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Scotland United Against Racism



14th STUC Black Workers' Conference
Saturday 2 / Sunday 3 October 2010
Menzies Hotel, Glasgow

DECISIONS OF CONFERENCE

There is a Better Way

RESOLUTIONS CARRIED

1. Ethnic Minorities and Recession

“That this Conference is increasingly alarmed to see in a report published by the Commission and the Government Equalities Office that people from ethnic minorities have seen a marked increase in their rate of unemployment since the start of the recession.

“Unemployment level rise to 20.1 per cent in members of Caribbean and African communities, compared to 7.6 per cent rise in white unemployment, is a stark reality of unequal impact of the recession.

“Further, reports by EHRC and DWP reveal that the labour market is suffering from rising unemployment, redundancies and fewer available jobs. They highlight that certain groups from across society are being hit the hardest by the recession. ILO unemployment stands at 11.6 per cent for ethnic minorities which is much higher than the 7.3 per cent for the overall population. Inactivity rate for ethnic minorities is at 31.1 per cent, much higher than the overall population rate of 20.7 per cent.

“The labour market is less segregated now and women who make up a greater proportion of our workforce are no longer sheltered from the impact of recession either.

“Conference is concerned that, with the severe public service cuts on the horizon, the right wing groups will exploit people’s anxiety over the limited public funds and create tension and division among minority groups. Conference, therefore, calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee together with the STUC General Council to:

- campaign heavily against any public service cuts which intentionally or unintentionally reinforce inequality, disadvantage and poverty;
- put pressure on EHRC to use its enforcement powers to hold public services to account on outcomes and not consultations; and

- encourage positive integration amongst communities fully funded by the Government to defuse tension and division in society.”

2. BMEs and Mental Health

“That this Conference welcomes the lead taken by the STUC in addressing mental health issues across Scotland. However, Conference is particularly concerned with the increasing discrimination, both inside and outside of mental health services, of people from BME backgrounds. The impact of people’s circumstances on the onset, compounding or worsening of their mental health problems, are widely acknowledged. Unless this is addressed, the disparities for people from BME groups in mental health services can only worsen in the current economic climate.

“Conference notes the clear link between stress and mental health problems. Assumptions persist that workers in the health sector are equipped to provide services that strive to reduce inequalities, despite the lack of evidence to support this. In truth, many of the cultural issues surrounding mental health are overlooked or ignored in a Western dominated ideology.

“Conference agrees that there is a clear need for the care given to take on board the diverse cultural backgrounds and, in particular, the specific experiences of BME workers. Few services can demonstrate that they are tackling any of these disparities in a way that is proportionate to the scale of disadvantage.

“Conference, therefore, calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee, together with the STUC General Council, to work with affiliates and other agencies with the aims of ensuring that:

- BME mental health problems are audited;
- impact assessments are appropriately and adequately carried out;
- BME members receive the required treatment, care and support from all quarters of the health sector, as well as from the STUC affiliate network;
- the many BME professionals who work in the health sector act as advocates; and
- the wider Scottish public receives awareness and education.”

3. Public Sector Cuts

“That this Conference believes the Emergency Budget of the Tory Liberal Coalition represents the most regressive attack in living memory on public sector, low paid, Black and ethnic minority workers and vulnerable groups.

“Public sector workers face a two year pay freeze, 600,000 jobs cut and the decimation of welfare, equality and human rights services, whilst £120 billion remains uncollected in taxation every year – mainly through tax avoidance and tax evasion.

“Conference believes there is an alternative and a better way to tackle the economics of the banking crisis and failure to collect taxes through rebuilding collective prosperity and investing in public services to create jobs, deliver services and provide tax justice.

“Conference calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to:

- work with the General Council to unite affiliates, Black and ethnic minority groups, wider community, faith and civic organisations around a mass anti cuts campaign;
- ensure that the unequal impact of cuts on Black and minority ethnic workers and communities is a key message in the campaign; and
- highlight the legal duty of public sector employers to implement race equality impact assessments in relation to any cost cutting measures.”

4. Redundancies/Job Cuts Impacts on BME Members

“That this Conference notes the current UK Government’s preoccupation with cuts in public spending and the impact on the Scottish Government budget. These cuts will impact negatively/disproportionately on BME workers.

“The impact of public finance cuts will also affect Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

“HEI’s solutions are to reduce staff costs, thus raising the possibility of redundancy with universities recently introducing redundancy schemes and others announcing job losses.

“There are increasing fears by BME staff that they will be more vulnerable to redundancy, as they are under-represented in decision making and Senior Management Forums.

“Conference calls on the STUC:

- to organise affiliates to fight possible redundancies;
- to monitor that HEI consult recognised Unions in any policies/programmes resulting in redundancy;
- to request an Audit of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that any redundancy policies set out by employers meet the legal obligations of Equality Legislation.”

5. Protect Black Working Members’ Jobs

“That this Conference notes that the present economic crisis is a threat to the living standards, jobs and pensions of all working Black members. It is a major UK wide concern for Black members, along with all members, that they may be targeted for redundancy in the current economic downturn. As a result, members are facing reduced working hours or losing their jobs which can cause anxiety and long term health impacts. Debt and other financial issues may put quality of life and homes at risk.

“In the United Kingdom, there are one million young people under the age of 25 out of work and unemployment among Black people is increasing across the private and public sectors.

“Today, 11% of the UK population and 8% of the UK workforce describe themselves as coming from a Black or Ethnic Minority background. Black workers are projected to account for over half of the growth in Britain's working age population over the next decade.

“Conference calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to work with relevant groups and affiliated trade unions to build resistance against economic downturn, to protect working Black members jobs by:

- ensuring that Equality Impact Assessments are carried out at every stage of reorganisations/restructures;

- tackling any form of discrimination vigorously, which may stem from victimisation, bullying and harassment of Black members or Black activists when they are part of such areas of reorganisations and restructures;
- discussing innovative ways to provide young Black people within our communities with knowledge of what their trade union can do for them;
- finding ways to monitor and analyse the trends of Black members undergoing reorganisations and restructures at work, and seek ways forward; and
- sharing information across all parts of Scottish Black Workers.”

6. Diversity in the Scottish Parliament

“That this Conference is disappointed to note that of the 129 MSPs which form the Scottish Parliament, not one comes from the BME community.

“In the 11 years since devolution, there has been a significant increase in the BME population of Scotland, with it now constituting 2% of Scottish society, however, this diversity has not been mirrored within the Scottish Parliament.

“Conference believes that considerable work needs to be done by the political parties and trade unions in Scotland to remedy this.

“Conference, therefore, calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to:

- lobby all major Scottish political parties to improve diversity within their parties; and
- work with Operation Black Vote on a campaign to increase the involvement of BME communities in the Scottish political field.”

7. Cuts in Additional Support for Learning and EAL Provision

“That this Conference recognises that cuts in public sector expenditure are damaging to frontline provision across all sectors.

“It notes that English as an Additional Language (EAL) comes under the provision of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. Any cuts in this provision will have an adverse impact on the education of children from asylum seeking/refugee and migrant families. It will also make it difficult for local authorities to comply with their duties under this Act and the new equality duty on public bodies.

“Conference urges the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to:

- highlight its concerns about cuts in this provision with the Education and Equality Committees of the Scottish Parliament;
- liaise with education affiliates about the true nature of cuts in this provision; and
- publicise the impact of these cuts on children and young people.”

8. Black Representation (amended)

“That this Conference recognises that, despite this issue effectively becoming an annual debate at STUC Black Workers’ Conferences and, despite the strong words of the STUC in developing policy that is supportive of improving the level of Black representation in our UK trade unions, the reality is that we continue to see a glaring failure by the unions to encourage Black trade union activists to come forward.

“Conference instructs the incoming STUC Black Workers’ Committee to liaise with the STUC General Council with a view to putting in place a strategy that will meaningfully affect things in a positive way for Black trade unionists. The strategy should include recommendations relating to positive references to mechanisms such as reserved seats, mentoring programmes and developing a multi-agency approach with groups, such as NUS Black students group, and Operation Black Vote. This list is not exhaustive.

- a) Liaise with the General Council to undertake an audit of Black members similar to that of the TUC Equality Audit;
- b) Identify the reasons for such low representation; and
- c) Report the findings to the 2011 Conference with a view to developing a strategy to addressing the problem.”

9. Step Up the Anti-BNP / SDL Work

“That this Conference welcomes the May election results, which show a UK wide reduction in the British National Party’s vote bank.

“The results manage evidence that the STUC and its affiliate trade union-led strategic campaigning can stop the BNP and the far-right in their tracks, to keep Scotland a BNP free zone – that our message can defeat BNP’s message of hate in any constituency – and that these campaigns can successfully unite communities, build local coalitions and change the debate.

“The trade union work carried out to counter the BNP in the May elections was built on practice in recent years: a central message and publicity with regional and local targeted campaigns, working in conjunction with other unions, community organisations and organisations such as Searchlight/Hope not Hate and Unite against Fascism.

“Conference deplors the sight of Scottish Defence League in Scotland, which targets a specific section of our communities in Scotland with their message of hate. Conference believes that there is no room for BNP or SDL in Scotland.

“However, the BNP still received half a million votes and Conference recognises the need to step up the efforts to expose the reality of BNP and SDL in the times of continuing recession, which creates a potential breeding ground for further fascist/racist activities of BNP and SDL.

“Conference calls upon the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to work and urge upon the STUC, that they do not relax after their fruitful campaign against the fascist BNP and the far-right, but to keep working with its trade union affiliates, community groups, anti-fascist / racist external organisations, in a bid to step-up the anti-BNP / SDL work in the difficult times ahead.”

10. Opposing the Far Right

“That this Conference notes the successful mobilisation of thousands of trade unionists, faith communities and anti-racist campaigners under the banner of Scotland United to stop the small far-right, neo-fascist Scottish Defence League (SDL) from staging public events in Scotland.

“The STUC and affiliates are to be commended for their participation in the successful anti-racist counter protests.

“Ideologically, unions are committed to celebrating diversity, unity in action and social justice and in opposing the far-right and promoting an alternative vision of society.

“Many unions in Scotland have Black Members’ Networks. It is important that these Networks are at the forefront of opposition to the SDL, the BNP or other neo-fascist organisations.

“Conference calls upon the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to:

- map Black Members’ Networks within all affiliates;
- directly contact Black Members’ Networks within each union in addition to formal union structures whenever significant anti-racist and anti-fascist activities are being organised; and
- seek contributions from affiliates and their Black Members’ Networks to a ‘Rights not Racism’ Charter with a series of Social Justice demands and aspirations to appeal to people from many backgrounds and provide an alternative to simplistic racist rhetoric and set out a vision for a fairer Scotland.”

11. Anti Racism

“That this Conference is concerned that some retail outlets in Scotland believed it was not a problem selling world cup ‘t’ shirts or other paraphernalia which were overtly racist. It is disappointed about the number of people who responded to the racist anti-English sentiment expressed as ‘Anyone but England’ phrase as being ‘humorous’ and/or harmless.

“Conference reaffirms its belief that racism is unacceptable and never harmless in whatever form it takes.

“Conference urges the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to:

- reaffirm that its anti-racist message include all forms of racism;
- liaise with the Scottish Football Association about anti-racism;

- consult with the Scottish Football Supporters' Association, the 'Tartan Army' about its anti-racist message; and
- consider mounting an anti-racist campaign targeted at the 2012 European Football championships."

12. Show Racism the Red Card

"That this Conference congratulates the hard work 'Show Racism the Red Card' has done in Scotland and the progress it has made since its establishment in 1996.

"However, recent newspaper articles suggest that the funding was under threat and we are concerned that, with the new coalition government making sweeping cuts, this will affect many funded campaigns like 'Show Racism the Red Card'.

"Conference, therefore, urges the STUC Black Workers' Committee to continue their support for Show Racism the Red Card and actively campaign should the funding come under threat."

13. Migrant Worker Exploitation

"That this Conference believes that migration is healthy and is good for the country. Research has shown that immigration has minimal impact on both jobs and wages. In many cases, immigrants take up jobs that would otherwise remain unfilled. Many companies especially in agricultural sector would not be able to survive without low skilled migrants, while highly skilled migrants are wealth creators and foreign students contribute to universities. Factors such as education, changing demographics and technologies and, most importantly, market conditions have a much greater impact.

"However as the population of migrant workers in Scotland increases, so do incidences of exploitations, violation of employment rights and social justice. Unscrupulous landlords constructing and letting out sheds with no running water, lavatory or cooking facilities are what is on offer in places where there is a shortage of social and available housing. Multiple occupancies, overcrowding and, in extreme cases, sleeping in shifts and all over the place, including kitchen worktops, are reported by Council inspectors.

“Overcharging and failure to provide tenancy agreements or rent books, abuse of tenancy rights, with immediate eviction of workers upon termination of employment, are common practice.

“Some migrants are encouraged to take up so-called ‘self employed’ status, so that the rogue employer does not have to pay tax and national insurance. Failure to supply workers with written statements of employment, paying national minimum wage, paid holidays, sick pay notice rights, illegal deductions, etc, are some of the despicable practices that migrant workers have to face on a regular basis.

“Therefore, Conference calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to campaign for:

- greater enforcement of labour market standards/ review of regulation;
- greater recruitment and organisation of migrant workers; and
- boosting collectivism by encouraging parity of employment and social conditions between indigenous and migrant workers.”

14. Points Based Immigration System for Overseas Students and Workers

“That this Conference denounces the points based immigration system for non European Economic Area (EEA) nationals. Migrants are assessed on their skills and qualifications and the ability to meet maintenance costs for themselves or their families. Overseas students are only allowed to undertake paid employment for 10 hours per week. This clearly discriminates against those from developing countries and poorer families.

“The new admissions system requires universities to report information about students to the Border and Immigration Agency. This information may be used to take enforcement action against the students.

“Migrants are required to carry biometric cards even though this scheme has now been abandoned by the new Government.

“The information required from ‘licensed sponsors’ will include reporting precise information about overseas students’ enrolment, monitoring records of student contacts, course progression, attendance and reporting suspicious behaviour.

“For many academics this is tantamount to snooping on students and undermines the trust between staff and students.

“Universities are reporting that this has undermined overseas student recruitment. This may result in an imbalance in the ethnic diversity of universities.

“Conference calls for:

- the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to lead on a campaign with Black members, affiliates, student organisations and the STUC to reverse the points based immigration system, as its implementation gives sustenance to the racists among us;
- affiliates to campaign to end the use of ID cards for a targeted section of the population;
- the STUC to campaign for the restoration of the working hours limit to 20 hours per week; and
- affiliates to support staff who may be disciplined after refusing to perform duties previously undertaken by police, immigration officers and border agency staff.”

15. Glasgow Suicides & Asylum Seekers

“That this Conference was shocked with the news surrounding the Serykh family, which saw three members of this family all leap to their deaths from the Petershill Drive flats earlier this year.

“Whilst it is true that an enforced removal was not issued to the Serykh family, they were clearly suffering difficulty in getting their leave to stay in Scotland.

“The over-riding negativity and ignominy that asylum seekers and refugees face on a daily basis needs to be challenged head-on and the trade union movement in Scotland needs to continue to play a leading role in doing this.

“Conference asks the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to draw up a comprehensive campaign to help to raise awareness of :

- the general background of persecution that follows many asylum seekers; and
- the deeply worrying issue of ‘enforced removals of refugee families’.”

16. Violence Against Women

“That this Conference congratulates the STUC for their work on race equality campaigns and notes that Black women workers around the world are not only paid less, but are subject to gender based violence.

“Violence against women is an international issue and it is instigated by Governments or by family members. It takes many forms including rape, femicide, forced marriage and murder in the name of so called ‘family honour’.

“Lack of advocacy for women's rights and inadequate shelters are part of the problem, as well as nationalism, fundamentalism and militarism. This is supported by our Government with arms sales and trade agreements which continue to lend legitimacy to grave violations of women’s rights.

“Conference is concerned at the level of violence faced by women of all races, nationalities, religions, cultures or class, who are subjected to domestic abuse within all communities in the UK.

“Conference, therefore, calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to:

- vigorously denounce violence against women and support the call from our sisters in Scotland, the UK and internationally to end gender based violence;
- highlight the problem of domestic violence in all communities;
- work and campaign with organisations in the Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities supporting women who suffer from domestic and state violence; and
- campaign for prevention and investigation of crimes committed against women, as well as providing support services for women in danger, particularly specialist services for Black women and children fleeing domestic violence.

“Conference calls for the trade union movement to use their voice wherever they can to raise awareness and end the silence and impunity surrounding the killing of women.”

17. Single Equalities Act

“That this Conference notes that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, like many Public Authorities in Scotland, have been less than dynamic in the implementation of the Single Equalities Act. “This is evident in the lack of significant progress in recruiting, retaining and promoting of BME throughout all departments in the 8 Scottish Services.

“Conference demands that the STUC use its influence to put pressure upon the Scottish Government and COSLA to ensure that all Public Authorities, but in particular the Fire and Rescue Services, are sufficiently directed and funded to enable them to adopt a proactive approach to comply with the new equalities duties laid upon them.”

18. Support for the People of Haiti

“That this Conference notes that, as many of us work to figure out appropriate strategies to support the people of Haiti, it is important to note that the most vulnerable people can experience a slower response to the consequences of the original disaster.

“For example, women experience the most negative consequences of catastrophic events, particularly higher rates of injury and death, displacement, unemployment, increased incidents of HIV, domestic violence, increased poverty and the disproportionate responsibility for care.

“This is especially true for women marginalised by race, sexual orientation, class, health issues, ability, age and legal status. Additionally, in times of crises and environmental emergencies, poor and marginalised women, who are least responsible for the horrific conditions in which they live, are often neglected.

“Conference, therefore, calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to work with the STUC General Council:

- to seek and make links with at least one specific women’s organisation/network in Haiti;
- to develop and sustain a productive relationship with the Haitian trade unions through TUC International links;
- to commit to continue to secure resources for the aid effort; and

- look to organise a visit to Haiti to assist with reconstruction efforts.

“A report on progress to be given at STUC Conference in 2011.”

Emergency Resolution 1. Pakistan

“That this Conference is concerned that, despite positive responses to the appeal for financial support for the victims of floods in Pakistan, over 3.5 million children in Pakistan face life threatening diseases, such as watery diarrhoea and dysentery.

“Over 1500 people have died and over 6 million need food aid, but the international response to the appeal has been slow and on 17 September, a further appeal to raise £78 million was launched to provide tents and urgent supplies to the people of Pakistan.

“Individuals in the UK have so far contributed over 60 million to the Disaster Emergency Committee Appeal, but this still falls far short of funds raised for other disasters.

“Conference welcomes the commitment of the UK Government to provide over £130 million in aid, not only to provide relief, but to help start rebuilding the country’s infrastructure and the homes of the people who have been affected by the floods.

“Conference urges the Government to put pressure on other countries to commit to supporting the rebuilding of Pakistan and encourages affiliates to promote the DEC appeal within their own membership.”

Emergency Resolution 2. Discrimination against the Roma People

“That this Congress deplores the policy of forced deportation of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma (Gypsies) peoples by France (and also by Sweden and Denmark).

“There are an estimated 10 million Roma in Europe today. 86% of them live below the poverty line. They are often blamed for being criminals and burdens on society. Yet, it is often the prejudice of wider society that prevents them from accessing jobs and so becoming productive and worthy members of that same society

“When Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, the people gained the right to travel and to live in other European countries. Many Roma groups took advantage of that. The French insist the Roma apply for a work permit or they must leave after three months.

“Yet prejudice and discrimination on the part of the government authorities means getting this work permit is often an insurmountable task.

“By requiring only nationals of the two most recent accession States to the EU, Romania and Bulgaria, to register for work permits, France and other EU States are being discriminatory.

“Conference requests that the UK Government send a strong message of disapproval to all countries that discriminate against Roma people.”

Emergency Resolution 3. BARAC

“Black Activists Rising Against Cuts (BARAC) Campaign is a broad coalition of trade unions, community and voluntary sector organisations plus individuals who have come together, in order to campaign against public sector cuts and to highlight, challenge and campaign against the disproportionate adverse impact on Black workers and communities of the cuts.

“BARAC has 4 main objectives as follows:

- to campaign and defend jobs and services;
- to highlight the disproportionate and adverse impact of the huge reduction of public spending on deprived communities, in particular Black communities;
- to provide a campaigning platform to fight against cuts in jobs and services, including on any adverse, disproportionate impact on Black workers and communities; and
- to work in partnership and build alliances with others facing and fighting similar attacks.

“The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) will be announced on 20th October and it will uncover the huge extent to which cuts will impact on Black workers and communities. At its meeting in September, BARAC agreed to mount a legal challenge immediately after the CSR announcement to challenge this negative disproportional impact.

“Conference agrees to support the aims and objectives of the BARAC campaign, identifying cuts impacting on Black people, participate in campaigns against the cuts and make links with other like-minded organisations, in order to build a strong collective force against these attacks on Black communities and workers.

“We agree to:

1. add our name to the BARAC campaign;
2. work with BARAC against the cuts;
3. provide information about planned cuts impacting negatively / disproportionately on race or multiple grounds;
4. publicise the campaign; and
5. work collectively to highlight the alternatives and to challenge the disproportionate and adverse impacts of the cuts.”