

## General Secretary's speech for Unions Work Launch

(Power point 6: 'Unions Work') CLICK (Bill Speirs, STUC General Secretary)

Sandy introduces Bill Speirs and Bill approaches the rostrum and begins:

I'm standing here before you today, in a departure from our normal Congress Agenda, to launch what is for us, a very important strategy.

'Unions Work', is a key initiative that will radically change the STUC's whole approach towards promoting trade union membership and supporting our affiliates to grow the movement.

It will affect everything we do.

CLICK (Power point 7: 'Unions Work') CLICK (Delivering a strategy for growth...)

The STUC can't recruit members directly to trade unions but we can help, in a variety of ways, to create a positive environment that supports membership growth in Scotland.

Speaking in corporate terms, **we** can act as the marketing department, by delivering a strategy for growth that will enable **you**, our affiliates, to get on with the sales.

But before embarking on any new strategy, its important for us to recognise where we've been, the challenges we've faced, why we are here now, and where we need to be going.

To grow, it is necessary for us to take a critical look at ourselves and develop new strategies to change and adapt.

This is vital if we are to widen our membership base, making it more diverse in terms of age, gender and ethnicity, and also reach a broader range of economic sectors.

**CLICK (Power point 8: Membership Profile)**

The figures in our research show that we have major issues to address:

**CLICK (Bullet 1: Membership 11% for ages 16-24, average member age 47.)**

We have an ageing membership. Between the 16 – 24 age group just 11% are union members. The average age of our membership is currently 47 and is still rising year on year.

Even more worrying, for every 6 union members leaving the movement due to reaching retirement, we only have one worker aged under 20 joining.

This is worrying for two reasons, firstly because if we don't recruit younger people then we will slowly but steadily slip into retirement, but also because it's crucial to get people to join us early in their working life. The longer people work without joining up, the less likely they are to join in the future

Young people's are not against unions. In one survey 37% were positive towards us, and only 9% negative, but we do have a big awareness-raising job to do, as more than half didn't know what we are, or do.

**CLICK (Bullet 2. Public sector density 66% but private sector only 21%. )**

While in the public sector our membership density has held up comparatively well, in the private sector only 1 in five are likely to be a member.

That's not to say we can afford to be complacent about our public sector stronghold either. In Scotland today around a third of public sector employees, benefit from union negotiated pay and conditions, despite not being in our membership. We need to get our message across to these people as well as those in non-unionised areas.

**CLICK (Bullet 3. Most significant fall has been in manufacturing sector.)**

Much of our losses in the private sector can be attributed to the collapse of our traditional manufacturing base. We can't organise in industries that no longer exist, but we can look towards new manufacturing industries and to the service sector where there is much for us to do.

We must also find ways of making the union model fit the small business sector. Just 8% of those in workplaces with under 25 people are members of trade unions and small business continues to be a growing part of our labour market.

**CLICK (Bullet 4. Fall of 2% per year 1980-2000, but recent new growth shown.)**

For a 20-year period our membership took a real battering due to both economic and political factors, Thatcher's anti union legacy made a real impact on us. In 1997 with a new government and new laws, we started to put the breaks on, and break out of the negative cycle.

The good news is that membership has levelled out in the past five years, and over the past two is starting to show the first signs of recovery. Even more encouraging, our level of density across the labour market in Scotland (an

independent measure!) is rising faster than our own membership figures.

That is an incredible achievement, given the rate at which our members are retiring, and our traditional manufacturing base is still disappearing.

Some in the past have described us as dinosaurs, but we are a movement made of working people, people who have the ability to change, to adapt, and to innovate.

Today I'm here to tell you, that I'm in no doubt, that we can survive and we can grow, but only if we are willing to listen to what today's workers have to say, listen to their views and needs.

And only if we are willing to put a sustained effort into making the changes required, to meet those needs.

**CLICK (Power point 9: Unions Work)**

I have no doubt that we are still absolutely necessary to the vast majority of working people in Scotland, and it is still a fact that we make a positive impact on workers terms and conditions, wherever we organise.

**CLICK (Are we relevant to today's workers?)**

But whether working people in Scotland see us as relevant, is the question we really need to be addressing.

**CLICK (Power point 10: We asked people....) CLICK (Do unions work?)**

So, we went to Glasgow's Queen St. Railway Station and asked folk.... Do unions work?

**CLICK (Power point 11.video clip. Vox-pops in Queen St Station. 57 secs )**

**CLICK (Power point 12. Rational for Unions Work:)**

**Bill continues:**

Its crucially important that we are able to demonstrate our relevance to today's workers, and its worrying to me that around half of the people on that video don't know what a union is.

We have to make sure that everyone in Scotland knows what we do, and what we stand for. That will be the starting point to pushing for real growth. That's what the unions work strategy is all about. That's why the General Council of the STUC is absolutely committed to:

**CLICK (Bullet 1)**

- Taking a collective, united approach to breaking the long-term pattern of decline

**CLICK (Bullet 2)**

- Halting the year on year rise in our membership's average age profile

**CLICK (Bullet 3)**

- Rebuilding the activist base in our existing workplaces and recruiting activists in new areas

**CLICK (Bullet 4)**

- And, linking closely into the agenda of working people with a positive media strategy based on key workplace issues

**CLICK (PowerPoint 13: Unions Work) CLICK (Getting our message across)**

Yes we may have faced some hard times and real challenges over the past 20 years, but we have a very positive story to tell, based on the real practical progress and results our members and workplace reps achieve

every day, day in, day out, on pay, on training, on health and safety, and on supporting colleagues facing individual problems at work.

Unfortunately, we are still not very good at telling that story and we need to get far, far better at it. We must get out there and spread our good news, shout it from the rooftops, and in the High streets across Scotland. Show today's workers exactly why they are better off in a union and what they've got to gain from joining our collective.

**CLICK (Power point 14: Unions Work) CLICK (Over £25 million compensation won last year in Scotland!)**

In the past year alone, trade unions in Scotland have won a whopping £25,000,000 in compensation for their members. Compensation paid out to workers who were unjustly treated or injured by their employer!

**CLICK (Power point 15: Unions Work) CLICK (Support when you have a problem...)**

Here are just a few examples of where we've been able to successfully support members, who have chosen to stand up to unlawful treatment at work.

**CLICK (Power point 16: Video clip 2, Yvonne James and Dhesi 3 mins 37 secs)**

**CLICK (Power point 17: Unions Work) CLICK (Getting you a fairer deal at work)**

Unions are not just there for people when things go wrong – we work with employers to implement fairer working conditions on a daily basis, and really are a positive force, but it takes membership strength to deliver results. The more members and reps we have, the better we're able to deliver a fairer deal in the workplace.

Scotland's employers also have much to gain from welcoming us into the workplace. We are a force for delivering fair employment practice, better training and improved consultation, all the ingredients in fact, that are proven to contribute to increased productivity and growth.

**CLICK (Power point 18 Unions Work)**  
**CLICK (Bullet 1. On learning and skills)**

In a union, you will have better access to training and lifelong learning. We are leading the way on the lifelong learning agenda and have almost 1000 workplace learning reps now operating in Scotland.

**CLICK (Bullet 2. On pay and remuneration)**

In a union, your pay is on average 7-10% better than in a non unionised workplace

**CLICK (Bullet 3. On work life balance)**

In a union, you will have better work life balance. Your Hours will be lower, your holidays longer, and you are more likely to be able to access flexible working options

**CLICK (Bullet 4. On Pensions)**

In a union, you are more likely to be able to join an occupational pension, with employer contributions.

**CLICK (Bullet 5, On health and safety)**

When there is a union health and safety rep at your workplace, you're half as likely to suffer an industrial injury,.

**CLICK (Bullet 6. Equal Opportunities)**

Furthermore, a unionised employer is more likely to have an equal opportunities policy and the pay gap between women and men is likely to be considerably narrower.

I'm not just making all this up, I'm quoting from research on all these areas, but don't just take my word for it. Lets listen to some people who really know what's going on out there.

**CLICK (Power point 19: Unions Work) CLICK (Getting results on learning and skills...)**

Trade union activists who are encouraging colleagues back to learning and making a real difference as learner reps, like David, John and Betty!

**CLICK (Power point 20: Clip 3A on lifelong learning projects at Rosyth and Glasgow Railway learning. 1 min 21 secs)**

**CLICK (Power point 21: Unions Work) CLICK (On workplace recognition...)**

Trade union activists, who are achieving real results through winning workplace recognition and representing their members collectively, like Theresa and Duncan!

**CLICK (Power point 22: Clip 3B on workplace recognition Ethecon and Simmers. 2 mins 2 secs)**

**CLICK (Power point 23: Unions Work) CLICK (On work-life balance...)**

Trade union activists, like Cheryl, making real progress on increasing childcare, flexibility, and work-life balance for working parents, and all her other colleagues!

**CLICK (Power point 24: Clip 3C. Cheryl at PCS 1 min 18 secs)**

**CLICK (Power point 25: Unions Work) CLICK (On health and safety...)**

Trade union activists, like Steve, a health and safety rep, protecting his members, in a heavy engineering plant!

**CLICK (Power point 26: Clip 3D on health and safety 51 secs)**

**CLICK (Power point 27: Unions Work) CLICK (On tackling low pay...)**

Trade union activists, making a real difference, like Lillian, tackling the scourge of low pay among women in the Health Service!

**CLICK (Power point 28: Clip 3E of Lillian on Chef's Campaign 1 min 15 secs)**

**CLICK (Power point 29: Unions Work) CLICK (On promoting equality)**

Trade Unions activists like Habib, who serves on the STUC Black Workers Committee, guiding us on the best way to promote equality and tackle racism. Here he is talking at the recent, crowded launch of our One Workplace Equal Rights Campaign, which was also attended by Margaret Curran, the Minister for Communities!

**CLICK (Power point 30: Clip 3F Habib and Margaret 1 min 56 secs)**

**CLICK (Power point 31: Unions Work)**

All of these stories are a testament to the hard work and dedication that our people, across Scotland, put in to working with employers to deliver real improvements for members.

**CLICK (Improving your legal rights at work...)**

Unions work to help individuals who are fighting injustice, we negotiate with employers to deliver on terms and conditions for groups of workers, and we are also successful, through our partnership with government in delivering new legal rights and protections for working people. Since 1997 we have been instrumental in lobbying the labour government to deliver over 26 different new positive legal rights for working people, from the

minimum wage, to information and consultation, to new discrimination protections.

That's not to mention the outstanding work carried out by individual affiliates to support private members bills at both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament on issues like corporate killing, Sunday working, and the licensing of gang-masters.

Yes, there is always much more we will want but lets pause for a moment to celebrate the positive difference we have been able to make.

**CLICK (Power point 32: Unions Work)**

We really could go on all day with more and more examples of why unions work and I'm sure it would make us feel great, but **we** all know it's true. We need to stop preaching to the converted and get out there, let **everyone else** share in our great secret!

**CLICK (If we work together.... We work stronger)**

There is much, much more that the STUC can and will do to get our message across, but there is also much, much more that affiliates can and must do to get out there and give all workers in Scotland, the chance to benefit from being part of our collective.

Unions Work is not just a campaign for the STUC – it needs to be a culture shift for the whole of our movement in Scotland. We are not just launching this campaign here today for your information – we are also inviting all of you, yes every one of you here today, to play an active part in it and help us deliver the message that Unions Work.

Without your input this campaign will be lifeless, but with your active support the 'Unions Work' message will come alive in every workplace.

**CLICK (Power point 33: Unions Work) CLICK (Room for Improvement?)**

So what is it that we all have to do to improve? This is a question that we have been asking a lot of people. Over the past few months we've met with all our affiliates to build our strategy, we've also consulted with our representative structures, with academics and with a range of external bodies. Here are just a few ideas, once again from our own activists to get us started:

**CLICK (Power point 34: Clip 4, Suggested improvements 58 seconds)**

**CLICK (Power point 35: Unions Work) CLICK (Key elements of the Campaign...)**

The key elements of the Unions Work strategy for the STUC will focus on delivering a positive communications & media strategy; capacity building and promoting best practice across the movement; encouraging more co-operation between affiliates; and most importantly, targeting young people.

**CLICK (Power point 36: 1. Communications Strategy)  
CLICK (Bullet 1. Delivering a positive media strategy)**

We know we have a great story to tell and the Unions Work campaign means that the STUC will go out and tell that story every day.

Every week we will produce another solid example of why unions work in a key area, with solid research to back up that example.

**CLICK (Bullet 2. Consulting the members... our best asset.)**

We will work with affiliates to consult more with our members in Scotland, on the key issues that matter to them, the difference that they see unions making on the ground, and the areas they want to see us taking more action on.

We will also do more research into the shape and profile of members in Scotland. We will trawl for good practice examples to highlight on the wide variety of key issues that matter to working people

**CLICK (Bullet 3. Getting our message across in new ways.)**

We will tell the good news story in our schools, our colleges and universities, in our workplaces and in our communities across Scotland. We will engage with a wide range of campaigning and voluntary sector groups, with the Scottish Executive, with local authorities, with the enterprise agencies, with employers, and with every information and media outlet in the land, however large, however small, whatever their political views.

More people in Scotland tend to read their local news than elsewhere. We need to work more closely with branches and trades councils, to make sure that local good news stories are fed to small, local publications on a regular basis

**CLICK (Bullet 4. Building the 'Unions Work' brand.)**

Unions Work is a strong, positive, and versatile brand available for use by the whole movement. We really do need as trade unions a simple badge that everyone can recognise. We want to share the unions work badge with the whole movement.

All Trade Unions and Trades Union Council's in Scotland will be positively encouraged to adopt the Unions Work

brand and logo alongside their own, and to use the phrase (as many times as possible!) in their own communications strategies to help get their own message across more effectively, as part of the wider Unions Work agenda.

If we all shout together with one voice, then our message will be so powerful, that it will be impossible to ignore.

Building a strong level of joint brand recognition can only be a good thing for all trade unions in Scotland!

**CLICK (Power point 37: Capacity building)**

This campaign will be brought to life, by the members and activists we have out there in the workplace and the community. If our members are our lifeblood, then our activists are the heart, the lungs, and the brain.

**CLICK (Bullet 1: Delivering briefing seminars on new developments & best practice.)**

We will provide lots of support to our affiliates through the delivery of a programme of awareness raising, highlighting best practice on techniques for reaching out to and organising in new areas; for strengthening our structures and activist base in existing areas; for developing participation among young members; and increasing dialogue with existing members; as well as using information technology and new campaigning methods.

**Click: (Bullet 2•Developing materials & support networks for workplace activists.)**

We need a voice in every workplace and those voices need to be well informed, well supported and empowered to really do the business for today's workforce.

To most members a union is only as good as the local rep and we need to invest a lot of time and effort into ensuring

that workplace reps and branch networks are supported, strengthened and empowered, so that the service we provide to members, gets even better.

**CLICK: (Bullet 3: Training on organising, recruitment, campaigning.)**

We will work with TUC education services to provide a targeted programme of training across Scotland for our activists; on organising and recruitment; on running workplace campaigns and using local media in a positive way; on political education and linking the big picture issues like globalisation into what happens in the workplace; and on promoting trade unionism in your community, for example, How to deliver an effective presentation on trade unions to a local school.

**CLICK (Power point 38; Encouraging Co-operation)**

A key role for the STUC under the Unions work banner is to positively encourage a co-operative approach from affiliates towards growing the movement.

There is a strong need for a collective approach, and no rational reason for us to be competitive over potential members. After all there is more than enough non-unionised, virgin territory out there, waiting to be organised. We need to be strategic and co-ordinate our approach, and to do that we need to be prepared to work together and share information.

**CLICK (Bullet 1: Further developing the 'Clearing House' principles)**

Through the operation of the Clearing House principles, the STUC is continuing to successfully cut down on inter-union disputes between our affiliates, organising new green-field sites. This means that time and effort is going into growing rather than competing.

We have recently reviewed the principles, and looked at how they can be extended, and there is broad agreement among affiliates that we should further develop the 'clearing house' approach, in a way that complements our strategy of promoting trade union membership to the public through the Unions Work campaign.

**CLICK (Bullet 2•Co-ordinating local activity with Trades Union Councils.**

We will work closely with Trade Union Councils to develop & synchronise local campaigning activities, so that a co-ordinated Scotland wide approach to promoting the Unions Work campaign can be delivered.

**CLICK (Bullet 3•Developing targeted inter-union campaigns in partnership with affiliates.**

We have established specific Unions Work contacts within each of our affiliates, and we're now working with them on the development of a concentrated, high profile, joint union organising campaign, that will involve several different unions in targeting a key locality or industry.

There is broad consensus among our affiliates 'in principle' to this approach, and we hope to undertake more detailed dialogue in the coming weeks. and months, with the aim of identifying a suitable area for a joint focus, by Autumn of this year.

This will not be easy but if we pull it off it will not only provide a valuable central focus for the Unions Work campaign in publicity terms, but it will also build co-operation and synergy between affiliates, which can then be built on in the future.

**CLICK (Power point 39: Targeting young people)**

This is, without a doubt the most important aspect of the Unions Work Campaign.

If we are going to grow then we must:

**CLICK (Bullet 1)**

Support our current youth structures.

**CLICK (Bullet 2)**

Raise awareness among young people about the role of trade unions.

**CLICK (Bullet 3)**

Develop new younger activists & officials.

But I'm certainly not the best person, to tell you how we reach out to young members, or how we make ourselves relevant to a new generation of workers.

This part of the campaign has been developed by the STUC Youth Committee, and in a moment I will pass you over to them, to hear more about our agenda in this area.

But first, let's listen to what some young people out with the STUC, have to say on the subject of trade unions:

**CLICK (Power point 40: Unions Work) CLICK (Reaching out to young workers)**

**CLICK (power point 41: Clip 5. Young people's views on unions)**

**CLICK (Power point 42: Fiona Smith and Daniel Donaldson)**

Congress please give a warm welcome to Fiona Smith from Unison and Daniel Donaldson from the GMB, both of whom are highly active members of the STUC Youth Committee

**CLICK (power point 43: Engaging with young people)**

## **Daniel and Fiona do there bit (8 mins)**

**CLICK (power point 44 Unions Work) CLICK(Reasons to be cheerful)**

Thank you Fiona and Daniel. for that stark reminder of our need to evolve our practices and involve our young members to avoid dying off! Now that they've terrified the life out of us, its my job to cheer you all up a bit, its not like the Youth Committee are asking for the impossible from us, we can do this if we put our minds to it.

After all, we still have a lot of public support in Scotland; strong foundations to build on; and some powerful friends supporting us!

**CLICK.(Power point 45:Video clip 6 Yvonne to Jack McConnell)**

**CLICK (Power point 46: Unions Work) CLICK (The campaign starts here)**

Unions Work is not the STUC's campaign its your campaign and I would ask all of you to reflect on what you can do, within your union, to help us deliver growth

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 into key positions;
- training and supporting more activists;
- engaging dedicated organisers; and investing about a third of their total resources into organising and recruitment

Its a proven formula for growth and those who employ it get results.

As I said in my opening remarks the Unions Work strategy will affect radically how we do many things at the STUC.

The past 10 years have seen seismic shifts taking place in the democracy of Scotland, and rightly we have been at the heart of that process, representing our memberships interests as citizens.

We make no apologies for representing working people in the widest sense, and we will continue to do so, but now is the time for us to turn our attention back to the core workplace agenda, and to the bread and butter issues that affect people at their work.

We can help working people address many of these issues, and by reaching out to them and persuading them to join and work with us, we will ultimately make our movement stronger and more able to achieve its wider goals for improving society.

Comrades I know that the people in this room are capable of campaigning very hard for, and achieving, the things they believe in. I've seen it many times.

So together, lets get out there, and campaign to make sure all Scotland's workers experience the benefits of being union organised!

Lets make unions work, for our members, for Scotland, and for the future!

**CLICK (Power point 47: Clip 7 Final video montage) Come together music builds and ends**

**CLICK CLICK(Power point 48: For more info)  
Time lapsed 45;00 mins**