



STUC Energy Conference 2023

The STUC's Energy Conference in March 2023 brought together trade unionists, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders to consider how to tackle bills, climate and jobs crises by ensuring a just transition and building trade union power.

The first panel titled, 'Setting the context – the crises we face' brought together expert speakers focused on jobs and conditions, energy bills and the climate crisis. Its objective was to create a shared level of knowledge about the concurrent challenges facing our energy system.

Participants then broke into breakout groups and focused on reflections from the panel, identifying current problems they saw in their own workplaces and what would happen if nothing changed.

Condensed notes from the first panel's breakout groups are below.

Breakout 1: The problems

Reflections on panel:

- Scottish Government:
 - Say they are co-designing with communities but this isn't happening as well as it should. Not putting workers and communities first.
 - Disparity between lip service and what is happening on the ground: how do we hold them to account?
 - Does not have a consistent definition of Just Transition. There is a lot of conflation between Net Zero and Just Transition. Ultimately, you can achieve Net Zero without a Just Transition.

- Consultation announcements leave limited time and resources to contribute well
- Bringing organising into communities
 - Agitation of trade union members and communities
 - Focus on communities at risk of increased costs and decreased jobs
 - Political education
 - Making climate narratives work with trade union messaging
- Diverting blame is a big problem
 - Only way we aren't pointing fingers is when we are marching together
- A big issue of market reliance
 - Need to bring an understanding of how free market ideology has failed us to communities
- Take away questions:
 - What conversations can we have that make it difficult for Scottish Government to ignore us?
 - What are we doing to build leverage?
 - How do we make Just Transition an everyday phrase?
 - We need substantial education on what a Just Transition is and why ordinary people should care about it – how do we bring this into communities most at risk?

What are the problems?

- 1. Lack of public education and appropriate narratives**
 - Need to distil clear messages
 - Educating reps and grassroots: mainstreaming ideas around just transition involves accessible materials
 - Many members of the public view it as a bills issue rather than climate change or energy crisis
 - Media:
 - Stigma around environmental issues
 - Need to combine environmental and economic issues
 - Focus diverting to other issues ex. Ukraine and Covid
- 2. Market ideology:**
 - Main barrier to social justice and decarbonisation
 - Refusal to imagine a future not dependent on the market
 - Energy price guarantee an example of this
 - No vision of public ownership
 - More robust and widespread criticism of the economic system
 - Move away from the boom and bust system of oil and gas
- 3. Lack of collectivism**
 - Industrial change has historically led to a decrease in unionisation, we need to stop this from happening again
 - New roles created as graduate posts that aren't unionised
 - Division between well paid and under paid

- Environmental issues that aren't obvious at first ex. Midwives
 - Capacity to focus on broader issues in the face of immediate needs
 - How do enviro groups and TUs work together in a strategic way rather than an exclusively reactive way
 - Capacity to work together / understanding power
 - Embedding a power analysis into our work
 - Embedding lived experience into our work
- 4. Lack of planning and funding for training**
- De-skilling has been a problem for years
 - Short term courses without bigger plan or comprehensive training
 - Impact training
 - Skills gap! We need a skills plan to deliver the transition
- 5. Lack of investment and infrastructure**
- Lack of publicly owned energy in Scotland, whether that is at the national, regional or local authority level
 - Lack of power over the grid infrastructure
 - Lack of infrastructure or the consistent investment to build infrastructure needed
 - Lack of democratic accountability, especially with initiatives like freeports
- 6. Unclear what success looks like**
- Understanding the tendering process – what do we want out of it?
 - More understanding of how job markets will change
 - Public ownership is key to delivering successes
 - Workers understanding they have the power – we need to get the right people in the room

What happens if nothing changes?

- Normalisation of the current crises we are facing: increasing bills, fuel poverty, climate breakdown, lack of democratic accountability
- Breaking climate limits, climate catastrophes worldwide, food shortages and power outages
- The rich getting richer while the poor get poorer
- Companies in control, causing industrial collapse and the demise of unions in those industries
- Violently enforced borders and disabled and marginalised groups left without support