

Scottish Trades Union Congress

Submission on the Establishment of an St Andrews Day Bank Holiday

October 2004

Introduction

The Scottish Trades Union Congress is Scotland's Trade Union Centre. Its purpose is to co-ordinate, develop and articulate the views and policies of the trade union movement in Scotland.

The STUC represents some 630,000 trade union members in Scotland, the members of over 40 affiliated organisations. We speak for trade union members in and out of work, in the workplace and in the community, as workers and as citizens. Our affiliated trade unions have members in every sector of the economy.

STUC Response to the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday Consultation

The STUC believe that the establishment of a bank holiday on St Andrew's Day in Scotland would be a positive step in the right direction in gaining parity with workers within the European Union. Currently only the Netherlands gives its workers as few public holidays as the UK, however, Dutch workers benefit from more annual leave. With 11.35 days as the average across the 25 European states, Slovakia (18 public holidays) has the most, closely followed by Cyprus (14). Malta, Spain and Portugal all grant their workers 14 days each year.

Productivity

Employers will claim that many problems will arise from establishing a St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday in Scotland - particularly the issues further regulation and more time away from work impacting on productivity. The STUC believe that there is scope for a new holiday and most of the countries mentioned above have greater productivity

levels than the UK. Having said that between 1997 and 1999, UK productivity grew by 4.6 per cent, whilst the number of contracted hours worked fell by 0.7 per cent, showing that when extra days holiday are granted there is not a negative impact on output.

The granting of additional public holidays merely gives back a small slice of the benefits of increased output to employees. Employees would have more quality free time away from work, improving work/life balance. This would also assist companies who have problems with stress, fatigue and related absenteeism amongst their workforce.

Other issues

There is an ongoing concern from unions organised in the finance sector over the refusal by some banks to recognise, as well as the de-recognition of, the 2nd of January as a Scottish Bank Holiday. We would stress that concerns around this issue must be considered within the context of any new holiday.

The trade union movement in Scotland currently promotes St Andrew's Day as a national celebration of Scotland's diversity of cultures, faiths and ethnic origins and the STUC would be very keen for the Bank Holiday to have a theme of this nature. In our opinion, this would improve Scotland's international image and attract more visitors from overseas.

The STUC believes there would be positive effect on the Scottish economy if an St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday was established. On a bank holiday, the activities of the millions of people not in work that day have upward effect upon other areas of the economy, with retail and tourism sites doing a roaring trade. In 2001, when the UK was hit by the foot and mouth epidemic, representatives from the tourism and hospitality industry lobbied the Government for a special bank holiday that autumn to stimulate trade.

We believe that alternative arrangements should be put in place if a St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday is established but the 30th November falls on a Saturday or Sunday. Generally speaking collective bargaining arrangements imply that a substitute day should be taken if the Bank & Public Holiday falls on the weekend. However the issues around this could be eliminated if the bank holiday was taken

on the Friday or Monday closest to November 30th. In our opinion a long weekend celebration would maximise event organisation, social and tourism opportunities and have a more positive impact for those on holiday and on the economy than a midweek holiday.

STUC
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