

Scottish Socialist

Party

STUC Conference 2008



The Scottish Socialist Party extends solidarity to all delegates and visitors to STUC 2008 conference.

As the one party which since our formation in 1998 has consistently taken the side of the working class and their unions against the employers and their savage attacks, the SSP is committed to uniting with fellow-trade unionists in the battles for workplace rights, decent jobs, wages and conditions, and the broader struggle against cuts, privatisation and capitalist exploitation.

This country suffers some of the worst wages and conditions of the advanced nations.

A particular assault has been launched against the public sector and its workforces.

Gordon Brown's attempt to squeeze down wages to less than 2% for 3 years is a blatant wealth transfusion from the working class to the employers - in keeping with the entire record of growing inequality under New Labour.

STUC conference is an opportunity to build unity in action against this attempt to make workers pay for the growing crisis in the capitalist economy. To build support for the civil servants on strike on 24 April. To build action across Scottish local government against the 3-year pay cut planned by CoSLA. To support Shelter staff who are resisting the 'corporatisation' of the voluntary sector, with pay cuts and longer hours - a struggle vital to workers right across the voluntary sector. To prepare concrete support for battles that loom on the railways, Grangemouth and elsewhere.

New Labour's assault on the public sector is ideologically driven. It does nothing to improve services but means loss of earnings, pension cuts, privatisation and stressed-out staff.

Labour can afford £55billion to bail out Northern Rock, but fail to invest a mere £40m to catch up with their own pathetically modest target of halving child poverty. They squander £6bn on war but cut workers' pensions.

The SSP strives to build maximum public sector unity in action across the unions to resist these attacks.

And we appeal to trade unionists to help us build a genuine party of working class socialism in Scotland.

£8 MINIMUM WAGE AT 16

A key fight across all unions is for decent wages. It took a long struggle to win minimum wage legislation. But the level introduced by New Labour, the vast exclusion zones, and the youth discrimination embedded in law, all make a mockery of fighting poverty pay. The minimum wage has become the norm, not the minimum, in whole sectors, including the retail, food and hotel industry.

Mass unemployment under the Tories has been replaced by mass poverty pay under Labour. The working poor make up the single biggest group within over 900,000 Scots who currently live in poverty.

The SSP has consistently fought for a minimum wage for all workers, trainees and apprentices over 16 - based on the time-honoured formula of two-thirds male median earnings. That would be well over £8 an hour today. It is a demand raised by many unions back in the 1970s. It is the minimum required to meet the bare essentials of a decent life. **It is the policy adopted unanimously at the conference of the UK's 5th biggest union, PCS, in 2007.**

Anything short of that would still be below a living wage, given the rocketing cost of gas, electricity, food and fuel. The STUC should follow the example of PCS, launch a massive campaign to justify a formula that would combat the poverty trap AND confront the gender pay gap - thereby giving strength and courage to workers wallowing in wages that leave them in a sea of debt.

FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

One of the key crises trade unionists confront today is that of the environment. Global warming, climate change, pollution, rising respiratory illness .. our communities, workplaces and planet are under threat as a result of a society that puts profit before people.

One of the most radical, immediate measures to combat both pollution and poverty - as well as social exclusion - would be the introduction of a vastly expanded network of fare-free public transport.

Privatisation of the railways and buses has been a public disaster - but a source of obscene profits for the few.

Instead of punitive attacks and taxes on those forced to use cars, we need to offer the public a viable alternative means of transport.

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The SSP has consistently opposed the war for oil and empire, called for the immediate withdrawal of troops, and sought to build links with the Iraqi trade unions who are fighting privatisation, imperialist occupation, sectarianism and terrorism.

We appeal to STUC delegates to support affiliation to *Iraq Union Solidarity Scotland*.

Scottish Socialist Party - *Scottish workers' voice*

By taking all forms of transport back into public ownership and democratic control by workers and users.
By demanding vast public investment to make the network safer, more far-reaching and more efficient - with the necessary expansion of staff.
And then by making it free to all passengers, regardless of age or income.

The SSP pioneered this policy in the 2007 elections. It is not some hair-brained fantasy.

In the Belgian city of Hasselt - twice the size of Dundee - congestion was eliminated in the late 1980s with the introduction of a totally free public transport system. Within a year bus passenger journeys rose by 870% - and have since increased by over 1,000%.

San Francisco is costing a free public transport plan.

So why not Scotland?!

It would cost less than £1billion. The cost of the polluting M74 extension in Glasgow, punted by Labour, now implemented by the SNP government. It could also be funded through a payroll transport tax on big companies (as in France) - not to mention by scrapping Trident!
Free public transport would radically reduce car use, road accidents, pollution and congestion's £20billion a year cost to the economy.

And it would put £40-100 a month in the pockets of over a million workers.

Many scoffed at the idea of a free NHS in the past; free public transport would be just as pioneering a policy today.

LABOUR BETRAYS WORKERS

The working class have been politically dis-enfranchised, as Labour has transformed into a nakedly capitalist party, with no pretence of combining their worship of the market with representing working class people. Increasingly workers have awoken to the realisation that New Labour are the New Tories. **Whilst the biggest initial reaction is to abstain from politics and from voting in elections, a conscious minority of workers have seen the need to combine their efforts through the unions with the organisation of a political voice and vehicle for**

socialist change. That is what underlies the formation of the SSP in 1998, our growth in the workplaces, unions and communities, our peak votes so far of 130,000, and our continued track record of uniting with every group of workers in struggle.

SSP FIGHTS FOR:

- £8 minimum wage for all workers and trainees over 16 - based on two-thirds male median wages - end age wage discrimination
- equal pay for women workers - without a penny off the pay of any worker
- a 35-hour maximum working week for all, without any loss of earnings - as a step towards a 4-day week
- abolition of all anti-trade union laws - for a positive charter of workers' rights, including the right to strike, to take solidarity strike action, to be in a union - without fear of victimisation
- for workers' control of health and safety through elected H&S reps
- a minimum of 1 years' maternity leave on full pay - with the job protected for return, and the choice of returning part-time or full-time without loss of benefits. At least 1 month's paternity leave on full pay - and the option of exchanging part of the maternity/paternity leave
- scrap all prescription charges - stop taxing sickness
- free school meals for all children in state schools - nursery, primary and secondary - permanently
- scrap the Council Tax - for the Scottish Service Tax, based on income, on ability to pay, raising more funds for jobs and services, and making 8 out of 10 Scots better off
- tax the rich and the big Corporations - no to the tax havens of New Labour AND the SNP
- reverse all PPP/PFI and privatisations
- public ownership of all services, transport, construction, banks, energy, telecomms, big industries, North Sea Oil - under democratic control and management
- an independent socialist Scotland that stands for people not profit, the millions not the millionaires.

We appeal to trade unionists to unite in action - but to also fight to break the link between the unions and New Labour.

Pouring affiliated union members' money into New Labour is like giving petrol money to an arsonist to torch your home! Why should the unions fund the party of cuts, profiteering, privatisation, anti-union laws and war? Make the break from Brown's New Tories - as an individual and as a union - and join the socialists.

Join the SSP - the one party in Scotland which since our formation in 1998 has stood on the side of the working class and trade unionism, for people not profit, for a socialist Scotland that produces for need not greed.



Join the SSP - the party of public ownership, solidarity and socialism

name phone.....

address.....

..... email

send to: SSP, Suite 308, 93 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6LD

text 07899 732068

email: ssp.glasgow@btconnect.com

www.scottishsocialistparty.org

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