



# NO GOING BACK

## Biennial Delegate Conference | 2021

23 March 2021

### MOTIONS

STRONGER TOGETHER  
  
**CONGRESS**  
Northern Ireland Committee  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

# Agenda for Virtual NIC-ICTU BDC 2021

**Tuesday 23rd March 2021**

## **SESSION 1: 10.30am – 11:45**

- Welcome from Belfast Trade Council
- Address from Patricia King, ICTU General Secretary
- Motions 1-5
- Video – The Northern Ireland trade union movement
- Address from Gerry Murphy, NIC Chair and ICTU President
- Address from Kevin Callinan, ICTU Vice President

Break 11.45am – 12 noon

## **SESSION 2: 12 noon – 1:15pm**

- Video 'No Going Back'
- Roundtable discussion 'No Going Back'
- Motions 6-8

Break 1:15pm – 1:45pm

## **SESSION 3: 1:45pm – 2:45pm**

- Roundtable discussion 'Just Transition'
- Address from Owen Reidy ICTU Assistant General Secretary
- Solidarity greetings from Wales TUC & Scottish TUC

Break 2.45pm – 3pm

## **SESSION 3: 3pm – 4:30pm**

- Motions 9-19
- Close of conference – NIC Chair and vote of thanks to the chair

# Standing Orders for NIC-ICTU Virtual BDC 2021

## 1. Northern Ireland Conference

- 1.1 These standing orders have been approved by the NIC for the exclusive purpose of this virtual conference. Therefore, it has been agreed by the NIC that on this occasion that there is no requirement for a Conference Arrangements Committee.

The Northern Ireland Conference shall meet biennially. The place and date shall be decided by the Northern Ireland Committee, subject to the approval of the Executive Council.

- 1.2 The Chairperson for the Sessions of the Conference shall be the Chairperson of the outgoing Northern Ireland Committee.

### 2. Representation

Only bona fide members or full-time officials who are members of an affiliated trade union and resident in Ireland may be appointed as delegates in accordance with the following scales:

- a. Trade unions with an affiliated membership in Northern Ireland of less than 1000 members = one delegate

Trade unions having an affiliated membership in Northern Ireland of:-

1000 members but less than	2000 = 2	delegates
2000 " " "	3000 = 3	"
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37000 " " "	39000 = 28	"
39000 " " "	42000 = 29	"
42000 " " "	45000 = 30	"

and one delegate for each 3000 members above 45000 and up to 75000 and thereafter in accordance with Paragraph 37 of the Constitution of Congress.



Trade Unions must include women delegates in their delegation in accordance with the following scale:

- b. Trade Unions having an affiliated membership in Northern Ireland of more than 500 but less than 1000 women shall appoint at least one woman delegate.

Trade Unions having in Northern Ireland:-

<b>Women Membership</b>	<b>Women Delegates</b>
1000 but less than 5000	at least 2
5000 but less than 10000	" 3
10000 but less than 15000	" 4
15000 but less than 20000	" 5

and at least one woman delegate for each 5000 women members above 20,000.

- c. Local Councils of Trade Unions may appoint delegates (who must be members of affiliated trade unions) to the Conference in accordance with the following scale:-

Up to 6500 affiliated membership	1 delegate
Over 6500 affiliated membership	2 delegates

### 3. Motions

- 3.1 Affiliated organisations may submit one motion for the Conference Agenda on this occasion. Motions must be signed by the authorised official of the organisation and forwarded to Congress not later than the date specified in the notice to organisations. Should an affiliate believe it necessary to submit an emergency motion it must be forwarded to the secretariat without delay in advance of the conference, not later than 22<sup>nd</sup> March. The F&GPC will decide if the motion is appropriate to go forward.
- 3.2 Motions must be within the scope of the Objects of Congress as set out in the Constitution. They must relate to the matters provided for in Paragraph 37 of the Constitution, viz "matters relating to the internal, industrial, economic and political conditions of Northern Ireland, and of direct concern to Northern Ireland members only". The Executive Council shall determine whether motions submitted are in order and its decision shall be final.

#### 4. Business of Conference

The business of Conference may include the following items:

- a. The Report of the Northern Ireland Committee
- b. Special Reports from the Northern Ireland Committee
- c. Motions from affiliated organisations and the Northern Ireland Committee
- d. Guest speaker(s) invited by the Northern Ireland Committee

#### 5. Methods of Voting on Motions and Reports

Voting at Conference shall be confined to delegates and on this occasion shall be via the zoom voting software which will be used at this virtual BDC, each delegate having one vote. Voting on motions shall be taken after the end of each session/group of motions as per the agenda. A vote on the conference report in its entirety will be taken directly after the vote on all motions is concluded.

## 6. Limitation of Speeches

No speaker shall speak more than once on the same question except the mover of a motion replying to the discussion. Proposers and seconders of motions shall have 3 minutes and 2 minutes respectively. Speakers on motions shall have 2 minutes. A list of those proposing and seconding motions and speakers to motions along with their mobile number so they are contactable on the day if necessary must be received by the secretariat via email to [gillian.allen@ictuni.org](mailto:gillian.allen@ictuni.org) no later than the close of business on 16th March 2021.

## 7. Executive Council

Executive Council members and Congress Officials are entitled to attend Conference. Officials may speak as appropriate on motions or reports.

## NO GOING BACK/COLLECTIVE BARGAINING/ WORKERS RIGHTS

### 1 UNISON

No Going Back –  
Trade Unions Demand for A Rights Based Society

### 2 NIPSA

No Going Back

### 3 SIPTU

Automation

### 4 COMPOSITE MOTION: PCS/FSU/CRAIGAVON TRADES COUNCIL/DERRY TRADES COUNCIL

Changing the Rules to Protect Workers –  
Strong Unions, Strong Rights

### 5 USDAW

Christmas and New Year Working

### 6 EQUITY

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Work Travel Rights for Creative Industries Professionals

## EQUALITY

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### 12 OMAGH TRADES COUNCIL

Oppose Gold Mining in the Sperrins

### 13 PROSPECT

Freelancers in the Creative Industries & Pandemic Support

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Exploitation of Seafarers

### 15 UCU

Tuition Fees

## HEALTH

### 16 ROYAL COLLEGE OF MIDWIVES

Safer Working Environments

### 17 PDA

Parity for Pharmacists in the Health Care Sector

### 18 FERMANAGH TRADES COUNCIL

Caring for Carers

### 19 COMPOSITE MOTION: SOCIETY OF RADIOGRAPHERS, ULSTER TEACHERS' UNION & MID-ULSTER TRADE'S COUNCIL

Better Mental Health Resourcing, Support and Awareness



## NO GOING BACK/COLLECTIVE BARGAINING/ WORKERS RIGHTS

### 1 UNISON

#### No Going Back - Trade Unions Demand for A Rights Based Society

Conference notes that since the return of devolved Government in Northern Ireland in January 2020, workers across both public and private sectors have either been at the frontline in responding to the worst global public health crisis in living memory or have been plunged deeper into poverty through job loss.

Key workers have shown incredible dedication and made major sacrifices, putting themselves in harm's way to protect us all and keep society functioning.

Conference pays tribute to all workers for the sacrifices they continue to make and demands that pay justice and workers' rights become an immediate priority for Government and employers.

To this end Conference endorses the ICTU 'No Going Back' proposals as the template for all future engagement. 'No Going Back' recognises the toll that years of austerity have taken on our public services pre-pandemic; demands genuine rebuilding and investment in our public sector; calls for our members who continue to deal with the pandemic to be properly valued, no longer be

subject to precarious work, and be able to access collective bargaining; highlights the need for a social security system that can genuinely deliver a decent standard of living; highlights the need for a major public housing programme undertaken by public agencies; and calls for fundamental reform of government revenue.

Conference notes with serious concern the 'flat cash', single year Northern Ireland budget for 2021 - 22 that will not provide a stimulus for economic recovery and does not provide enough resources for public services to meet rising demands. This follows the November 2020 Comprehensive Spending Review at Westminster which failed to provide the sustained, multi-year funding settlement needed for Northern Ireland as our public services and economy try to rebuild from Covid-19 and meet the challenges presented by Brexit.

Conference further notes that the new Executive Programme for Government has been developed in the absence of genuine consultation and engagement with the trade union movement, and reminds Government that its previous failure to properly consider pay justice and worker's safety led to concerted industrial

action in health in 2019/20 and was a key pressure point in the restoration of devolution.

Conference agrees that, particularly noting the huge sacrifices made by our collective membership in continuing to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, the failure of the Northern Ireland Executive to fully engage with ICTU on the same basis as our trade union counterparts in Scotland and Wales is now untenable.

The 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement sets out a range of actions on equality and human rights which must be urgently delivered, including on the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, on workers' rights, on an Anti-Poverty Strategy and other equality strategies which are long overdue. However direct trade union engagement on developing strategies and action plans on these issues, which are core trade union demands, is selective and piecemeal.

Conference notes the ongoing threat that Brexit poses to the rights of our members, their families and their communities. The EU - UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement contains only weak commitments on the 'level playing field' that do not require future dynamic alignment on worker's rights and open up the potential for further divergence from existing standards. Whilst the Northern Ireland Protocol offers some limited protection for rights and equality standards, Conference agrees that the ICTU must be recognised as having a central role in monitoring and challenging the erosion of rights through future joint working mechanisms.

Conference therefore calls on the incoming Northern Ireland Committee to develop a new political engagement strategy towards the NI Executive and the UK Government, using all the tools available to the trade union movement to ensure that:

- the UK Government honours its commitments and makes the necessary resources available for our public services;
- all parts of the Executive develop bi-lateral relationships with ICTU to produce the cross-cutting policies, strategies and outcomes required to improve the social and economic position of all the people;
- the NI Executive take cognisance of the Equality Coalition 'Manifesto for a Rights Based Return', endorsed by ICTU, through genuine power sharing between the parties in government, and
- the rights of workers, their families and their communities are not eroded as a result of Brexit, but instead strengthened moving forwards.



## 2 NIPSA

### No Going Back

Conference, the past year has seen us having to face unprecedented challenges with tragic loss of life and economic damage from the global pandemic impacting on workers and their families here and across the world. Northern Ireland has seen over 1,700 Covid-related deaths. This includes family members and workers and retired workers many of them trade union activists. Congress pays tribute to each and every worker and activist who lost their lives due to Covid-19. Economically, Northern Ireland has experienced the loss of thousands of jobs with up to 70,000 workers still on furlough and the economy shrinking to historically low levels.

The pressures facing our colleagues working on the front-line is colossal with many experiencing PTSD and other illnesses. While some employers have supported their workers in these difficult times, many have not and tens of thousands of workers have been made redundant and the threat of more to follow in the months ahead. In this regard, it is significant that the Department of Communities are in the process of recruiting an additional 450 permanent and fixed term workers to deal with the expected redundancies in the remainder of this year and beyond.

Unfortunately, political behaviour within our political system has not delivered for the people of Northern Ireland with political infighting on key issues relating to Covid including some opposition to urgent comprehensive Lockdowns compounding failures of both messaging and delivery. This incoherence, operating in a Health and Social Care

system that already lacked long-term strategic investment, has meant that workers and their families have been failed during the pandemic.

Since 23 March 2020 many workers have also moved to work from home as part of the Covid response. Congress commends all workers who moved to work remotely, many in very difficult circumstances, seeking to juggle work, home schooling and caring responsibilities. However, this has health and safety consequences, including the mental health issues that will be a burden for many workers now and will be well into the future. Conference welcomes the work of affiliates and NIC ICTU in delivering many courses aimed specifically at working from home, returning to work in a safe way and other interactive webinars to assist activists at this difficult time.

The trade union movement is the largest civic society organisation representing workers. Therefore, it is incumbent that the movement press forward with a whole plethora of policies and issues which will deal with the fall out of the pandemic, whether that be the impact on workers, on the economy or on the future of society. Conference therefore welcomes the publication of the 'No Going Back' document. This clearly sets out a clear and future path. Conference therefore calls on the incoming NI Committee to ensure that no stone is left unturned in convincing others that this a path to recovery – one based on collective provision and solidarity - which will benefit society and workers for the next decade and beyond.

### 3 SIPTU

#### Automation

Automation is not a new challenge to the Trade Union movement, however, the pace of change posed by new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) & digitalisation is staggering with some estimates putting jobs effected as high as 35% in the UK and 47% in the US. This has radical and long reaching consequences for the world of work, TU members and communities.

Northern Ireland is particularly at risk from the adverse effects of new technologies, such as automation, due to its reliance on service sector jobs, those sectors deemed to be most affected by replacement and displacement of existing jobs. Of course, its effects will be felt across all sectors with transport, retail and finance being the at the cutting edge of change at present, however, all occupations and sectors will be impacted.

We should also recognise that new technologies also present us with opportunities to organise and gain real benefits for workers. Key to this will be our ability to collectively organise and bargain, without changes to legislation and a campaign of renewal in the TU's, workers voice in the new technological transition will be lost. AI and respective technologies have the capacity to make workers lives better, we must ensure that large swathes of citizens are not left behind.

In a world where technology creates few jobs but enormous wealth (the period of AI has become one of labour replacement), the challenge is a distributional one. Regardless of what the future of technology holds, it is up to us in the trade union movement to shape its economic and societal impact. It is for our movement to make technology enabling for workers and their families and for this technological advance not to be exploited in the interests of employers.

We must demand a fair share in the form of higher wages, decent jobs, less time at work and most importantly that those most affected by technological change should be the ones that benefit most from it.

Conference calls on NIC-ICTU:

- To explore and map out potential areas of risk posed by new technologies across sectors;
- This should also include new jobs, activities and areas of production which would enable the creation of decent job growth and job options new technologies may enable. This should be carried out on an NI and all island basis, especially in the context of Brexit;



- Lobbying for new legislation to protect workers faced with technological displacement/replacement;
- To lobby the NI Assembly to form an institutional framework to assist workers displaced by digitalisation/automation which would give intensive support and training to workers. To seek best practice and models in an international context e.g. Swedish "Job Security Councils", which include employers and unions. This model sees over 90% of those affected by technological displacement return to employment within 12 months. NIC-ICTU could progress via Better Work Better Lives Campaign;
- Increased rights to Collectively Bargain & Organise as any just transition posed by automation is meaningless without workers' voice within that process. Collective bargaining will be central to bargaining for job security and new technology agreements;
- 4 day working week with no loss of pay, along with worker friendly flexible working arrangements via any productivity gains which new technologies engender.
- Education and training in skills needed for the future, including quality apprenticeship schemes.



#### **4 COMPOSITE MOTION: PCS/FSU/CRAIGAVON TRADES COUNCIL/DERRY TRADES COUNCIL.**

##### **Changing the Rules to Protect Workers – Strong Unions, Strong Rights**

Securing decent jobs is a core aim of all trade unions, to build a better future for all we need to win fairly paid jobs across all sectors. To do this we need to campaign and organise.

Conference calls on affiliate unions and Congress to support campaigns across all sectors which seek to ensure decent secure employment for working people and their families.

Conference acknowledges that the spread of Covid-19 has seen the best from many workers in many sectors with nurses and health workers risking their lives to protect and save communities, low paid workers such as cleaners, hauliers and retail staff working in difficult environments on low pay to keep services running to public sector workers paying benefits and workers in meat plants to keep money in our pockets and food on our tables.

However, despite this heroic sacrifice, Conference is dismayed that many of these same workers are bearing the brunt of the worst effects of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. Workers are also at risk of losing the protections of EU derived rights, and every affiliate has seen an alarming increase in instances of precarious work, zero hours and temporary contracts, fire and rehire policies, rushed redundancies and increased surveillance and monitoring of workers.

Furthermore, conference endorses campaigns which challenge the 'always on culture' by seeking a 'right to disconnect'. The digital revolution is dramatically changing the business environment in Northern Ireland. While digitalisation will potentially bring employers vast new profit, for workers it threatens to bring redundancies, job insecurity, job precarity, workplace monitoring and surveillance. Conference supports ICTU and affiliate unions in their work to protect workers from the negative impacts of future technology on work.

Whilst the UK Government department BEIS has recently announced a full U-turn on their review of employment rights, there are still concerns over what the future will hold for workers. Conference notes that the current Tory government has been exceptionally hostile to trade union and workers' rights, passing the Trade Union Act 2016, which represented a direct attack on union's ability to effectively represent and organise their members. Whilst the Act was not introduced in NI, thanks to the campaigning of the trade union movement, a raft of anti-trade union legislation is still on the statute books.

Conference enthusiastically supports legislation that will assist the trade union movement in its efforts to improve pay, terms and conditions for all workers, and that creates conditions where trade

unions can more effectively campaign against privatisation in support of public services, for real living wages, for social equality policies and for working class demands. All legislation constraining the efforts of trade unions to organise workers and that acts as a barrier to collective action needs to go now.

Conference congratulates all unions in their campaigns to protect and defend the rights of working people.

Conference calls on the incoming NIC ICTU to:

- Campaign to repeal all anti-trade union laws;
- Campaign to ensure the NI Assembly outlaws fire and rehire practices;
- Support 'right to disconnect' campaigns;
- Support organising, strengthening of collective bargaining and industrial action;
- Campaign for worker and union friendly procurement policies;
- Campaign for strong employment rights, equality and diversity legislation which applies to all workers as a day one right.

These changes would greatly enhance the ability of unions to organise and therefore to win greater job security, pay and conditions for workers and their families. They would raise the standard for all workers and transform the economy in Northern Ireland.

## 5 USDAW

### Christmas and New Year Working

Congress is concerned that many workers in a wide range of different sectors are not receiving a decent break from work over the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

Congress notes the results of the Christmas and New Year working surveys by Usdaw, which show that in Northern Ireland, 80% of respondents said that they spend too little time at Christmas with family and friends.

Christmas Day trading legislation means that nearly all shops do not trade on Christmas Day. However, many retail workers report that for them, Christmas is just a day off, not a holiday. Long hours in the run-up to Christmas and shops re-opening early on Boxing Day leaves many retail workers too exhausted and with insufficient time off to enjoy the Christmas holiday.

Congress is clear that there is no need for excessive working hours in retail over the festive period. Usdaw's survey showed that over half of retail workers in Northern Ireland who worked on Boxing Day reported that their store was either fairly or very quiet.

Congress commits to supporting Usdaw's campaign to allow retail workers to have quality time with family and enjoy the benefit of the break in the way so many of us do rather than use Christmas Day as a day of recuperation. This campaign is calling for:

- Early closure on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve;
- Closure on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day;
- No loss of pay for retail workers when stores are closed.



## 6 EQUITY

### **Brexit – Work Travel Rights for Creative Industries Professionals**

The omission of creative professionals from the list of self-employed workers benefiting from visa free travel for work purposes in Annex 3 is a huge blow to entertainment workers, the impact of which will be immediate and far reaching.

Equity has already received reports of casting breakdowns for TV and film posted in the UK requiring only EU passport holders to apply. Similarly instances of job adverts for circus and other touring overseas performance work recruiting in the UK making similar demands have been brought to our attention.

Equity calls on the NIC-ICTU to support our campaign for the inclusion of creative professionals in the list of self-employed workers benefiting from visa travel for work purposes.

## EQUALITY

### 7 Retired Workers' Committee (Proposed by NIC)

#### Age Discrimination Legislation

Delegates will recall that in 2016 this conference passed a motion calling on the NI Executive and Assembly to complete the legislation designed to outlaw discrimination on the grounds of age a requirement under the 1998 Belfast Agreement and the subject of equivalent legislation in England, Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

The legislation was almost ready to be passed when the institutions of the Belfast Agreement collapsed in January 2017, but there is an opportunity again to finally complete this unfinished business. This is not a tokenistic concession to the lobbying and campaigning power of older people. Rather, it's fulfilment would be a suitable tribute to our citizens who refuse to fade away from public life upon retirement, many of whom are trade union activists of long standing, still active in their unions, in the National Pensioners' Convention and the NI Age Sector Platform, which ceased operations this year.

It is appropriate that the pledge in New Decade New Approach to include this issue as a 'priority concern', and it deserves to be honoured as part of the next Programme for Government.

The proposed legislation presented in 2015 for consultation from OFMDFM (now The Executive Office) is far from perfect but it represents an important first step.

Conference believes that age discrimination legislation in relation to goods facilities and services must:

- Be framed with a strong purpose clause containing a series of clearly articulated goals;
- Include the public, private and voluntary sector in its scope;
- Include strong protections for older people across all areas of goods facilities and services, in particular health and social care and financial services;
- Include people of all ages in the scope of the legislation;
- Learn from the experience of the pandemic not to marginalise our elder citizens, but to value their continued contribution to our society.

This Conference therefore calls on the NI Executive to take steps to introduce legislation to address this issue without further delay. Our older citizens do not have the time to wait.



## 8 NASUWT

### Eradicate Sexual Harassment from Workplaces

Conference is deeply concerned by the compelling evidence of the increasing incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace, including sexist 'jokes' and 'banter', unwanted touching and the growing objectification of women and girls.

Congress notes that the NASUWT's research indicates that one in five members has experienced sexual harassment in the workplace by a colleague, manager, parent or pupil since becoming a teacher.

Conference is concerned by the widespread reluctance among teachers and other staff to report harassment for fear of not being believed by employers and that even when this abuse is reported, in the majority of cases, little or no effective action is taken by employers to address the harassment.

Conference asserts that this is not only having a damaging impact on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of women teachers, but is also creating a climate of premature sexualisation of children, and in particular young girls.

Conference affirms that schools should be places of safety and must be supported in tackling the problem of sexual harassment or violence towards either pupils or staff.

Conference therefore calls upon the ICTU to campaign for:

- a mandatory requirement on employers to record and report incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against staff in schools;
- schools to foster an environment in which individuals can be confident that when reporting incidents of sexual harassment, such complaints will be taken seriously and acted upon;
- increased awareness among employers that sexual harassment can intersect with other forms of prejudice and discrimination, including on grounds of age, class, community background, disability, gender identity, race/ethnicity, religion/belief or sexuality;
- affiliates to work with other civil society organisations to end sexual harassment in the workplace and wider society; and
- the introduction of legislation to give wider protection from third party harassment to all employees with protected characteristics.

## THE ECONOMY

### 9 UNITE

#### Just Transition

Awareness of the scale and urgency of the climate crisis and the wider environmental threats faced as a result of unsustainable capitalist economics is growing among all sections of the community, most especially the young.

Trade unionists have joined and been inspired by the vigorous approach adopted by young Climate Strike protesters. The role of the trade union movement in securing real movement by governments both domestically and globally is a vital one.

Workers need to be empowered in the process of change that is needed to transition to a sustainable, post-carbon economy. There are huge opportunities – in terms of jobs and skills from such a transition – but there are also huge risks and threats.

The recent struggles by workers in Harland & Wolff and Wrightbus demonstrated the way in which the fight for jobs, skills and investment is increasingly tied to the demand for a sustainable economy that meets the needs of working-class people. Workers cannot be side-lined from shaping the economic transition, instead they must play a central and deciding role. It is vital that the trade union movement, in particular those representing the trade unions representing workers in industries which will face the

greatest change, is centrally involved in securing a truly Just Transition.

Workers cannot and will not bear the cost of climate change or regressive taxes which are driven in the interests of the few but justified on their environmental necessity. Real environmental and economic change must start with a recognition of the role of the rapacious and inherently chaotic capitalist economy on a global scale as a driver of unsustainable exploitation of both nature and workers.

Conference mandates the incoming NI committee to bring forward a #JustTransition campaign to engage politicians, academics and decision-makers at all levels to demand a seat for workers and their trade unions at every table where decisions are being made affecting workers or delivering the new economy.



### 10 BELFAST AND DISTRICT TRADES UNION COUNCIL

#### No Privatisation of Housing

Conference notes that unions and the broader trade union movement, along with many public housing activists and campaigners have long agreed that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has been deliberately underfunded for more than two decades and that this has created what is now widely accepted as a public housing crisis. Conference also notes that a recent announcement about a wide-ranging social housing reform programme by the Department for Communities Minister has been hailed by most political parties as a panacea to resolve the housing crisis. It is acknowledged that there are some positive proposals contained in the Minister's announcement, including efforts to tackle rogue landlords, provide greater security of tenure for those in the private rental sector, as well as proposing other changes to free up land for a reinvigorated house building programme. However the other proposals, including reclassifying the Housing Executive as some sort of mutual/not for profit/cooperative entity is not the answer. It is in fact a political decision to privatise public housing provision and Conference completely rejects that decision.

Conference notes that to predesignate the NIHE in this way would result in the NIHE becoming a private body, governed by an unaccountable Board, with minimal or reduced tenants' rights, little or no accountability to or scrutiny by the Assembly or the Minister.

The new Board would have the power to set its own rent levels for tenants, as well as make decisions around its own stock (homes), including the power of eviction, without challenge. This approach is clearly not the answer.

Conference agrees that if this suggested break-up of the Housing Executive is pursued it will see the destruction of the NIHE as a public housing authority. We also cannot ignore the history of division regarding housing provision here, being one of the major demands of the civil rights campaign, resulting in the establishment of the publicly accountable Housing Executive. The starting point in this debate should be a clear political commitment to retain the NIHE as a public housing authority and then find ways to facilitate borrowing and funding, to enable the Housing Executive to commence an ambitious building programme as well as undertaking much needed repairs and upgrades for its tenants. Dismantling the Housing Executive is not the answer.

Conference applauds NIPSA for the work they have done over more than a decade in keeping the retention of the NIHE as a major priority of the trade union movement and the whole community, supported by the commission of a number of important publications by Dr Stewart Smyth from the University of Birmingham, that sets out in detail the problems experienced by the NIHE over many years,

including recommendations about how these problems could be remedied. Conference also notes the ongoing engagement with the DfC Minister and civil servants on the future plans and potential impact on staff.

Conference agrees that it is critical that when a decision on a proposed way forward is reached, that along with full protections of staff affected, that tenants' democratic rights are fully protected and that they are given an opportunity to vote on proposals which will have such a major impact on their own futures and that of their families. The issues involved in the Social Housing Reform Programme obviously go beyond the important issues about protecting the staff, but reach across the entire community. Conference agrees that the Trade Union movement has an important role to play in joining with unions and other bone fide organisations and community and tenant groups in broadening this debate to ensure that the NIHE remains in public control and ownership and that public housing remains a right for all who need and seek it.

Conference calls for a campaign, led by the trade union movement, which secures the future of the NIHE as a publicly owned and accountable housing authority, protects the rights of staff, defeats any attempts to privatise that function and retains tenants' rights to be fully consulted, including their right to a vote, before any decisions are taken about transferring to any new body or organisation.

## 11 CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY

### Covid Recovery and Rehabilitation

NIC-ICTU notes that rehabilitation must be recognised as an unmissable part of Covid-19 recovery, and leaders and policy makers need to be taking urgent action to ensure that this is delivered.

Recent modelling and evidence suggests that a significant number of people who develop COVID-19 will require health and care input to support their recovery and that rehabilitation is central to the short and long term management of patients with COVID-19.

In December 2020 the Office for National Statistics released survey results which revealed that,

- 1 in 5 of those testing positive for COVID-19 have symptoms for five weeks or longer, and that
- 1 in 10 of those testing positive for COVID-19 have symptoms for twelve weeks or longer.

Congress further notes that in addition to those with COVID there are significant non-COVID rehabilitation needs as a consequence of the pandemic, including people whose health and function are now at risk due to pauses in planned care, delayed diagnosis and treatment, and deconditioning in those with long term conditions.

NIC-ICTU is calling on Northern Ireland Executive to significantly increase investment in community rehabilitation services and confirms its support for a 'right to rehabilitation' for everyone who needs it.

NIC-ICTU is further calling for the Department of Health, to publish as a matter of urgency, a Rehabilitation Framework to support service planning for the expected demand for rehabilitation and recovery of both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 populations in adults and children.



## **12 OMAGH TRADES COUNCIL**

### **Oppose Gold Mining in the Sperrins**

This Conference reaffirms the policy of Congress to oppose the mining of gold in the Sperrin mountains. Conference believes this would cause massive environmental pollution to an area of outstanding natural beauty, threaten the entire Foyle River system, and be a hazard to the health of those who live in the area. Congress notes that, rather than create jobs, the proposed mining would damage existing and future sustainable jobs in agriculture, the food industry and tourism.

Congress believes trade unionists have a duty to defend the environment. We believe that the supposed trade-off between jobs and pollution is a dangerous illusion. Congress welcomes the campaigns of opposition from communities in the Sperrins, and pledges support to all genuine community-based campaigns which stand by trade union principles.

## 13 PROSPECT

### Freelancers in the Creative Industries & Pandemic Support

It is noted that coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on all workers across the economy, and in particular freelancers and the self-employed within the creative industries in Northern Ireland, who have fallen between the gaps of income support schemes and been left with no financial support.

Conference resolves to:

- highlight the hardship experienced by freelancers in the creative industries, since the beginning of the Covid crisis;
- lobby the NI executive to recognise and rectify this;
- campaign for a 'new deal' for freelancers to achieve increased rights and job security, within the framework of the 'Better Work, Better Lives' campaign.

## 14 RMT

### Exploitation of Seafarers

Conference is deeply concerned at the impact of Covid-19 on jobs and terms and conditions of employment for seafarers working on Irish Sea routes.

Conference notes that in early April, days into the first lockdown, Stena Line unilaterally scrapped the company sick pay scheme for seafarers and port workers which had been agreed with trade unions, leaving key workers required to self-isolate or actually infected with Covid-19 to rely on statutory sick pay.

Conference supports the RMT's work to oppose this move in Stena Line and the steps taken to support members and all crew on the Cypriot-registered Stena Edda on the Birkenhead-Belfast route, which saw an outbreak of Covid-19 infections amongst seafarers in December 2020.

Conference is concerned that this case alone demonstrates the invidious position which some employers are placing seafarers and port staff in by hacking back terms and conditions of employment, such as sick pay. No worker should feel pressure to go to work when they do not feel well, at any time but particularly during a pandemic driven by a successfully mutating virus.

Conference supports the RMT's campaign for measures to tackle seafarer exploitation on domestic and international routes. This is particularly important in the Irish Sea, where operators continue to

fly in crews from eastern Europe and across the world to pay them considerably less than a domestic seafarer would be paid for doing the same job.

Conference notes the effect of the pandemic on crew changes in the international shipping industry, which have ensnared 400,000 Ratings and Officers. Thousands of seafarers have been forced to work well beyond the end of their contracts and beyond the end of the minimum legal protection in the Maritime Labour Convention which requires safe passage home, free of charge, for seafarers after a maximum of 11 months working at sea. Thousands of the most exploited, fatigued and isolated seafarers have been working at sea now for over 18 months in some cases.

Conference strongly believes that modern island economies require domestic Ratings, Officers and port workers to operate a diverse range of merchant ships and port services, including in the burgeoning offshore renewables sector.

Conference wholeheartedly supports RMT's continuing campaigns in the maritime industry to increase the number of domestic seafarers covered by collective bargaining agreements with local trade unions. These include the introduction of cabotage legislation to increase employment on domestic routes and the use of post Brexit equality, employment and immigration laws.



### 15 UCU

#### Tuition Fees

Conference notes that one of the great benefits of devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has been the ability to improve access to third level education. In this, Scotland led the way by abolishing student fees, something which UCU fully supports for all regions. Here in Northern Ireland, proposals to remove the cap on student fees were resisted by UCU Branches at the two universities and Training Colleges and rejected by an independent inquiry in 2010. UCU, along with NUS/USI and the students' unions in both Universities led the successful campaign to 'keep the Cap on fees'. Conference also reiterates its opposition to crippling student fees and fully supports those ongoing campaigns which seek to abolish tuition fees in their entirety.

Conference welcomes the return of devolved government at Stormont after a three year hiatus but is disappointed by the DUP Leader, Arlene Foster's unilateral and unprompted suggestion that higher tuition fees should once again be on the agenda for debate. Student fees are currently £4,275 per annum. Conference notes that students borrowing money to pay these fees have interest added from day one. Once the student graduates and earns about 2/3 of the median full-time wage, that loan has be paid back at the rate of 9% of income above the threshold.

Conference agrees that lifting or abolishing the cap on tuition fees is not a fair way to fund university education and any proposal to raise fees will make things worse for existing and prospective students. Conference notes the numerous reports over recent years which have highlighted the fact that the introduction of tuition fees discourages young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those from marginalised communities and areas of multiple deprivation. Research has also demonstrated the growing problem of educational underachievement of working class protestant boys. Any attempt to raise tuition fees will only add a further financial obstacle against attempts to reach out to everyone across the whole community, regardless of their background. Third level education should never be the preserve of the elite.

Conference notes that the industrial base that once sustained employment for many in Northern Ireland is largely gone. If we want to construct a shared and prosperous future for young people we must equip them with the education and skills they need without crippling them with debt. Compared to other European countries, fees in Northern Ireland are already high.

Conference accepts that the largely English system of lending students relatively large amounts of money to pay high fees is neither fair nor efficient, and seeks only to create the space for private 'for profit' providers who care little about the educational welfare or achievement of young people and students.

Conference applauds the work undertaken to date by the NUS/USI and others, including UCU, to protect access to university education for all and fully supports the ongoing campaign to resist any attempts by the Assembly to impose greater financial burden on students through abolishing the cap on tuition fees.

Conference reiterates its support for free third level education for all.

## HEALTH

### 16 ROYAL COLLEGE OF MIDWIVES

#### Safer Working Environments

The birth of a baby is a significant life event and many parents capture this moment on video and by taking photos. This has always been supported and facilitated by the midwives caring for the women and their partner during labour.

Recently we are finding a small number of 'social media influencers' who are videoing their labour and birth for BLOGS. These recordings are being posted on social media sites and payment is changing hands. This is a business venture the woman and/or their partners have engaged in.

Midwives are finding themselves in a situation where they have not consented to being recorded and are being told they will be edited out. Recording equipment is being brought into and used in a clinical setting which is potentially disruptive to care and may negatively impact on safety in a clinical environment.

Some of these recordings are taking place covertly with the use of cameras placed in the room without the midwives knowledge or consent.

If television crews or other media wish to record or report from health care settings they must obtain consent and follow strict guidelines. Why should staff have to deal with the public freely recording in health care settings without consent or following any guidelines?

The recordings made by the woman or their family members enables them to decide what they wish to share or post on their social media site but the midwife has no say in this matter. Midwives have no control over this recorded material.

Midwives are effectively being recorded without their consent and the videos are being shared for financial gain. This is totally unacceptable.

We call on conference to support this motion to actively raise awareness of this issue and to support a campaign of education and awareness raising for our members and the public. Midwives are already working in difficult and stressful situation where their focus is rightly on safe care for the women. It is not always possible to avoid cameras in health care settings as that could impact adversely on clinical care.



We need to give control to the midwives to ensure they have the right to consent or not, to this type of activity and to ensure employers provide effective guidelines to their staff which protects their privacy and their rights to give or withhold consent and to ensure the working environment meets all health and safety requirements.

We need to work to ensure our staff are protected while also ensures that parents have every reasonable opportunity to record one of the most important events of their lives.

The rights of our members to work in an environment that is safe and free from additional stress must be ensured to enable them to carry out their duties in the safest and most appropriate way.

### 17 PDA

#### Parity for Pharmacists in the Health Care Sector

Congress recognises that community pharmacies form part of the NHS and during the pandemic have become the primary access point in the community to NHS services, and have supported hospital efforts when redeployed in secondary care. Pharmacists also play a vital role in improving the health literacy of the population. Despite this, they are often overlooked for recognition of their input, falling into the gaps between medical, nursing and AHP colleagues.

This disparity has been illuminated during the pandemic with pharmacists initially being excluded from PPE provision, health and safety risk assessments, bonus, and vaccinations for locums secured by the PDA Union campaigns.

The Department of Health, Health and Social Care Board, and Trust employers have a duty to protect the health, safety and well-being of pharmacy workers, and to safeguard the role of the workforce in evolving specialist/additional services.

Congress calls upon the Executive Council to campaign for:

- Parity of working conditions, professional respect and safety for pharmacists when providing services comparable to that of medical, nursing and AHP colleagues, including a zero tolerance to abuse, threat or assault in pharmacy premises building on existing PDA Union campaigns;
- The development of a framework for safe staffing levels, flexible working, and adequate breaks for pharmacy staff to enable time to be spent on patient-facing clinical activities and for the pharmacists' own wellbeing;
- The Department of Health to raise public awareness and that a modern health service includes multidisciplinary teams in which the contribution of all health professionals should be valued and respected.

## 18 FERMANAGH TRADES COUNCIL

### Caring for Carers

There are 272,000 unpaid carers before COVID hit our shores. Many in their 60s/70s/80s have been caring all of their lives for loved ones; being financially starved, plus not getting a full state pension. We are proposing a motion for carers who are unpaid, also known as informal carers by the health trusts. Unpaid carers save the NI executive the equivalent to the health budget for all of Northern Ireland, according to a Carers NI report, Valuing Carers (2015) – the rising value of carers' support.

We call on conference to demand recognition of the informal caring work force and campaign for:

- Carers obtaining a living wage;
- Carers allowance being raised to £200 per week;
- Carers being recognised & being able to obtain flexibility in the workplace;
- Bring carers workforce, into the professional arena, like social workers, nurses, classroom assistants & nursery assistant;
- Specialist help with the different syndromes requiring support.;
- All carers should be receiving a 'Carers Card' to give discounts on food etc.



### 19 COMPOSITE MOTION: SOCIETY OF RADIOGRAPHERS, ULSTER TEACHERS' UNION & MID-ULSTER TRADE'S COUNCIL

#### Better Mental Health Resourcing, Support and Awareness

Conference notes that the "New Decade, New Approach" agreement in January 2020 set out a mental health strategy that led to the Department of Health "Mental Health Action Plan" in May 2020. Conference further notes that the draft Programme for Government prioritises mental health and wellbeing. However, the COVID-19 situation continues to impact negatively on the mental health and wellbeing of pupils, education workers and families across Northern Ireland and fundamental inequalities which have existed for many years have been laid bare.

Conference notes that NI has one of the highest suicide rates in the world and nearly twice the average suicide rate than in England; suicide has killed more people than the troubles in Northern Ireland. 1 in 5 adults in NI have a diagnosable mental health disorder, with a 20% higher chance of having a mental disorder than the rest of the UK. The extent of mental health disorders in NI has resulted in NI with the highest rate of anti-depression subscriptions in the UK.

Workplace stress, which can lead to mental health problems, is also on the rise.

We are currently experiencing a Covid-19 pandemic and with that mental health issues related to the health emergency, such as

anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and sleep disorders are more likely to affect healthcare workers, especially those on the frontline, migrant workers, and workers in contact with the public. Conference recognises that mental health is currently in crisis from Tory imposed DUP/SF cuts to health funding; In addition, Stormont does not take mental health disorders in NI seriously and has not addressed the underlying issues at health care level nor tackled the social issues of providing better jobs, education, housing etc that has added to this mental health crisis.

The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland estimates, based on GB figures, that there are 15,000 cases of work related stress, anxiety and depression in Northern Ireland each year. While a 2018 UK-wide report from Investors in People (IIP) highlighted the Northern Ireland region as having the greatest percentage of employees who are experiencing stress as a result of work, with 85% saying they have felt stress while at work.

Trade union representatives and Officers are dealing with more members than ever before who have mental health problems which may be further exacerbated by employment issues and processes such as workplace investigations, disciplinary processes and stressful or traumatic events at work.

We must also remember that under health and safety legislation, employers have a duty of care to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of their workforce is protected. This must include risk assessments to identify health and safety hazards, including factors which give rise to workplace stress.

We request as a collective trade union movement that more support and care is provided for our representatives, who themselves may have mental health issues that could be triggered by dealing with member cases. We need to be proactive rather than reactive in protecting our representatives.

We call on conference to:

- campaign and lobby for additional funding for mental health services, political recognition of the mental health impact of the conflict in NI and the link between poverty and mental health issues;
- Ensure that workplace stress and managing mental health is highlighted to the Northern Ireland Executive in the context of the new Mental Health strategy;
- review what is in place for trade union representatives regarding managing stress at work and mental health awareness and support;
- ensure that all necessary pressure is exerted across the various departments of the Northern Ireland Executive to ensure that they honour their commitments and deliver the mental health strategies and services that our children, workers and wider society need and deserve;
- provide sufficient resources to the NIC-ICTU Health Committee, working in collaboration with the NIC-ICTU Health and Safety Committee, to organise seminars on workplace stress and mental health for representatives. Seminars should include employer involvement and draw on best practice from statutory bodies including the HSENI and the Equality Commission.



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