



**SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS**

**2002 ANNUAL STUC YOUTH CONFERENCE**

**DECISIONS**

## **Resolution No. 1 “Young People and Trade Unions”**

“That this Conference notes that:

- \* it is difficult to recruit young members into Trade Unions;
- \* it is often difficult to encourage youth participation in Trade Unions;
- \* very few affiliates have structures in place that allow young members to become active and develop the ability and confidence to continue their activism in the wider Trade Union Movement;
- \* very few Trade Unions send youth representatives to Annual Congress; and
- \* TUC affiliates must send at least one youth delegate to the TUC Congress.

“Conference believes that:

- \* all Trade Unions have a duty to encourage youth participation in their Union at all levels;
- \* many young workers are put off joining Trade Unions because of stereotypical images;
- \* active participation in Trade Unions by young members is essential to the future of the Trade Union Movement.

“Conference resolves:

- \* to ask the General Council to submit a Constitutional amendment to the Annual Congress, which will require affiliates to send a youth delegate to Annual Congress;
- \* to ask affiliated Trade Unions to review their internal structures and procedures to actively encourage youth participation at all levels in the Trade Union Movement; and
- \* to ask affiliated Trade Unions to support and fund the creation of a dedicated Youth Development Officer within the STUC.”

## **Resolution No. 2 - Young People and Democracy**

“That this Conference notes the falling turnout in both local and national elections, in particular the extremely low level of turnout among young voters aged 18 to 27. Conference also notes with concern the increasing profile and success of far right groups such as the BNP, particularly in the light of their intention to stand in the 2003 Scottish Parliament elections.

“Conference fully supports the STUC Youth Committee’s petition on lowering the voting age to 16, sending a clear signal that the views of young people are of vital importance in our democracy.

“Conference instructs the Youth Committee to continue to work with other organisations, such as the Scottish Youth Parliament, to encourage young people to participate in the democratic process, whilst campaigning for the reduction of the voting age to 16

“Conference calls on the Scottish Executive to legislate as a matter of urgency to lower the age at which people can stand for the Local Council. This should be reduced from 21 to 18, with provision to reduce it to 16 in the future.”

### **Resolution No.3 - Racism**

“That this Conference recognises that racist attitudes and behaviour permeate Scottish society at all levels. Conference recognises that in order to tackle racism these attitudes and behaviours need to be challenged whenever they are expressed and racism must be made unacceptable in all aspects of life. In order to achieve this a wide range of bodies in civil society are required to commit themselves to combating racism. This includes formal equality bodies such as the Commission for Racial Equality and bodies such as employers, religious bodies and Trade Unions. It also means that all individual members of society, both young and old, must be prepared to challenge attitudes.

“Following the recent murders of both Surjit Singh Chhokar, a Lanarkshire waiter and Firsat Yildiz Dag, a Kurdish asylum seeker, Conference recognises that there must be in place full protection from the law for all those who are vulnerable to racist attacks and a recognition that those seeking refuge from violence and oppression must be able to find a place of safety in Scotland.

“In the light of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 which led to an increase in racial tensions across Scotland and the mistrust of asylum seekers and refugees that has brewed in some sectors of politics and media, this resolution calls on Conference to:

- reaffirm its solidarity with all those who seek refuge in Scotland;
- pledge its support to the fundraising campaign that aims to allow the Chhokar family to fund a public inquiry into their son’s murder;
- build strong and productive links with campaign groups that seek to challenge racism in society, especially among young people.”

### **Resolution No. 4 - Skills and Training in Scotland**

“That this Conference notes with concern the skills shortage in Scotland, as illustrated by Railtrack recently being forced to hire skilled staff from abroad.

“Conference believes that the current economic climate and, in particular, the increasing used of the private sector in public services can only exacerbate this situation.

“Conference further believes that, whilst the Scottish Executive and UK Government’s efforts to attract more young people into further and higher education are laudable, this should not be at the expense of skills and training in traditional industries and trades.

“Conference calls on the Government and Executive to invest more resources in training young people in these industries and trades and, furthermore, to recognise the important role that, through apprenticeship schemes, public services play in helping to prevent future skills shortages.

“Conference also recognises the important role that Trade Union Learning Representatives can play in providing advice and guidance on learning and securing employer support for learning and training. Conference calls for legal rights to support the work of Union Learning Representatives, including:

- \* rights to time off for Union Learning Representatives to carry out their activities;
- \* rights to time off for workers to consult Union Learning Representatives;
- \* a legal obligation on employers to consult Union Learning Representatives through the formation of workplace consultative forums on learning and training; and
- \* a mandatory training levy and time off for training provision.”

### **Resolution No.5 - Work Placements for Young People**

“That this Conference notes that the Scottish Executive is consulting on the Education for Work and Enterprise Programme to extend the opportunity for young people to access work experience prior to leaving full-time education.

“Whilst acknowledging the benefits of young people gaining work experience, Conference believes that such a programme should involve guarantees that employers will not exploit young people on work placements. Conference also believes that it should recognise the benefits of properly informing young people, when in education, of the role played by Trade Unions at work.

“Conference calls on the STUC to campaign to ensure that programmes of this nature involve protection for young people on work placements and the involvement of Trade Unionists in industry awareness-raising sessions as an integral and important part of the education syllabus.”

### **Resolution No.6 - Student Finance**

“That this Conference notes that many students are forced to combine work and study simply to survive their university days.

“Growing financial pressures mean over a million students have jobs – many of which are low paid, unsociable and with poor terms and conditions of employment.

“In 1998 the Government abolished Student Grants and introduced Tuition Fees.

“A high number of students were pushed out of higher education because they could not afford to stay on. The average debt of all students at the end of their studies is £15,000.

“Nursing & Midwifery students also fall under these financial pressures. Student nurses are expected to survive on bursaries which give them £2.70 an hour which is less than the minimum wage.

“Therefore, this Conference calls upon the STUC Youth Committee to:-

- 1) organise to lobby MSPs and MPs for the abolition of all tuition fees and the re-introduction of student grants for all;
- 2) campaign for the Nursing & Midwifery Student Bursary to be abolished, to be replaced with a wage that enables nursing students to study free from hardship;
- 3) launch a campaign that will let working students know that Trade Unions are here to support them and to make them aware of the benefits of joining a Trade Union;
- 4) organise and co-ordinate a Trade Union Awareness Stand/Stall at all Scottish Universities Freshers' events.”

### **Resolution No.7 - Employment Rights for Young People**

“That this Conference notes that the weak enforcement of the rights of young people at work means that they are particularly vulnerable to health and safety risks and exploitation and face the added pressure of balancing work, study, family and social life.

“Conference also notes that some aspects of employment legislation, such as the exclusion from redundancy pay for workers under 18 years of age and reduced redundancy payments for workers under 21 years of age, are directly discriminatory.

“Conference calls for the extension of employment rights to all workers from day one of employment and the enforcement of legislation specifically addressed to young workers, such as the legislation pertaining to work performed by young people of school age.”

## **Composite A - National Minimum Wage - (covering motion nos. 8, 9, 10 and amendments)**

“That this Conference welcomes the introduction of the national minimum wage. Above all other initiatives before or since, it has brought thousands out of poverty in the UK. It has helped in closing the gender pay gap and has improved the pay of many young people. However, Conference believes that the national minimum wage is too low and it is discriminatory towards young people.

“18 – 21 year olds are not entitled to the full minimum wage and 16 – 17 year olds have no minimum wage at all. From the age of 18, young people are allowed to vote and are solely responsible for all their actions, yet they are not entitled to the same rights in the workplace as their older colleagues. This is of great concern. 16 – 17 year olds are the most exploited group of people in our society and giving them a minimum wage would help in reducing the pressure on them to skip school to earn money, and it would stop their exploitation.

“Conference is concerned that the reduced rate for 18 – 21 year olds and the lack of any protection for people aged 17 or under, may be seen by the Government as measures that will assist in making the New Deal more successful.

“Conference applauds the continued work of the STUC and its affiliates to rid our workforce of these discriminatory anomalies in the national minimum wage.

“Conference also supports the efforts of Trade Unions to ensure that wage rates achieved through collective bargaining are in excess of the statutory minimum wage and applauds those unions campaigning at the workplace for minimum wage rates of at least £6.00 an hour.

“Conference, therefore, calls for a statutory minimum wage of at least half male median earnings to be applicable to all workers, irrespective of their age and calls on the STUC Youth Committee to:

- Continue and expand on the joint work with the Low Pay Commission;
- Lobby both the MSPs in the Scottish Parliament and MPs at Westminster;
- Work with employer groups/ representatives to set a minimum living wage applicable to all.”

## **Resolution No.11 - Discrimination Against Personal Appearance**

“That this Conference recognises that many young Trade Union activists experience discrimination due to appearance. Many young people today choose to have body piercing, tattoos and different hair.

“Conference agrees to promote awareness and help build acceptance and tolerance for young workers who choose to express their appearance in different ways.

“Conference calls upon the STUC Youth Committee to produce guidelines with regard to tackling this issue”.

### **Resolution No.12 - Shift Changes**

"That this Youth Conference is concerned that a number of employers give little or no notice of shift changes. Whilst we are aware that if there is no minimum timescale in individual contracts, then there is no legal requirement on the part of the employer. We believe this to be bad practice. This causes problems for our members with caring responsibilities and is another example of employers having insufficient regard for staff.

"Conference agrees that employers should provide for a minimum notice period for shift changes, to allow our members to plan their lives outside of the workplace and instructs the STUC Youth Committee to press for action from Trade Unions, employers and government to address the issue."

### **Resolution No.13 - Pensions**

"That this Conference recognises the improvements made to the standard of living of Britain's poorest pensioners since 1997.

"The provision of free TV Licences for the over 75s, free eye tests, the partial concessionary travel scheme and the entrenchment of the Winter Fuel Allowance are welcomed by this Conference.

"However, there is much reforming still to do and this Youth Conference recognises that pensioners remain amongst the poorest people in our society. We therefore call for:

1. the restoration of the link between basic state pensions rises and average earnings rises;
2. an end to the drift towards means testing;
3. a substantial increase in the age allowance from 25 pence per week to £22 per week with a taper phasing in this increase from the age of 70.
4. an up-rating of the Christmas Bonus from £10 per year to £100 per year;
5. the non means testing and early introduction of Invalid Care Allowance to carers who are aged 65 and over; and
6. a continued commitment from all the parties in the run up to next year's Scottish Parliament Elections to free, long term care for the elderly.

"Conference is also concerned that the future of pension provision for today's young workers is threatened by the continued closure of final salary pension schemes by many employers. Conference calls on the STUC Youth Committee to raise awareness of these issues amongst all young workers.

"Conference believes the General Council and the Youth Committee should link up more with the pensioners movement to make these reforms a priority in our campaigning work over the next 12 months."

**Composite B - General Agreement on Trades Services**  
**(covering motion nos. 14, 15 and amendment)**

“That this Conference notes that, despite assurances from Government, there may be serious threats to public services from General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

“Fears are now apparent that GATS may give an easy route to the privatisation of public services and that the operation of PFI, PPP, and Best Value can assist this agenda.

“GATS covers the majority of services, in almost all of the world and in all manners of supplying services. Controversy has arisen where no clear guidance is given of supply or service supplied, as certain ‘Government Authority’ services may be exempt.

“As more and more public services are privatised, essential public services can now be readily classed as ‘Non-Government Authority’ and GATS may be a route to tender out schools and hospitals.

“Little debate has taken place on GATS and in January 2001 an Early Day Motion signed by 262 MPs, called on a proper and thorough independent assessment of the effects of GATS to the UK and internationally.

“ Conference notes that following its original agreement in 1994, the EC described GATS as being ‘first and foremost an instrument for the benefit of business’. It further notes the criticisms of GATS as expressed by groups including various Parliamentarians, the World Development Movement, Developing Nations and a variety of Trade Unions. GATS needs to be challenged globally. For developing countries and the UK, Conference demands proper consultation with Governments to ensure the protection of public and other services for our future generations.

“ Specifically, Conference expresses concern over the:

- Lack of consultation and debate on GATS in the UK;
- Lack of definition of services in the GATS agreement;
- Ability to further undermine public services as a result of this, both in the developed and developing world.
- Irreversibility of GATS. Once Governments have opened up particular service sectors to WTO rules, citizens will no longer have the democratic right to decide whether or not services should be regulated
- GATS liberalisation agenda, which threatens basic service delivery, through a system which is governed by people’s ability to pay rather than their needs.

“Conference calls on the STUC Youth Committee to:

- Work with the TUC and International Trade Unions on joint campaigning
- Back the various investigations into GATS, for example conducted by Trade Unions, the World Development Movement, and various charities
- Lobby Scottish Parliamentarians, MPs and MSPs to ensure the Government will not sign up to a treaty that requires the liberalisation of public services
- Campaign to stop ‘Corporate Globalisation’, and replace it with core labour standards based on International Labour Organisations Conventions
- Campaign to highlight the plight of developing countries, and the further damage that GATS will cause them.”

## **Emergency Resolution No.1 - National ID Cards**

“That this Conference notes:

- \* the UK Government’s current consultation on the introduction of ‘entitlement cards’ as a form of National ID card.
- \* the Home Secretary’s enthusiasm for such a scheme following the tragic events of 11 September and as a means of preventing the rising number of ID thefts
- \* the lack of written constitution of the UK that sets out the boundaries of Government involvement in private citizens’ lives
- \* that the UK Government has already used the ‘National Security/Public Safety’ get out clause of the current human rights legislation.

“Conference believes:

- \* that every member of UK society should be entitled to access to public services without being forced to display a National ID Card
- \* that any National ID card scheme, if introduced, should not be compulsory and the cost of such a scheme should not be at the expense of the delivery of public services, such as health or education
- \* that there should be no extension of either police or Government powers to enforce such a scheme
- \* that the UK Government should be subject to the same provisions of the Human Rights Act as any other public body.

“Conference resolves:

- \* to mandate the Youth Committee to write a formal report to the UK consultation exercise on this issue outlining our concerns
- \* to campaign against a compulsory system of enforced national identification.”

## **Emergency Resolution No.2 - Dilemmas Facing Many Workers with Caring Responsibilities**

“That this Conference, following the launch of the recent survey by Carers Scotland, expresses its concern at the serious dilemmas facing many young workers in Scotland with caring responsibilities for family members, particularly ageing parents.

“Conference believes that, at a time when people are living longer, many young and older workers are having to devote an increasing amount of time caring for elderly and ill family members, without any recognition of this role and contribution either by government or employers.

“Conference, therefore, instructs the STUC Youth Committee to:

- i) raise this issue with the STUC General Council to initiate a campaign across all unions with employers, to seek agreements which recognise and protect the role of all workers with caring responsibilities;
- ii) ask the STUC General Council to raise this important issue with Scottish Ministers, to examine measures aimed at protecting and valuing workers with caring responsibilities; and
- iii) work with Carers Scotland in pursuing this agenda.”