

SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS

DECISIONS

4TH ANNUAL BLACK WORKERS CONFERENCE

**SATURDAY 30 SEPTEMBER /
SUNDAY 1 OCTOBER 2000**

Resolution No.1 - Challenging Racism in the Media

“That this Conference is concerned at the levels of racism displayed across broad sections of the press and broadcasting media in Scotland. This was recently demonstrated by the style of coverage in a number of tabloid newspapers around the issue of refugees and asylum seekers coming to Glasgow. Other examples include the way that religious values and cultural practices, such as arranged marriages within the Muslim faith, are portrayed in a negative manner with little effort to differentiate between arranged and forced marriages, or the way that young Black men are frequently portrayed as criminals and thugs to be feared by others in the community.

“Conference believes that this sort of racial stereotyping does little to build bridges of greater understanding and co-operation between the different ethnic groups that are all part of our communities in Scotland. Indeed, such coverage in the popular media can lead to false fears and misconceptions becoming more widespread across the white majority of our population, increasing levels of racism in our country towards minority ethnic groups. This creates a breeding ground for racist attitudes to thrive unchallenged and undermines all attempts to base our society around welcoming diversity and multi-culturalism.

“Conference, therefore, calls upon the STUC Black Workers Committee to work with the STUC General Council and affiliates to:

- highlight and challenge any reports by the media in Scotland, which either directly or indirectly incorporate or encourage racist attitudes;
- devise a campaigning and media strategy, which breaks through the myths of racial stereotyping and promotes the positive aspects of a multi-cultural society;
- embark on a campaign to raise awareness among Scotland’s people about the racism experienced by Black people in Scotland and the damage this causes.”

**Composite A (Covering Motion Nos.2 and 12)
“Scotland’s Criminal Justice System”**

“That this Conference deplores and condemns the vicious, unprovoked and racially motivated attack on a Black woman trade unionist in Edinburgh earlier this year.

“Conference is further appalled that although the alleged perpetrator was charged and prosecuted for the crime, he was in the end acquitted due to a lack of collaborative evidence, which requires at least two positive identifications for a conviction to take place. Unfortunately, only one other witness to the attack had come forward, despite the incident taking place in a crowded street. Conference finds the lack of witnesses willing to come forward in this case deeply disturbing.

“Conference notes the increase in reporting to the police of racially motivated harassment and attacks and welcomes the steps taken so far by the authorities to raise the confidence of minority groups in the ability of the police and criminal justice system to protect them. However, Conference recognises that many other incidents go unreported and that much more needs to be done to support victims of racial harassment and crime. Unfortunately, the above case is yet another addition to a long list of cases, such as the death of Surjit Singh Chhokar, where justice has not been seen to be done in a racially motivated attack. Conference believes this does little to allay the fears of Black people in Scotland about the institutional racism existing within our criminal justice system.

“Conference is alarmed that, despite the length of time elapsed, the Chhokar family is still waiting for justice and believes that there is a need for a full public enquiry into this issue. If the statutory authorities will not consent to such an inquiry, Conference calls on the Trade Union Movement to examine how it itself can progress this matter.

“Conference notes the work carried out by the STUC Black Workers Committee over the past year to support the Chhokar Family in their campaign for justice and contribute towards the Scottish Executive's consultation on their Action Plan for Scotland in response to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. However, Conference now calls on the Black Workers Committee to take action towards ensuring that Scotland develops a criminal justice system which can offer real protection to the Black communities.

“Conference believes that such action should include calling for the Scottish Executive to take the following steps:

1. Increase support for both victims and witnesses to come forward and report racially motivated attacks;
2. Conduct a public inquiry into the Crown's actions at all stages in the Chhokar case.

3. Establish of an independent Police Complaints authority in Scotland with adequate representation from a range of minority groups.
4. Increase representation for Black communities on the steering group implementing its Action Plan for Scotland in response to the Lawrence Inquiry.
5. Investigate ways of adjusting prosecution requirements in racially motivated attacks, so that more have a chance of success, as has happened in other areas such as domestic violence and rape cases.”

Amended Resolution No.3 - Workplace Racism

“That this Conference recognises the work the STUC Black Workers’ Committee and General Council are doing to assist trade unions and co-ordinate events to help combat workplace racism.

“It is shocking that discrimination, harassment and racism still exists in workplaces today.

“Conference calls on the STUC to continue their work in combating workplace racism, and to work with affiliates, the Commission for Racial Equality, and other community groups, to raise awareness, train union representatives, and campaign to end racism in the workplace. Conference further calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Conference to construct an agenda for action based on best practice among affiliates in campaigning, awareness-raising and training.”

Resolution No.4 - Workplace Discrimination

“That this Conference continues to express its concern at the need for more effective action against discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation and race.

“The TUC report ‘Black and Excluded’ which shows an increase in unemployment in our ethnic minority communities highlights this problem. The unemployment rate for black workers is double that of white workers. In the fire service there are examples of the perpetrators of racial discrimination remaining in the service despite, after proper investigation, having been found guilty of discrimination.

“This erodes confidence in anti discrimination procedures in the workplace.

“Conference is also disappointed in the failure of the Government to suitably strengthen the provisions of the Race Relations Act. The Home Secretary has agreed that he will consider addressing the shortcomings which have been identified by the Commission for Racial Equality. Conference, therefore, calls upon the General Council of the STUC to support the necessary legislative changes required to tackle racism, including racism in the workplace, more effectively. This should include dismissal if racism is proven.”

Resolution No.5 - Extended Leave

“That this Conference recognises that members of ethnic minorities are more likely than others to require extended periods of absence from work when visiting relatives or attending to religious duties (e.g. hadj). Normally these events can be planned well in advance but even with advance planning employers may need to be flexible and meet requests to defer or shift periods of leave to accommodate visits abroad, particularly to parts of the world which are less accessible. Employers also need to be flexible to accommodate more extended periods of release from work to visit ailing relatives or attend funerals at short notice.

“We call upon the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to make representations to the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament for inclusion of this issue in policy in respect of institutions under the direct control of the Scottish Executive.”

Resolution No.6 - Double Disadvantage

“That this Conference is alarmed by the continuing double discrimination of racism and sexism faced by Black women in the workplace.

“The STUC Black Workers Committee is instructed to liaise with the Women’s Committee to prepare and publish a guide for negotiators which highlights the problems faced by Black women in the workplace and the practical steps that can be taken to overcome this discrimination.”

Amended Resolution No.7. Religious Discrimination

“That this Conference agrees that religious discrimination is one form of institutionalised discrimination as it often takes the form of discrimination against minority religions.

“This Conference, therefore supports the campaign for legislation to combat religious discrimination. Conference calls upon the STUC to liaise with the Commission for Racial Equality on how best to further the campaign.

“This Conference further calls on all employers to ensure that the requirements of different employees within a multi-faith workplace is equally recognised.”

Resolution No.8 - Recruitment of Black Youth

“That this Conference notes with concern the continuing difficulty of engaging Scotland’s youth in trade union activity. Trade union collectivity is seen by many as ineffective or irrelevant in present day work life. Of note is the low level of union participation by black youth, despite the real difficulties facing them both in attempting to obtain employment and, for those who are successful, in the workplace.

“Research shows that unemployment and poverty are not simply due to a lack of qualifications or skills. The Commission for Racial Equality has reported clear evidence of racial discrimination in employment recruitment and selection of 16-24 year olds in Scotland. Additionally, 74 per cent of black ethnic minority households in Scotland have incomes of less than £10,000 per year, as compared with 57 per cent of white households.

“Conference notes further that in order to effect change in the situation for young black workers, effective campaigning is necessary. Even considering the improvements contained within new legislation, much work is still required to combat the exclusion of black youth in Scotland’s workforce and to increase their numbers in trade union membership.

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

- Increase recruitment activity among black youth in Scotland;
- Campaign for the development of targeted programmes, using both print and electronic media;
- Seek actively the support of relevant organisations, such as youth groups, racial equality and community education groups in promoting trade union values;
- Promote youth activities and recruitment events in black communities throughout Scotland.”

Resolution No.9 - Organisation and Recruitment of Black/Ethnic Minority Workers

“That this Conference believes that the organisation and recruitment of black/ethnic minority workers needs sustained and committed support. Conference therefore urges Congress and its affiliates to demonstrate that commitment and develop programmes of organising and networking activities which will allow black/ethnic minority workers to identify with and engage more easily in union structures and campaigns. Wherever possible, working with the black communities, opportunities should be identified to inform black workers of their rights and the role that unions can play in achieving and improving on basic entitlements and the additional benefits that union membership and organisation brings. It is also important to ensure that black union members and activists are fully involved in developing and participating in such organising and recruitment campaigns.

Resolution No.10 - Stephen Lawrence Task Group

“That this Conference notes the initial success of the TUC Stephen Lawrence Task Group and the initiatives that have flowed from its work.

“Conference notes that whilst the overall success of the work of the Task Group will be judged in the longer term, the exercise of representatives from key unions meeting to discuss an action plan for anti racism within the trade union movement and with employers has proved a positive experience. On that basis Conference believes that the STUC would profit from a similar exercise.

“Conference therefore calls on the STUC Black Workers Committee to work with the General Council to convene its own Stephen Lawrence Task Group with representatives drawn from an agreed number of affiliates, the STUC Black Workers Committee, academics and others able to make a useful contribution. The aim of this Task Group would be to develop a clear action plan for the STUC and suggestions for unions as employers.”

Amended Resolution No.11 - Mainstreaming Race Equality

“That this Conference welcomes the STUC’s Seminars on ‘Mainstreaming Race Equality’ and the support of the CRE and the Black Workers’ Committee in this process.

“Conference calls on the Black Workers’ Committee and the General Council to develop this work in further depth, in close co-operation with the CRE, for example, by the following steps:

- (a) working with the CRE to set up a network of those Union officials, including the STUC General Secretary, who are signatories to the CRE Leadership Challenge, to support them in meeting their commitments under the Leadership Challenge;
- (b) developing a joint STUC/CRE programme of seminars to raise awareness of shop stewards and other lay representatives of race equality and other equal opportunities issues (possibly in conjunction with the EOC, the Disability Rights Commission and other partner organisations representing groups disadvantaged in the workplace);
- (c) developing an advice manual for use by affiliates to include practical suggestions and examples, emanating from best practice, in combatting workplace racism, supporting black/ethnic minority people in the workplace, e.g. helplines, how to use disaggregated statistics, specialist race equality advisers.”

Amended Reslution No.13 - Raising the Black Profile in Scottish Public Life

“That this Conference is concerned to note that, with a few notable exceptions, the visibility of black people in public life in Scotland fails to reflect the role that is played in communities and organisations across the country.

“Conference, therefore, calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to take whatever steps they can to publicise the work of black trade union activists in Scotland and to encourage black trade unionists to apply for public appointments.

“Conference also calls on the Scottish Parliament to work with the STUC to publish proposals on the practical steps that can legally be taken to increase the representation of the Black community in public appointments.”

Amended Resolution No.14 - Partnership

“That this Conference welcomes the publication by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Racial Equality Councils in Scotland booklet entitled “Racial Equality Matters: An agenda for the Scottish Parliament”.

“Whilst more detailed work is required, this Conference believes that this document provides the basis for a comprehensive agenda for change in Scotland.

“Conference agrees that the best way of achieving sustainable change in Scotland on race equality is by partnership between the Parliament and black and anti-racist organisations, including the Trade Union Movement. The STUC Black Workers Committee and the General Council are, therefore, instructed to develop plans for how such a partnership arrangement can be organised.”

Resolution No.15 - Scottish Executive and Race Equality

“That this Conference welcomes the commitment of the Scottish Executive to race equality. It particularly welcomes the inclusion of equality in consultative documents and legislative proposals. Conference is encouraged by the extensive consultation exercise conducted by the Scottish Executive’s Race Equality Advisory Forum and the efforts to seek comments regarding the draft stage of the report. Conference views it as of the utmost importance that black/minority ethnic people, communities and their representative bodies are able to influence this and other consultative documents.

“Conference notes that proposals and recommendations for action to progress race equality in all areas of society are not cost neutral.

“Conference, therefore, calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to continue to work closely with the Scottish Executive to:

- (a) ensure that race equality issues are not marginalised;
- (b) ensure the establishment of effective methods of measuring and monitoring progress on race equality issues;
- (c) to seek and pay heed to the comments and advice of front-line service providers regarding progress and effectiveness of race equality policies and legislative provision.

“It further calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to:

- (a) continue to campaign for appropriate funding and resources for race equality;
- (b) urge affiliates to continue to raise the profile of anti-racism and race equality within their organisations;
- (c) urge affiliates to continue to refer to race equality where appropriate in submissions/responses to consultative and other documents issued by the Scottish Executive;
- (d) to seek the views of affiliates whose members provide frontline services on the effectiveness of measures taken to promote and ensure race equality.”

Resolution No.16 - Asylum Seekers and Education

“That this Conference condemns racist attacks on asylum seekers regardless of their source. Conference stresses its support for people who have experienced trauma and disruption in their lives, the extent of which forced them to escape from their homes and families. Conference applauds the efforts made by many organisations and local authorities to welcome asylum seekers and provide a wide-range of services, but express concern that such efforts may be thwarted through lack of appropriate finance.

“Conference recognises among the many needs of asylum seekers is the need for continuing education for children, young people and adults. Conference calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to urge all relevant agencies and education trade unions to co-operate in the development of plans to support the educational needs of asylum seekers.”

Resolution No.17 - Academic Asylum Seekers

“That this Conference, whilst unequivocally welcoming asylum seekers to Scotland, is concerned that the new regulations under the Immigration and Asylum Act will enforce the dispersal of asylum seekers to locations of the Government’s choosing.

“In the case of many academic asylum seekers fleeing oppressive regimes in which academics are often the focus of organised opposition, this is likely to disrupt their contacts with the UK academic community. UK universities have historically provided a haven for continued professional life and, in turn, have been enriched by the intellectual and cultural contribution brought to the UK by academic refugees.

“Conference calls on the General Council to seek talks with the Scottish Executive with a view to maximising consultation with asylum seekers about where they should be located. For example, academic asylum seekers should have every opportunity to be located close to the universities where they have existing contacts and support.”

Resolution No.18 - Ethical Diversity and Internationalism

“That this Conference applauds the lead given by the STUC to affiliated Unions on anti-racist initiatives together with their positive portrayal of diversity.

“Recognition of the contribution to the economic and cultural life of the United Kingdom made by generations of our black and ethnic minority community is long overdue. Similarly, the radical tradition of Scottish Trade Unionists to internationalism should also be celebrated.

“Conference, therefore, supports the call for a monument to acknowledge and symbolise the positive impact of ethnic diversity and internationalism in our society.

Composite B (covering Motion Nos.19, 20, 21 and 22) “Race and Asylum”

“That this Conference condemns the recent distasteful spectacle of refugees and asylum seekers being used as a political football, which has led to racist hysteria by certain sections of our communities, some newspapers and some political parties. In particular, Conference condemns the Conservative Party and William Hague for exploiting the fate of asylum seekers for electoral advantage.

“Conference joins the churches, the United Nations High Commissioners on Refugees’ representatives in Britain and Bill Morris, the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers’ Union, in condemning the way in which both Government and opposition have tried to out-bid each other in the intolerance of their statements about asylum seekers. In this context of growing racism, the threat of racist violence has increased for all non white communities in Britain.

“Whilst Government has the right to implement an immigration policy, it also has clear international obligations:

- the obligation to offer security to those who are persecuted and oppressed; and
- the obligation to lead a moderate debate with moderate language.

“Sadly in recent months we have seen precious little in the way of moderation from our politicians. But our politicians must never forget that it is the rights of asylum seekers that should be at the centre of this debate:

- rights to basic needs;
- rights to civil and public protection;
- rights to fairness and justice; and
- rights to human respect.

“In the current climate we are in danger of losing sight of those rights.

“Conference believes that this situation will not be helped by the implementation of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, the main provisions of which came into place on Saturday, 1 April, and initiates the following:

- * Asylum seekers will be required to live in designated no choice areas.
- * Asylum seekers will be made to live in designated no choice accommodation.
- * Asylum seekers can be subject to house and area curfew.
- * Asylum seekers will not be allowed to leave their designated house or area for more than 7 days.
- * Asylum seekers will be forced to live on vouchers and £10 cash weekly (total of only 70% minimum DSS weekly rates), with shopkeepers forbidden to give change where goods obtained are less than the value of the voucher.

“Conference is concerned that such rules can only serve to further alienate, stigmatise and segregate refugees, which could, in turn, lead to an even more negative reaction from the local communities into which they are being integrated. In addition, the proposal to introduce a system of £10,000 bonds to those wishing to enter the UK from certain countries is morally wrong and inherently racist and should be strongly opposed.

“Furthermore, Conference condemns the scapegoating of British lorry drivers, who are targeted through no fault of their own.

“Conference pledges its support and solidarity to all refugees arriving in Britain. “It is important that as a caring, inclusive, modern state, Scotland is able to provide shelter, homes and a real welcome to people from other parts of the world. Asylum seekers and refugees should not be penalised and treated as criminals on entering the UK. Often they have fled from their homes scared and terrorised by situations in their own countries.

“This Conference believes that:

- Britain is not a ‘soft touch’. This country has the harshest asylum regime in Western Europe and takes fewer refugees per head of population than Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Denmark and Canada;

- the racist abuse in the press and by politicians is directly leading to an increase in racist attacks;
- job losses are not caused by refugees, but by the profit motivated concerns of companies such as BMW and Barclays Bank.

“Conference, therefore, urges the STUC Black Workers Committee to do all within its powers to:

- campaign against the harassment and intimidation of refugees and asylum seekers engendered either indirectly by the media or directly by organised fascist groups, examples of which have already been seen in Scotland.
- call for legal action against newspapers which publish material inciting racial hatred
- demand an end to attempts by political parties and leaders to exploit racism for electoral gain
- lobby the Government to relax the stringent conditions placed on asylum seekers and to provide more support to them through a very difficult, harrowing and vulnerable period.
- work to build a greater understanding in Scotland of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, and the fact that the vast majority are genuine cases deserving our full support.
- call for a review the present dispersal arrangements, as well as measures to ensure adequate funding to support local authorities with the integration of asylum seekers into local communities.

“Conference, furthermore, calls on the STUC Black Workers Committee to work with the STUC General Council to continue the campaign against racism and in particular to campaign for the abolition of the voucher system and the bond scheme.”

Resolution No.23 - Globalisation – Ethical Trading

“That this Conference notes with concern that thousands of jobs in the clothing and textiles industry in Scotland have disappeared overseas. When companies like Marks and Spencer can switch their sourcing at short notice it forces workers around the world to compete with each other in a race to the bottom in labour conditions. And in this race there are no winners. There is constant pressure to keep wages low, health and safety to a minimum, and to repress any attempt by the workers to organise themselves into unions.

“Conference calls on the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to actively campaign for governmental action in the World Trade Organisation and other bodies to force the adoption of minimum labour standards. And to promote consumer awareness of the conditions in which the clothes they buy are produced.”

Resolution No.24 - Jubilee 2000

“That this Conference recognises the importance of the Jubilee 2000 movement’s campaign for a one-off cancellation of the unpayable debts of the world’s poorest countries.

“Conference deplores the fact that the debt burden of these countries is 93 per cent of their income and every year scarce resources are diverted out of health, education and sanitation into servicing debts to the world’s richest countries which can never be repaid.

“Conference congratulates this Government on its recent moves to cancel debt owed to the UK.

“But Conference notes that action so far has been confined to bi-lateral debt with little headway on the billions owed to the IMF and the World Bank.

“Conference calls on affiliates and the STUC Black Workers’ Committee to lobby Government for wholesale debt cancellation which:

- i) takes place in a fair and transparent way;
- ii) is accompanied by support for economic regeneration and social renewal through education, health and anti-poverty programmes; and
- iii) is not conditional on poor countries adopting neo-liberal economic policies which slash jobs, squeeze investment and squash the social sector.

“Conference also calls on affiliates and the STUC to promote support for ethical trading and fair trade initiatives in all our workplaces.”

Emergency Resolution No.1 – Israeli Atrocities in the Occupied Territories

“That this Conference deplores the Israeli action in the Holy City of Jerusalem on Friday 29th September 2000 which resulted in 4 deaths of unarmed Palestinians and scores of other Palestinians injured in HARAM AI SHARIF – AL QUDS.

“Conference recognises the right of all Palestinians to their homeland. In accordance with the United Nations Security Council of Resolutions this Conference considers the Israeli occupation to West Bank including the City of Jerusalem and Gaza Strip to be illegal.

“Conference notes that so long as this illegal occupation continues and the Palestinians are denied establishment of their State as mentioned in UN Resolution 181, a lasting peace in the region is not possible.

“Conference welcomes the initiative of the Camp David talks revived in the past few months by the Clinton administration.

“Conference, therefore calls upon the STUC General Council to lobby our Labour Government to take all necessary actions in co-operation with the European Union to see that Israel abides by UN Resolution 242 and vacates from all occupied territories as soon as possible.”