

UNISON at the STUC
All the main UNISON reports from the 119th Scottish Trades Union Congress in Dundee - p1, 2, 3, 4



Opportunities and challenges of election result
An analysis by Mike Kirby - p2



Scotland at UK Health Conference
Pay, training, bursaries and more... - p3

PUBLIC WORKS:

a million voices for public services

May 2016 No 120

Scotland in UNISON

scottish council activists bulletin Use these stories in your branch newsletter or circulate the pdf version to members

Politicians must be bold in opposing austerity

The STUC backed a UNISON and GMB 10 point plan for decent public services as a key to 'reducing poverty and economic inequality.'

UNISON's Stephen Smellie told delegates there was a broad political consensus in Scotland against austerity but words were not enough.

"We must insist that Scottish politicians can't hide behind the 'it's all the fault of the Tories and we can't do anything about it' line. That was never good enough when the Scottish parliament had few powers to tackle austerity. It is even less acceptable now that the parliament has significant powers that it can choose to use.

"UNISON's publication 'Combating Austerity' spells out the steps that councils and the government can take", he said commending it to MSPs and councillors.

Stephen slammed the 40,000 council job cuts and called for no compulsory redundancies.

Politicians need to use existing and future taxation powers of the Scottish Parliament to oppose austerity and create prosperity.

"And in that light it is very welcome that Labour has drawn the conclusion that we drew years ago – we need to increase taxes, especially on the rich, to fund the level of services that the people of Scotland want.

"We need politicians to be

creative, be bold and who will work with us to oppose austerity", said Stephen.

The motion called on politicians to oppose the cuts rather than 'passively administering them' by investing in services and getting out of costly PFI schemes.

Staff skills should be recognised with decent pay and conditions along with



Dundee 2016

union/employer partnerships.

"Local taxation needs to be reformed so that councils have a sustainable financial base. That includes different forms of tax

raising powers and a fair local property tax", said Stephen.

"We have argued for an end to the Council Tax freeze from before it was implemented and so it is good to see the government finally say that it will end – but not till next year and only so they can direct councils how to spend the revenue raised. It is a start but not good enough."

Further strike as Glasgow jannies fight on



As we went to press, janitors in Glasgow schools were set to embark on another full week of strike action in their fight for parity of conditions with other workers.

The STUC Congress in April gave unanimous backing to an

emergency motion supporting UNISON's #Justice4Jannies campaign as they began their three-day strike at the time.

The jannies packed the gallery as delegates stood to applaud them.

The jannies' employer, Cordia, is refusing to pay a Working Context and Demands

Payment (WCD) to school janitors and is using spurious arguments to justify not making the payment. Glasgow City Council and its ALEOs' pay structure awards payments to workers who undertake duties which are dirty, unpleasant, involve working outside on a regular basis or heavy lifting.

STUC to fight for fair and Social Europe

The STUC is to launch a campaign promoting the employment rights the EU has delivered for working people and will oppose attempts to 'water down the benefits of a Social Europe.'

When UNISON consulted its members, 95% of them said that the EU was very important to them and two subjects above all were their priorities - public services and workers' rights.

"That is why UNISON will be recommending a vote to

remain in the EU", said Gordon, but he warned: "Let us be clear about what we are not supporting.

"It is not the EU of Cameron's Tories, it is not the EU of austerity, it is not the EU of undemocratic unaccountability.

"UNISON will work to amend and reform the EU. We want to see a fair and social Europe. As trade unionists we want a Europe that protects workers. We do that by working with our brothers and sisters throughout Europe. We do it by



GORDON MCKAY

working with our political allies, not by walking away from our friends.

"A Social Europe has made a

real difference to people's lives", said Gordon.

After the referendum there will still be a Tory government who, "however much they whine and rant, will still be forced by the EU to maintain social and employment rights on annual leave, maternity and paternity leave, equal pay for work of equal value, agency workers and working time."

But, out of the EU, the Tories would "bundle these rights together on a funeral pyre and set them alight."

UNISON wins call to defend human rights



LILIAN MACER

UNISON Scotland convener Lilian Macer won STUC Congress support for UNISON's call for a campaign against the repeal of the Human Rights Act.

The motion condemned the UK Government for its many direct and indirect attacks on human rights, including the Trade Union Bill, the proposed repeal of the Human Rights Act and its failure to implement its equality and human rights obligations under EU and UN equality and human rights instruments.

Lilian said: "Trade unionists know that equality and social justice and a human rights agenda is intrinsic to achieving the socially just and fairer Scotland we strive for."

Colombia

Lilian cautioned Congress about what life looks like without human rights. She said: "In December as part of a UNISON delegation to Colombia I witnessed first-hand human rights violations, the violence and abuses against trade unions, social movements and civil society organisations, on a level that shocked and disgusted our delegation.

"We heard testimonies from sisters and brothers in the trade union movement who live in fear of their lives on a daily basis for organising working people – doing what you and I do every day – for standing up for fair work, equality and human rights."

STUC congratulates Glasgow CCTV staff

The STUC Congress sent congratulations to Glasgow CCTV UNISON members who have won a deal bringing up to a 24% pay rise, after twelve days of strike action over six weeks.

The 19 UNISON members took the action over the employer's failure to pay shift allowances. Pending a new pay structure, workers will get an interim shift payment of £4,000 per year, backdated to January

£1.4m won for UNISON members

UNISON Scotland won over £1,403,897 in damages in for members via Thompsons Solicitors in the first three months of 2016.

178 cases were opened, 78 successful cases were concluded, 142 wills were prepared and 129 members were given general free legal advice.

North Lanarkshire beats off privatisation



A huge UNISON campaign has resulted in North Lanarkshire Council announcing that it will not privatise hundreds of home support workers' jobs.

Marie Quigley, Branch Secretary for UNISON's North Lanarkshire Branch said: "UNISON is pleased to hear that proposals are now off the table. This is a massive victory for our home support members who

tirelessly campaigned for the council to reject the privatisation plans.

"The home support service in North Lanarkshire provides vital care to people in our communities and has been lauded as one of the best in Scotland. There was massive public support for our campaign and we want to thank everyone who took time to share their views with the council."

Post election - where do the unions stand now?

The results of 5 May elections show us that 21st century post-industrial politics is a disunited kingdom. These are islands of political diversity, and a new politics to match. The UK affiliations are creaking.

In Scotland, we've repeated a vote for a marked and established change and a political ascendancy which the trade union movement must recognise. While we've known how to deal with variable political outcomes particularly in local government, our members, as a substantial part of the electorate in Scotland, have given us a clear steer on who we should work with in the future.

The SNP has swept Holyrood, with the Tories pushing Labour into third place. A strong Green surge put a pro-independence majority in place, despite the SNP's failure to win a majority.

A crushing defeat for a party which dominated politics in Scotland and was established by the trade unions. Jeremy Corbyn said, "We are going to walk hand-in-hand with our party in Scotland to build that support again."

Meanwhile, Labour's only MP in Scotland, Ian Murray, said, "... we should reflect, the leadership of the party should reflect, find a way of finding a strategy and a narrative that changes the perception of the UK Labour Party across the United Kingdom so that we can go on and have a real shot at winning in 2020."

Labour lost in Scotland because progressive cultural nationalism has gained momentum both since the referendum of 2014 and the UK general election of 2015.

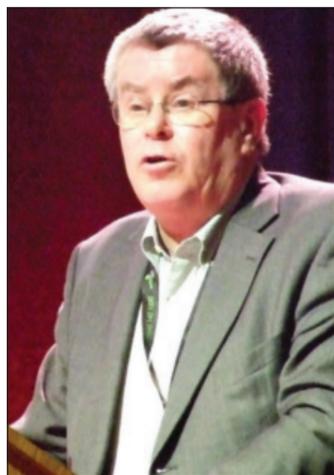
Scottish politics have polarised between a project of progressive independence and conservative unionism.

Labour is trapped in the middle and needs to decide which side it's on. Meanwhile it looks like some of unionist vote has now switched to the Tories.

Parts of the Scottish Labour Party will now push for a more radical Home Rule offer, with a federal Britain and a federal Labour Party, but will this be enough?

It may be likely Labour will have to re-frame its project around shaping the character of an

UNISON Scottish secretary MIKE KIRBY analyses the future for public services after an emphatic SNP election win on a manifesto that brings 'opportunities and challenges' for UNISON members at work and in their communities.



independent Scotland.

This will test the stance occupied by the trade unions in the 2014 Referendum, when we argued power for a purpose, for social and economic justice, was more important than where power lies. We questioned both sides on their intentions to deliver.

It is evident that there is not 'a settled will of the Scottish people'. Perhaps more unsettled by a perceived failure of "The Vow", and the continued and alien political dispensation at Westminster.

So much for the results. What happens next?

The Scottish General Election Campaign was shaped by the issue

of independence, and dominated by comparisons of income tax plans, yet Scottish Government may wish to park both of these issues for the next five years.

The SNP manifesto should give an indication of the next Scottish Government's programme. It offers some opportunities and challenges for UNISON Scotland, as it impacts upon our members at work and in their communities.

Tax & Finance

With new income tax powers in 2017, the SNP was attacked for its modest plans to alter George Osborne's bands and rates. That position didn't seem to do it much

harm at all.

To have a proper tax plan, using the 2017 powers to restructure, rather than a tax slogan, to shake up income tax, reform council tax and local government finance, and to raise taxes as Labour, LibDem and Greens wanted, would absorb quite a lot of political capital, and provide a platform for the official opposition Tories to push for further electoral gains.

Public Service Reform

Having "achieved" reform of Police, Fire & Rescue and Further Education, although still subject to turbulence, particularly on workforce matters, the SNP manifesto carried a significant mandate to push control of schools towards teachers and parents, which necessarily means pushing control away from councils. That starts with a big tranche of new funding being directed at headteachers.

The 'number, structure and regulation' of health boards and their relationship with councils will be reviewed. This appears to reflect a desire to make structural changes to health and local government, although the language is vague.

The councils have shown little appetite for a fight over such reforms, so far, despite nudging by UNISON. During the election, SNP

established a mandate for council boundary reform, and perhaps a big cut in numbers. However, UNISON has warned from experience that it's very time-consuming and expensive business in financial and political capital. Will SNP use administrative means in anticipation of controlling councils after next May?

NHS in transition

Public service reform continues with the health service. A tight budget and demographic change, advances in medical practice, are forcing the SNP to shift from its previous populist stance that it would preserve your local services. A movement of resources and staff from acute to community services?

The SNP have been working towards reforms which their Labour/LibDem predecessors were trying to reach before 2007.

While the pressure remains on acute services, there's a lot of change required in the NHS. The £500m extra promised in the manifesto, on top of inflation-related increases, is intended to help make that transition. Without doing so, the health experts are agreed that the NHS could crumble.

Health and Social Care

They are also committed to investing £1.3b 'from the NHS' to build up social care capacity. It is unclear if that is over and above the NHS revenue increase, of £500m.

As councils deliver social care, this is a big dent in the NHS spend, although welcome for social care as it will also help pay for the living wage.

There is no commitment to the other aspects of our Ethical Care Charter, so we will need to press those aspects through procurement. There is a commitment to "work to end 'time and task' based care".

The extra 500 health visitors are also confirmed as is training for an additional 500 advanced nurse practitioners. The student bursary will continue in Scotland. There will be another 1,000 paramedics 'working in the community'.

Overall

While specific proposals are vague, there does appear to be an appetite for significant public service reform, including structural change.

There are opportunities as well. The workforce elements offer at least a process to develop a better framework in Scotland.

In addition, there is an opportunity to make progress on some of our long standing campaigns including childcare, housing, social care and police staffs, and financial levers to combat austerity.

Use Scottish Government powers to protect the low paid

The STUC slammed cuts to tax credits and pledged to continue the campaign to fight these cuts and to implement the real living wage.

UNISON's Helen Duddy welcomed George Osborne's climb down on tax credit cuts in the last budget but warned us not to kid ourselves – this was not some sort of change of heart.

"He backed down because a lot of work had been done by a lot of people to work out and then expose just what this would mean to working families. And I'm proud to say that UNISON was amongst them."

But, said Helen, while he backed down on the cuts to tax



HELEN DUDDY

credits, the cuts to universal credit work allowances have gone ahead and began to come into effect in late April. Universal credit is being rolled out across the UK over the next two years.

"Once it arrives locally, people who aren't on tax credits won't be allowed to apply," said Helen.

"This matters because universal credit usually pays less than tax credits. So if we encourage people to claim their tax credits, we will be helping them protect their income."

UNISON has teamed up with Entitled to Ltd to develop a tax credit calculator to encourage people to claim tax credits before they arrive locally. Visit the website at www.entitledto.co.uk/

As for the future, Helen said: "It's right that we look to the Scottish Parliament to be prepared to take action.

"After all, there is not much point in having a parliament – and there is no point in giving it more powers – if those powers are not going to be used."

Zero hours – bad for workers, services and economy

The STUC will press the Scottish Government to work with trade unions to tackle the rise in zero hours contracts and casualised labour.

UNISON young member Bernadette Lafferty told delegates that she had personal experience of working a job that had no defined hours and was paid the minimum wage.

“It meant that I was unable to live independently and struggled to afford basic

necessities whenever I failed to get a decent amount of hours.

“This impacted in a really big way on my life because it meant I had no opportunity to go to college and develop a career or even just a more stable working life.”

Bernadette told delegates that there are many more young people out there who have been denied the same opportunities.

“It’s up to us in the trade union movement to support them as my union have



BERNADETTE LAFFERTY

supported me,” she urged.

She spoke about UNISON’s “great work” with the Ethical Care Charter which asks councils and other employers to

sign up to the living wage and to end zero hours contracts.

“Precarious work, zero hours contracts – these are not just bad for us, the workers, but for the quality of services – something that is heartbreaking in social care if the bad conditions mean a high turnover of staff looking after vulnerable people.

“Colleagues, these contracts are bad for workers, bad for services and bad for the economy”, said Bernadette.

STUC stories by
Kate Ramsden
and John

stuc

Stevenson. For **Dundee 2016** full coverage of these and more debates see the UNISON Scotland website.

Cuts to emergency services put staff and communities at risk

The STUC will press the Scottish Government to adequately fund the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and to properly staff their control rooms, currently being cut from eight to three.

UNISON’s George McIrvine said: “It is unrealistic that a modern ‘Best Value’ Police and Fire Service can be founded and built with such poor strategic planning, cuts to budgets and on such demanding timelines.”

Give disabled young people the chance they deserve

Disabled young people are massively under-represented in apprenticeships and Congress delegates backed a wide-ranging campaign to address the difficulties they face.

UNISON’s Morag Houston told delegates: “Young people who want to work are being denied the support that will get them into the workplace. And young disabled workers struggle to get into the modern apprenticeship programme and then in many places, struggle to get kept on to its conclusion.

“Let’s not kid ourselves, people with disabilities are being set up to fail well before then,” she added pointing out that through years of cuts we’ve seen a huge reduction in classroom assistants and it’s the most vulnerable who have borne the brunt of the cuts.

Make equal pay a reality for women

The STUC is calling for an “Equal Pay Employer Scheme” to provide accreditation for equal pay employers.



UNISON’s Davena Rankin, who is also the Chair of the STUC Women’s Committee, told delegates that the pay gap is still very much alive today despite the 1970 Equal Pay Act.

“The fight to end the gender pay gap is at its heart about the fight for workplace justice. It is about the basic right to be paid fairly for the work we do regardless of our gender.”

School mainstreaming needs resources

Cuts in specialist and support services means ‘mainstreaming’ the schooling of children with particular needs has become the ‘do-nothing’ option, the STUC was told.

UNISON’s Carol Ball, seconding an SSTA motion, said: “Most authorities have sound policies on supporting inclusion but in reality these are not fully implemented.

“If the government is serious about reducing the attainment gap, if they want a first class education system, then they must provide the additional resources to fully support all our children taking account of their individual level of need.”

‘Getting it Right’ must not be tick-box

Condemning education cuts, UNISON’s Susan Kennedy told the STUC that schools were getting it right for every child, but with teacher shortages, cuts to support staff, increased class sizes and attacks to terms and conditions, GIRFEC has become a tick box exercise with no guaranteed outcome to improve the education and welfare of children attending Scottish schools.

Call for total opposition to TTIP ‘dodgy trade deals’

Pat Rowland won STUC backing for a UNISON motion to campaign for total opposition to TTIP (Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership) in the Scottish, UK and European Parliaments.

If TTIP goes through, it will allow multi-national corporations to sue governments if their policies negatively affect profits, using what Pat called the ‘sinister’ Investor-State Dispute Settlement system (ISDS).

It will make it harder to regulate private companies providing services and could prevent future governments bringing public services like the NHS, higher education, and others back in house.

“It’s a threat to hard won workers’ rights such as health and safety, maternity rights, working time directive and environmental and climate change issues and many more”, warned Pat.

Britain’s strict controls over development of drugs through clinical trials could also be under threat due weaker USA controls.

The campaign is crucial because currently only Scottish Labour opposes TTIP outright.

The SNP believe in TTIP-Lite which would remove the NHS from the ISDS measures, but refuse to oppose the deals outright. UK Labour has not yet come out in total opposition.

“This isn’t good enough”, said Pat, “If you’ll pardon the



PAT ROWLAND

‘The campaign is crucial because currently only Scottish Labour opposes TTIP outright.’

pun, it isn’t a done deal – so our campaigning can be crucial.

“We must oppose these dodgy trade deals and campaign to ensure that the new Scottish Parliament, the UK Parliament and the European Parliament do so as well.”

Pat also warned that TTIP isn’t the only kid on the trade deal block. There are currently negotiations going on to

conclude a ‘Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement’, known as CETA, between the EU and Canada.

CETA is a particular threat to Scottish Water and it would pose a serious obstacle to bringing privatised water services in England back into public ownership as pension funds in Canada own large percentages of some of the water companies there.

Time to address Scotland’s housing crisis

The STUC will press the Scottish Government to mount a radical programme to build more affordable and social rent homes.

UNISON’s Mark Ferguson told delegates that it is a national scandal that estimates show there are over 150,000 applications on housing waiting lists in Scotland – 30% higher than 2004.

“We must demand an end to

the crisis by calling for a radical house building programme that creates construction jobs and apprenticeships.

“Housing has been left to the market for too long. The market has failed to deliver.”

He referred to UNISON’s policy paper “Making Homes for a Fairer Scotland” which outlines a new housing programme including how it can be funded

UK Health Conference backs Scotland on pay, training, bursaries and more...

Scottish delegates spoke out on a host of issues at the UNISON UK Health Conference last month.

Speakers included UNISON Scotland Convener Lilian Macer, Health Committee Vice Chair Sandra-Dee Masson, Alan Manley from Tayside, Cathie Miller from Glasgow Clyde CVS and NHS Glasgow and Clyde Health Visitor Una Provan.

The union backed Scottish motions on better training for admin and clerical workers, safer staffing levels, better training for staff on dementia and domestic

violence and salaries for student nurses.

Gordon McKay put some passion into the pay debate and a composite included Scotland’s motion to use the best deals won in any

of the nations as a benchmark for all.

The Conference demanded **training for undervalued ancillary, admin and clerical**



Cathie Miller speaking on the bursaries motion

workers who are being denied access to training.

Lilian Macer said: “Administrative staff are a hugely undervalued staff group.”

She praised the Scottish educational pathways project begun in July 2015, which shows the qualification members of staff can undertake.

And as the Conference turned to cuts, Alan Manley said that in Tayside they’ve been set a target to cut £1m a week in 2016/17, on top of existing 5% cuts, or about £30m a year.

A Scotland motion called on the union to be more proactive in **organising in new NHS bodies** and private contractors, campaigning to extend NHS pensions to workers employed in

those organisations.

Scotland also condemned Tory government plans to end **bursaries for nursing and midwifery courses.**

While welcoming the Scottish Government decision to maintain free tuition for Scottish students in Scottish universities, it noted with caution a planned review into funding packages available to nursing and midwifery students.

Scotland also won support for an important motion on **dementia awareness**, moved by Sandra-Dee Masson.

Public private finance – investigate and bring back in-house

The STUC will call for an independent enquiry into PFI/PPP funding models for public sector building work, as well as into the Edinburgh schools contracts which has led to such disruption for pupils, families and staff.

Seconding an emergency motion from the EIS, UNISON's Susan Kennedy told delegates that the issues raised around PPP by what has happened in Edinburgh go well beyond a single project and call into question the whole funding model in the past and in plans for the

Don't just investigate the schemes that suit you Nicola. We need to look at all of them

future.

PFI, PPP, and the current government's Non Profit Distribution scheme (NPD) "are all different names for the same problem," Susan said. "They are all flawed and we need them all investigated."

She called for politicians to take the opportunity of historic low



SUSAN KENNEDY

borrowing rates on capital to refinance or bring back these schemes into the public sector to provide better value for public money.

"UNISON has been one of the strongest campaigners against

PPP/PFI. It has been eye wateringly expensive, with secretive contracts that have been acknowledged now by so many as being a rip off.

"At a time of austerity where local government budgets are being sliced and education has no protection from these cuts the ongoing costs of schools and other contracts are having a major impact and we need to act.

"We must say to the First Minister 'Don't just investigate the schemes that suit you Nicola. We need to look at all of them,'" urged Susan.

Safer learning and end to homophobia

The STUC backed the TIE (Time for Inclusive Education) campaign which is committed to inclusive education, tackling homophobia and creating a safer learning environment for all regardless of sexual orientation, gender or identity.

UNISON Scotland has already donated £1,000 to this very important campaign for our young people. UNISON's Willie Docherty spoke in support. To the



WILLIE DOCHERTY

horror of many delegates he spoke of the experience of a former colleague who experienced homophobic bullying at school. He got no help from the adults.

Willie said, "On one occasion, when the bullying became violent he went to the school nurse and she told him that if he didn't act so gay, he wouldn't get into these situations."

He added that "the shocking fact is that in Scotland, 25% of LGBT school students have attempted suicide at least once, and 50% of them are regularly self harming.

"As a nation we should be ashamed of these statistics."

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 558 7488, john.stevenson@unison-edinburgh.org.uk

STUC health and safety award for UNISON's Scott Donohoe

Scott Donohoe, UNISON Scotland health and safety chair, has been presented with this year's STUC Frank Maguire Award for Health and Safety.

Scott has been health and safety officer for Glasgow City UNISON for 14 years and is seconded from his employer, Glasgow City Council. He is passionate about health and safety, an interest that has seen him play a leading role in his union's work on health and safety as well participating in the Hazards movement in Scotland, the United Kingdom and Europe in his own time.

Grahame Smith, STUC General Secretary said: "Scott Donohoe is an outstanding example of the difference trade union members can make in delivering safer and healthier workplaces. However, in Scott's case he takes it a step further,



Scott receives his award from First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and STUC General Secretary Grahame Smith

playing a leading role in the Hazards movement at home and abroad.

"Scott ensures that he supports UNISON health and safety representatives in Glasgow City Council developing campaign helping UNISON organise around health and safety, such as his

work to protect workers and seek trade union recognition in the SECC using health and safety failures as leverage to recruit and grow membership.

On receiving the award, Scott spoke of the respect for the late Frank Maguire of Thompsons Solicitors who the award commemorates.

Climate Day – Lining up for a low carbon Scotland

Trade unionists lined up for a 'just transition' on Climate Day at the UNISON Scotland and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland Fringe Meeting at the STUC.

The meeting was chaired by UNISON's Stephen Smellie, and speakers included Stephen Boyd, STUC, Cheryl Gedling, PCS, and Mike Robinson, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland.



Trident an extravagance that will destroy public services

The STUC renewed its call for Trident replacement to be abandoned and will revisit setting up Trade Union CND, focussing on job diversification for workers employed on Trident.

In a rousing speech, supporting a Clydebank TUC motion, UNISON's Jane Carolan told delegates: "UNISON has a proud record of defending quality employment, defending high paid skilled jobs.

"But we also have a record of standing up for international

peace and solidarity, and believe that both on practical and principled reasons that the impact of Trident replacement would be catastrophic."

The world has changed, argued Jane, and the threat that we now face makes nuclear weapons hopelessly irrelevant.

"Indeed their very existence is futile. They are worse than useless in the terrorist threat we now face. How could our rented rockets ever have been deployed against outrages in Paris or Brussels?"



JANE CAROLAN

"Yet while we spend on Trident, conventional forces that contribute to peacekeeping security and stability are cut", said Jane. Answering the argument that 'diversification' of

jobs was too vague, Jane pointed out that government figures that show that even if Trident were cancelled it would be 15 years before any jobs would go due to decommissioning.

"15 years is a long time in employment terms. Ask any local government worker", said Jane.

But there was also a wider principle, said Jane: "We need to highlight that Trident, a system designed never to be used is not only an irrelevance but an extravagance that will destroy our public services."

Support for young disabled people

by Andy Crosbie
Disabled Members Cttee

Did you know that 12.5% of Scottish young people have a disability as defined under the Equalities Act 2010?

Disabled young people face many challenges throughout their daily lives, which UNISON and other bodies fully recognise and are currently working hard on trying to address.

The recent STUC congress backed a motion on providing more employment opportunities for these people, specifically around the Modern Apprenticeship programme where just 0.41% of places are taken up by those with disabilities.

Scotland has a significantly higher rate of unemployment amongst young disabled people at 58% compared to 20% of non-disabled people, above the average of 48% of young disabled people out of work across the whole of the EU!

Attainment for young people with disabilities is significantly lower than those without. A recent FOI request by UNISON's disabled members committee revealed that only 63% of young people with disabilities attained qualifications at SCQF level 5 or better (the equivalent of a Nat5) compared to 89% of those without a disability.

This will further be worsened by a 8.38% drop in classroom assistants across Scotland, with three councils completely removing this vital support. Furthermore, many pupils with disabilities experience bullying in school, which will hamper their progress further.

Disabled young members are also represented on the National Disabled Members committee, by two representatives from the National Young Members committee. At last year's disabled members conference, the committee successfully carried two motions, all about disabled workers being unaware of their legal rights and also on receipt of reasonable adjustments to undertake their work.

STUC backs progressive movements in South America

The STUC sent out a clear message that we should be backing democratically elected governments in South America against a 'corporate-wealth' right wing backlash.

Moving UNISON's emergency motion, Sam Macartney told delegates: "Over the last couple of decades we have seen huge advances for working people in South America."

Gains made in Bolivia, Argentina, Nicaragua, Ecuador and of course Chavez's victory in Venezuela brought policies that benefited the workers and peasants and had huge popular support.

"Those gains are now under threat. The right is making a comeback", warned Sam.