection to some of the most vulnerable workers in the Scottish labour market.

“To build on that record of achievement and to promote the needs and interests of young workers further, Conference urges the STUC Youth Committee to work with affiliates to:

- widely promote the new rights extended to 16 and 17 year olds from October 2004;
- monitor employer compliance and use every means possible to ensure the minimum wage rate is enforced;
- continue to campaign to improve minimum wage rates for all young workers and, in particular, to ensure the full adult rate is paid.”

7.

### **Motion No. 8 - Pensions**

“That this Conference is concerned that current trends in both occupational and state pensions will have a detrimental effect on today’s young workers when they reach retirement if urgent action is not taken to:

- restore the link between State pension levels and earnings;
- place a legal obligation on employers to establish and make financial contributions to occupational pension schemes and negotiate improvements to these with trade unions;
- protect final salary occupational pension schemes and end the shift to money purchase schemes;
- ensure surpluses in pension schemes are used to make payments and / or increase benefits to workers who are members of the scheme;
- introduce legislation to guarantee pension levels promised, ensure that workers are treated as primary creditors in insolvency situations and to enforce the payments of all outstanding debts, and ensure that the plight of those workers who are currently in this situation be directly addressed.

“Conference recognises that pensions is a major issue for our generation and calls upon the STUC Youth Committee to campaign for these objectives, and resolves that the STUC Youth Conference will work with the pensioners movement in Scotland to win improvements for today’s pensioners that can be enjoyed by those who become pensioners in the future.”

8.

### **Motion No. 9 - Higher Education Funding**

“That this Conference notes its dismay at the proposal of the UK Government to introduce top-up fees in universities in England and Wales. Conference also expresses concern at the possible detrimental impact that this proposal will have on Scottish universities funding unless that funding is increased.

“Conference believes that the Scottish Executive must maintain their commitment not to expose Scottish students to further financial burdens in the form of top-up fees.

“Conference recognises the work already being done by the National Union of Students and trade unions in the sector on this area, but calls on the STUC Youth Committee to:

- lobby the Scottish Executive to continue with its policy of opposition to top-up fees and to urge them to ensure that Scottish universities are properly and adequately funded; and
- continue campaigning, in conjunction with NUS, for improvements to financial support offered to students.”

9.

### **Amended Motion No. 11 - Public Services**

“That this Conference reaffirms its support for the continuous improvement and development in Scotland’s public services. Public services must have a strong public service ethos with principles of integrity, objectivity, openness, accountability, competence and equality.

“Conference again states its strong opposition to PPP and PFI as ways of financing and operating public services as they undermine the very ethos on which public services are based.

“Conference welcomes the operation of the Protocol aimed at eliminating the creation of a two-tier workforce in PPP schemes and calls for the Scottish Executive to ensure it is properly implemented and monitored and its principles extended to all tendering processes and to cases where workers have been transferred to private firms.

“Conference recognises that in order to provide high quality public services, it is vital that the public sector workforce is of high quality, with high standards of working conditions, fair pay and workforce development.

“Conference expresses its concern that the age profile of public sector employees is relatively high and that young people are currently not attracted towards working in the public sector. It is vital that a positive image of public service employment is developed and maintained and that young people are able to see a public sector career as a valuable career choice.

“Conference, therefore, calls on the STUC Youth Committee to work closely with the General Council and affiliates to ensure that this is addressed with the Scottish Executive at the earliest opportunity.”

10.

### **Motion No. 12 - Exploitation of Migrant Workers**

“That this Conference notes with concern the exploitation of migrant workers in sectors such as construction and agriculture.

“Conference believes that migrant workers coming to this country should be made aware of their rights, so that they do not fall prey to unscrupulous employers offering lower pay and conditions.

“Conference also notes that many workers, particularly young workers, both indigenous and migrant employed by gangmasters in agriculture, food processing and packaging, as well as in unregistered textile factories, are also frequently paid well below legal minimum wages.

“Conference, therefore, calls upon the STUC Youth Committee to campaign to raise awareness on these issues and combat the actions of such unscrupulous employers, and give support to the campaign to regulate gangmasters.”

11.

### **Amended Motion No. 13 - International**

“That this Conference reiterates previous condemnation of the war in Iraq that was carried out despite strong opposition from many, and without the support of the UN. Conference deplores the continuing loss of life occurring in Iraq, both of military personnel and of innocent Iraqi civilians. Conference expresses concerns that the US and UK invasion of Iraq has not made the world a safer place. Rather it has promoted aggression and enabled a breeding ground for uncertainty, fear and hatred to flourish.

“Conference recognises that efforts should be concentrated on humanitarian work to restore basic services and human rights to all Iraqis rather than on continuing with an illegal military occupation.

“Conference believes that there should be no further military action against other countries in the Middle East and that the US and UK must show a strong commitment to the on-going efforts for resolution in the Palestinian / Israeli conflict.

“Conference calls on the STUC Youth Committee to continue to campaign on this issue along with the wider trade union movement in order to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East.”

12.

### **Motion No. 14 - British Overseas Development Policy**

“That this Conference welcomes the consistent progress made by the British Government since 1997 in addressing the problems of debt and devastating poverty in most of the developing countries. Conference welcomes, in particular, its lead to the efforts of the rich countries to ease the debt burden on the poorest countries, its achievement in raising the proportion of Gross National Income devoted to overseas aid by nearly one half to 0.31 per cent, and its attempts to have reformed the Common Agricultural Policy and other international trade arrangements which deny to millions of families the means to earn enough to obtain the basic necessities of life.

“Conference delegates are convinced that ending abysmal poverty and desperate suffering in developing countries just cannot be left to the market. 800 million people, most of them under 20 years of age, go to sleep hungry day in, day out, and the industrialised countries as a whole are failing to fulfil their commitment to halve world poverty by 2015. Conference calls on the Government to announce a timetable for Britain to achieve the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of GNI within a short period of years and to persist with its efforts to remove the debt burden from the poorest people of the world and to achieve a fair international trading system which enables developing countries to share in the world’s wealth.

“This Conference calls on the Government to make provision for Trade Union education and training in developing countries as a means of promoting the fair distribution of the benefits of international aid; accountable and just governance; and the exercise of basic Trade Union and other human rights.”

13.

### **Motion No. 15 - The Future of Northern Cyprus Post Reunification Referendum**

“That this Conference notes that:

1. Cyprus has been a divided island since 1974;
2. the United Nations, and its General Secretary, Kofi Annan, proposed a ‘reunification’ plan which was put to the vote by both communities on Saturday 24 April;
3. Northern Cyprus voted by 65% to accept the plan proposed by Kofi Annan – ‘The Annan Plan’;
4. Southern Cyprus voted by an overwhelming majority to reject The Annan Plan;
5. the people of Northern Cyprus continue to suffer socially, politically and economically as a result of decades of international trade embargos, political sanctions and economic isolation.

“Conference resolves to:

- a) recognise the ‘good will’ of Northern Cyprus in accepting The Annan Plan;
- b) campaign for the lifting of all trade embargos, political sanctions and all other social and economic measures imposed against the people of Northern Cyprus;
- c) lobby the EU, the British Government, the Greek and Turkish Governments to ensure the end of the political isolation of Northern Cyprus and to bring about an end to the suffering of the people of Northern Cyprus; and
- d) send a message of support to the trade union movement in Northern Cyprus and other youth and student groups.”

