

TRADE UNIONS IN SCOTLAND: FORWARD TO THE 1990s?<sup>(1)</sup>

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Introduction

The Thatcher years have witnessed an overall decline in both the absolute numbers of trade unionists in Britain and in the proportion of workers who are trade union members. TUC membership has fallen from just over 12 million in 1979 to 9.1 million in 1987, while in the same period STUC affiliated members have declined from 1.09 million to 910,942. Trade union density has fallen from its peak of 55% of employed workers to just over 40% today. But it should be remembered that this decline only takes trade union density back to the levels of the 1950s and 1960s, not to those of the 1930s. Recently published figures indicate that, after allowing for industrial structure and workplace size and ownership, Scotland is still, marginally, the most unionised part of Great Britain.<sup>(2)</sup> Much of the recent decline in membership can be attributed to the massive loss of jobs among male manufacturing workers who traditionally were well organised.<sup>(3)</sup> The decline of coal, steel and shipbuilding serves to illustrate the point. But Unions will have to adjust to the changing structure of the economy with the growth of part-time employment, increased numbers of women workers and sectoral change in the economy.<sup>(4)</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the state of trade unions in Scotland; to examine the pressure for change and to assess the extent to which they are ready to meet the challenges of the 1990s. Many of the issues facing the trade union movement in Scotland are the same as those facing the movement in Great Britain as a whole such as the trend towards merger into large general unions. But we will try to highlight Scottish issues and concerns and to focus on some of the particularly Scottish aspects of trade unionism, such as the role of the Scottish Trades Union Congress.

Union Membership in Scotland

A picture of trade union membership in Scotland from 1978-1987 is presented in Table 1. With one or two exceptions, the figures reveal a story of decline in membership of unions organising workers in manufacturing industry. This has particularly affected the traditional industries of coal, rail and steel. There are now more university lecturers who are trade union members than either miners or steelworkers. The decline has also affected

Table 1  
Membership of Principal Unions Affiliated to the STUC 1979-1987

Union	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	% change 1978-1987
<b>Section 1 Fuel &amp; Power</b>											
EETPU	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	35,000	32,000	29,000	27,000	25,500	- 36
NUM	15,752	15,981	15,558	14,202	13,010	10,198	10,088	6,422	3,763	3,538	- 78
<b>Section 2 Transport and Docks</b>											
ASLEF	2,734	2,756	2,788	2,639	2,489	2,404	2,329	2,284	2,199	1,975	- 28
NUR	16,429	16,592	16,532	15,603	14,920	14,310	12,907	12,376	11,577	10,672	- 35
NUS	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	0
TGWU	134,000	134,000	134,000	134,000	134,000	130,000	134,000	133,000	130,000	128,000	
Dyers & Bleachers	7,815	9,940	8,406	6,338	5,000	4,000	-	-	-	-	
Agric. Workers	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	3,519	-	-	-	-	
Total	143,315	145,440	143,906	141,838	140,500	137,519	134,000	133,000	130,000	128,000	- 11
<b>Section 3 Shipbuilding and Engineering</b>											
AEU	120,463	119,788	111,663	110,781	100,001	97,872	95,000	95,000	85,500	80,000	- 34
ISTC	10,436	9,673	8,904	8,751	8,733	8,000	7,000	5,292	4,702	4,160	- 60
TASS	15,155	20,000	20,000	17,988	16,728	15,721	17,705	16,729	16,950	17,988	
Total	145,054	149,461	140,567	137,520	115,462	111,593	117,705	116,221	95,152	85,160	- 41
<b>Sheet Metal Workers</b>											
Total	4,500	4,600	4,002	3,400	3,256	3,000	-	-	-	-	- 27
Total	24,785	29,933	27,338	24,477	22,585	20,783	19,747	17,842	17,998	17,998	- 27



Union	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	% change 1978-1987
<b>Section 4 Building</b>											
UCATT	39,884	39,884	39,884	31,908	30,313	30,313	30,313	30,313	30,131	38,971	- 2
FTAT	4,642	4,642	4,642	4,365	2,638	2,638	3,755	3,386	3,281	3,300	- 29
<b>Section 5 Printing &amp; Paper</b>											
NGA(82)	-	-	-	-	2,247	2,382	2,382	2,617	2,613	2,563	-
NGA	2,047	2,047	2,085	2,032	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SLADE	1,173	1,324	1,025	904	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	3,220	3,371	3,110	2,936	2,247	2,382	2,382	2,617	2,613	2,563	- 20
SOGAT(82)	-	-	-	-	19,219	19,792	19,350	19,095	18,587	18,145	-
SOGAT	23,912	24,296	22,467	20,155	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NATSOPA	2,010	1,010	2,010	2,010	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	25,922	26,306	24,477	22,165	19,219	19,792	19,350	19,095	18,587	18,145	- 30
<b>Section 6 Clothing etc.</b>											
Scottish Carpet											
Workers											
Union	4,504	3,961	2,978	1,874	1,100	1,073	1,058	970	880	804	- 82
NUHKW	4,885	4,885	4,358	4,367	3,897	4,045	4,080	3,774	4,020	3,620	- 26
NUTGW	15,000	18,153	14,000	12,132	9,876	9,884	10,075	10,075	10,020	10,112	- 33
<b>Section 7 Food, Drink, Tobacco</b>											
USDAW	61,258	61,374	57,604	55,672	51,757	49,862	47,591	48,032	47,729	47,131	- 23
<b>Section 8 Non-Manual Workers</b>											
BIFU	15,513	17,463	18,196	18,911	19,957	20,228	20,479	22,154	21,505	22,316	+ 44
BETA	-	-	-	-	-	2,657	2,657	3,202	2,732	2,003	-
ABS	773	854	891	734	958	-	-	-	-	-	-
NATTKE	1,530	1,530	1,500	1,612	1,530	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	2,303	2,384	2,391	2,346	2,488	2,657	2,657	3,202	2,732	2,003	- 13
ASTMS	34,906	37,566	36,566	36,566	30,000	30,000	30,000	25,000	25,000	26,035	- 25
APEX	11,000	10,982	9,008	7,775	6,715	5,809	5,264	5,248	5,658	5,053	- 54

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Union	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	% change 1978-1987
<b>Section 9 Civil and Public Servants</b>											
CPSA	21,204	20,513	19,868	19,983	20,205	19,849	20,081	17,954	18,564	18,799	- 11
NUCPS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,228	-
SCPS	8,200	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	9,000	-	-
CSU	4,454	4,318	4,610	3,954	3,606	3,257	3,549	3,383	3,228	-	-
Total	12,654	13,318	13,610	12,954	12,606	12,257	12,549	12,383	12,228	12,228	- 3
UCW	15,183	16,092	17,448	16,037	15,926	15,667	15,652	15,404	15,234	15,180	0
FBU	3,500	3,500	3,500	4,165	4,165	4,165	4,165	4,722	4,722	5,136	+ 47
COHSE	22,295	22,669	23,322	25,131	26,486	25,147	24,360	24,622	25,198	25,849	+ 16
IRSF	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	3,500	4,000	5,905	5,773	5,885	5,673	+127
NCU	10,251	9,554	10,959	10,893	11,003	10,853	10,498	12,517	11,901	11,654	+ 14
SPOA	2,553	2,567	2,652	2,668	2,736	2,760	2,904	3,021	3,127	3,228	+ 26
<b>Section 10 Local Government</b>											
GMBATU	100,000	105,000	102,400	102,400	102,000	101,368	118,487	115,000	111,892	108,889	-
Boiler-											
makers	25,935	26,076	25,317	24,859	24,442	20,121	-	-	-	-	-
The Scottish Lace & Textile Workers											
Union	600	1,200	1,200	1,041	1,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	126,535	132,276	128,917	128,300	127,442	121,489	118,487	115,000	111,892	108,889	- 14
NALGO	67,111	70,955	75,658	78,476	78,436	78,647	78,642	78,592	78,736	79,689	+ 18
NUPE	60,700	64,000	71,500	74,049	75,212	73,575	72,510	71,443	71,688	70,794	+ 17
<b>Section 11 Education</b>											
EIS	46,985	48,479	47,489	46,515	45,786	45,665	45,559	43,282	42,915	43,519	-
ALCIS	N/A	650	650	650	660	652	660	-	-	-	-
Total	46,985	49,129	48,139	47,165	46,446	46,317	46,219	43,282	42,915	43,519	- 7
ALCES	1,193	990	970	960	884	750	755	735	700	663	- 44
SFHEA	1,750	1,750	1,733	1,733	1,581	1,612	1,660	1,820	1,823	1,821	+ 5
SSTA	N/A	8,642	8,706	7,796	7,510	7,132	7,069	7,496	7,208	7,320	- 15
AUT(S)	3,983	4,089	4,196	4,538	4,488	4,339	4,471	4,188	4,519	4,888	+23
<b>Non STUC organisations</b>											
RCN	11,137	15,712	17,845	18,763	22,090	23,453	24,605	25,545	26,591	27,200	+143

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Source STUC Annual Reports 1979-1988. RCN figures supplied by the RCN.

lighter industries, such as clothing and knitwear manufacture, but particularly carpet making, with a decline in membership of the Scottish Carpet Workers Union of over 80% in the last decade. If the exactitude of the EETPU figures is accepted, then they reveal a sharp decline despite their 'single union no strike' approach to recruitment and organisation. The private service sector of the economy shows a more mixed pattern. The shop workers union, USDAW, has lost about a quarter of its 1978 membership, but USDAW always was in the position of having to keep recruiting in order to stand still, given the nature of employment in the retail industry and its 1987 TUC figures show a small increase. In the banking and insurance industry, however, BIFU has grown by nearly half.

The public sector also presents a mixed picture.<sup>(5)</sup> This sector of the economy traditionally was very highly unionised at around 80%. This figure does not look like changing very much, but within the public sector there has been a sharp decline in absolute membership in the trading sector, e.g. British Coal and British Steel and a less marked decline in union's organising in central government departments, e.g. CPSA and NUCPS. However, the picture is not all decline. The absolute number of fire brigade staff, tax inspectors and prison officers has risen and so too has the membership of the appropriate unions.

In local government, NALGO in Scotland has continued to grow slowly during the 1980s, although its membership on a UK basis has declined from the peak of 1981. Some of this change is due to privatisation of parts of the public sector and most of the relevant unions have amended their rule books to allow them to follow their members into the private sector. NALGO has agreed recently to take manual workers into membership to allow it to offer single union deals in competition with other unions when services are privatised. NUPE, however, has declined from a Scottish peak membership in 1982. In education, ALCES has declined markedly from 1978 to 1988 when it decided to amalgamate with the EIS. On the other hand, both the SFHEA and AUT(S) have grown in recent years despite falls during the early 1980s when education cuts first began to bite. The educational sector is virtually the only part of the Scottish trade union movement to retain separate Scottish unions, although the decade has seen the merger of ALCIS and ALCES into the EIS which puts pressure on the continued viability of other education unions outwith the EIS's banner.

The 1980s have seen a number of mergers of trade unions. While the decade has seen the disappearance of independent Scottish unions such as the Scottish Lace and Textile Workers Union, the main thrust of merger has been a UK wide phenomenon to create a number of large powerful general unions. The former General and Municipal Workers Union has expanded its name and its membership coverage to become the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union. A number of small

regional unions have joined this organisation and its next major merger partner is the white collar workers union APEX. Similarly the TGWU have taken in Agricultural Workers and Dyers and Bleachers as well as a number of smaller unions. MSF (Manufacturing Science Finance) has recently been created combining ASTMS and TASS as a major force in the sectors of the economy suggested by its title. The creation of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants from the former CSU and SCPS is a sign of pressure for change in the public sector. Mergers will continue to be a major feature of trade union organisation in the 1990s and, although, to date, there is little evidence of a Scottish dimension to these changes it has been suggested that if the next general election produces a Labour Scotland but a Tory UK, then there may be moves to establish a separate Scottish public sector union.

Despite the success of some TUC/STUC affiliated unions in increasing their membership in this decade, it should be noted that the organisation which grew most rapidly, both in the UK and in Scotland, was the non-TUC affiliated Royal College of Nursing. The RCN now has more members than the main TUC NHS based union, COHSE. While it was clear during both the NHS dispute and the teachers' pay campaign that there was movement of members between organisations which were perceived as being more or less militant, it would appear that the balance of movement has been in favour of the 'no-strike' RCN in the health service. In teaching the Professional Association of Teachers has also grown although the EIS remains the dominant union in this sector. The issue of membership movement between organisations during dispute situations needs to be investigated further.

### Pressure for Change

Having given this overview of the changes in trade union membership in Scotland in the past decade, it is now necessary to examine some of the pressures for change operating on the Scottish trade union movement. Many of these are not specific to Scotland, but can affect Scotland in particular ways. The issues to be addressed include the levels of unemployment, the changing distribution of employment, workplace size, etc. An overview of sectoral employment change is provided in Table 2.

The main reason for the decline in trade union membership has been the disproportionate rate of closure and job-loss among large highly unionised manufacturing plants. This could be redressed by a recovery in manufacturing, but the dominant trend in employment is away from manufacturing to non-manufacturing industries and from full time to part-time employment.<sup>(6)</sup> Both of these areas, non-manufacturing and part-time employment, are traditionally less unionised and thus are unlikely to be fertile recruiting ground for unions to recover the loss of members in manufacturing employment. Moreover, within manufacturing there is a

**TABLE 2**  
**Employees in Employment in Scotland at June by industry, 1980-1986**  
*thousands*

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
<b>1980 SIC Total Employment</b>	<b>2,082</b>	<b>2,002</b>	<b>1,950</b>	<b>1,899</b>	<b>1,901</b>	<b>1,904</b>	<b>1,888</b>
0 Agriculture, forestry and fishing <sup>(1)</sup>	45	45	39	37	35	34	31
1 Energy and water supply	74	73	72	68	65	60	53
2 Metal manufacturing and chemicals	77	67	63	55	53	52	48
3 Metal goods, engineering and vehicles	239	215	204	195	189	188	182
4 Other manufacturing	248	229	209	194	192	191	181
5 Construction	155	141	135	134	136	136	134
61-63 Wholesale distribution, 66-67 hotels and catering	201	193	200	188	193	195	199
64-65 Retail distribution	194	191	184	183	186	185	186
7 Transport and communication	134	129	124	119	115	115	110
8 Banking, insurance and finance	126	129	135	140	141	146	155
91-92 Public administration and defence <sup>(2)</sup>	171	167	168	171	170	170	175
93-99 Education, health and other services <sup>(3)</sup>	419	422	417	416	425	432	435

- (1) There is a discontinuity in the estimates for agriculture: prior to September 1981, non-principal tenant farmers are counted as employees in employment; from September 1981 they are counted as self-employed.
- (2) Excludes member of H.M. Forces.
- (3) Excludes private domestic services.

Source: Scottish Abstract of Statistics 1987.

shift towards employment in smaller plants, employment in geographical areas which are traditionally less well unionised, such as the South-East of England and in small towns throughout the UK. The decline in employment in parts of the public sector is also weakening a traditionally well organised sector of the economy and means that this sector far from being able to add to overall union membership, will now have to work hard to maintain its own relative position. This will be particularly so if the government succeeds in its attempts to contract out local authority and NHS services in Scotland to the extent that it has already done in England and Wales.

If we examine trends in private sector employment, we can detect a number of factors which militate against trade union organisation. Within the manufacturing sector changes are taking place in terms of plant size, occupational structure, ownership and industrial structure. There is a strong association between large (over 500 employees), plants and unionisation. The trend, however, has been towards smaller plants, with average manufacturing plant size declining by half between 1979 and 1983.<sup>(7)</sup> The decline in Scotland has been less dramatic, but nonetheless the trade union movement will have to address the problem of organising and servicing members in smaller units where there will be increased costs and, perhaps, more resistance to unionisation on the grounds that 'we don't need outsiders because we have good direct relationships with our employer.'

It is also the case that unionisation is lower among white collar workers and the trend is towards more technical and managerial staff being employed. The 1970s witnessed a growth in white collar trade unionism which was attributed to a combination of three factors – the degree of employment concentration, the willingness of employers to recognise unions, and the extent to which recognition was encouraged by the Government.<sup>(8)</sup> There are signs that all three of these conditions no longer apply and any continued change in the occupational structure in favour of white collar workers will potentially pose difficulties for trade unions.

It is argued that Scotland has become a branch factory economy, particularly of US multinationals.<sup>(9)</sup> Such companies are more likely to prefer a non-union environment and therefore there is a possibility that a continued dependence on inward investment may pose difficulties for unions in Scotland. On the other hand, manufacturers tend to adopt a pragmatic line towards industrial relations and many Scottish branch plants have a long history of unionisation. The main approach to union recognition being adopted by companies establishing on greenfield sites is to favour single union deals or no-union arrangements and this also placed the trade union movement in Scotland, and indeed in the UK, in a considerable dilemma. This will be returned to later.

While unions face these difficulties in recruiting and organising in private manufacturing, they face even more difficulties in the private services sector. This has along been an area of low union density. Although the 1984 WIRS survey did indicate a slight increase in membership in this sector, compared to 1980, the figures are still well below those in manufacturing.<sup>(10)</sup> Moreover, much of the growth in this sector has been of the employment of part-time women workers and the evidence again shows that part-timers and women, but especially part-time women workers are less likely to be union members. Although there has been employment growth in private services, the increase of 30,000 jobs between 1979-1986

by no means compensates for the loss of nearly 250,000 jobs in manufacturing and primary industries.<sup>(11)</sup>

Any substantial increase in union members in the future will have to come from this sector. But a number of features of private service employment militate against such growth. This sector has been dominated by small workplaces which have been making union organisation more difficult. However, if the trend is towards smaller establishment size in manufacturing, then the reverse is the case in services.<sup>(12)</sup> Supermarkets are easier to organise than corner stores; estate agent chains linked to banks than one town partnerships. On the other hand, especially in retailing and catering, the nature of the workforce is not conducive to union organisation. These industries are characterised by high labour turnover often of temporary, part time and young workers. Two thirds of all temporary workers are employed in these sectors.<sup>(13)</sup> These characteristics of the workforce make the problems of trade union recruitment all the greater, and associated with low recruitment are problems with recognition. In June 1988 Pontins became the latest company to withdraw union recognition on the basis that union membership had fallen to less than 1 per cent in a workforce of 5,000. Similarly the Stakis and Norfolk Capital hotel chains have withdrawn recognition.<sup>(14)</sup>

#### Unions and New Towns

A general feature of the economy from the 1960s has been the relocation of manufacturing employment away from inner city areas and contributions in favour of more rural locations based on green field sites.<sup>(15)</sup> A key element in such a move in Scotland has been the expansion of the five Scottish New Towns. The implications for this for trade unions has been researched and has become the subject of debate.<sup>(16)</sup>

The state of union organisation in the New Towns is of particular importance as their employment structure has been heavily weighted towards the manufacturing sector and therefore any absence of unions in New Towns must be of particular concern since it cannot be attributed primarily to problems with the service sector.

The basic finding from research conducted into the state of union organisation in the five New Towns is that less than a fifth of all plants recognize unions.<sup>(17)</sup> As can be seen in Table 3, the figure is much lower for Livingston, but higher for Cumbernauld if all premises are included not just those established post 1979. Or, from the viewpoint of individual workers, around 90% of firms in Cumbernauld and East Kilbride have no non-manual employees in a union and nearly two-thirds have no manual unionised employees. Moreover, where unions are recognised this, in most cases is, on the basis of single union recognition. Irvine is the partial exception to this.

**TABLE 3**  
**Extent of Unionisation in New Towns in Scotland**

Town (Date of survey)	% of plants recognising a union for bargaining purposes		% of firms which recognised unions, which did so on a single union bases
	All plants	post 1979	
Cumbernauld (1987)	30.4	20.2	69
East Kilbride (1986)	19.0	n/a	78
Irvine (1985)	n/a	19.4	45
Glenrothes (1985)	n/a	19.6	76
Livingston (1986)	n/a	6.6	54

N/a = not available

Source: Cairns *et al*

Further analysis of the survey results indicate that non-unionism is associated with new plants and small plants (which usually, but not always, are the same thing). For example, 30% of all plants in Cumbernauld recognised unions, but only 20% of those established post 1979. Non-union plants in East Kilbride had grown from 65% to 85% of the sample between 1982 and 1986.<sup>(18)</sup> Similarly as can be seen from Table 4, a large proportion of firms in New Towns are small, and these firms are overwhelmingly non-union.

**TABLE 4**  
**Size of Plant and Union Recognition**  
**In New Towns in Scotland**

Town (Date of survey)	% of companies with less than 10 employees	% of companies with less than 10 employees not recognising unions
Cumbernauld (1987)	40	85
East Kilbride (1985)	70**	-
Irvine (1985)	63*	91
Glenrothes (1985)	72*	88
Livingston (1986)	65*	97

\*\* 1-15 employees

\* Post 1979 companies only

Source: Cairns *et al*

Non-unionisation is not simply a function of size. In East Kilbride the

two largest employers are non-union, accounting for about a third of manufacturing employment. In Cumbernauld, the larger firms were much more likely to recognise unions, but there were very few with more than 200 employees.

The general conclusion of this research is that the five Scottish New Towns exhibit a similar pattern of non-unionism. This is not unique to Scotland. Beaumont and Townley found that a relatively high proportion of recently established plants in the three New Towns in the North West of England (Central Lancashire, Skelmersdale and Warrington Runcorn) were also non-union.<sup>(19)</sup> Milton Keynes is estimated to have only a 20% unionisation rate and was the subject of a special recruitment drive organised through the Trades Council.<sup>(20)</sup>

Non-unionism in Scottish New Towns cannot be blamed on US multinationals alone. Small indigenous firms, some of which do not have a long life span, are a key feature of new town employment. But while the unsuccessful may fade away, the successful ones will grow. If they start non-union, develop non-union, then they may well remain non-union. Taken together, we are talking about substantial numbers of people – an estimate of 10,500 in Irvine, Glenrothes and Livingston.

On the other hand, it could be argued that unions have always had difficulty in recruiting in small firms and that those that grow will eventually be organised when it becomes worthwhile, say once over 100 employees. This view may be overcomplacent now, especially as average plant size is declining and thus fewer plants may expand to this size.

A different interpretation of the state of unions in New Towns is to be found in the work of John MacInnes. MacInnes surveyed New Town manufacturing plants with more than 100 employees.<sup>(21)</sup> The results (from only 30 companies covering only a quarter of employees in manufacturing in the New Towns) showed that over 8 out of 10 plants, accounting for 87% of employment, recognised unions for collective bargaining. Manual union density was put at 95%, but only 50% for white collar workers. In line with this finding, 30% of the plants which recognised unions did so for manual workers only.

These figures would appear to suggest that unionism is well established in large plants in the New Towns and as these cover a high proportion of all workers, then fears of New Towns being at the vanguard of non-unionism are unfounded. However, two further findings reported in MacInnes work lend support to a more pessimistic viewpoint. First, manual recognition was usually agreed when plants were first opened and 85% had been opened since the 1970s or before, indeed 30% before the New Towns were designated. Thus these plants and manual trade unionism at least are long established. However, half the plants without recognition had been

established since 1980 and the newer plants were smaller in size which is in line with national trends, but also in line with a concern about unions' ability to organise smaller plants.

MacInnes argues that the figures on new plants not recognising unions are 'too small to be able to say whether this represents any trend away from recognising unions in the 1980s'.<sup>(22)</sup> But the earlier findings clearly indicate that plants established post 1979 are much more likely to be non-union and employment patterns in the Scottish New Towns are characterised by a simultaneous high rate of job creation and of job loss. All this suggests that the position of non-unionism is an issue which trade unions ought to address.

There are virtually no trade union offices in the New Towns which could serve as a focus for recruitment drives (assuming there was agreement over which union should organise which workforce). The STUC have begun to tackle this issue by seeking agreements with the New Town Development Corporations to alert them to incoming investment so that the appropriate union can be advised of the recruitment opportunity.

#### Unions in Electronics

It is often alleged that the 'high-tec' industries, especially electronics are a feature of non-unionism.<sup>(23)</sup> This is partly associated with location in New Towns. There is some evidence in support of this contention. Cairns' New Town Survey found 70 companies in the electronics sector, all but two of which were non-union.<sup>(24)</sup> The East Kilbride study found all the firms in this sector to be non-union.<sup>(25)</sup> The reason for this may not, however, be due to location, but to more salient features such as plant size and date of opening which are explored in the next section.

MacInnes has disputed the conventional wisdom. In a recent report, MacInnes and Sproull have compared trade unionism in the electronics industry in 1987 with that in 1984. They found that 'union membership in the industry is quite robust and shows little sign of falling off. Overall, six out of ten employees in the industry work in unionised plants and more than four out of ten are union members.'<sup>(26)</sup>

They found 'no statistically significant evidence that non-unionism in the industry was associated with the nationality of ownership, new town location, style of workforce, sector of production or employment, performance of the plant.'<sup>(27)</sup> They did find, however, that larger plants were more likely to be unionised, but that plants established in the 1980s were less likely to recognise unions. Plants which had all their employees on staff conditions were less likely to recognise unions and there was some evidence that semi-conductor manufacture may be significantly associated with non-unionism, but their data did not allow this to be adequately tested

statistically.

Additionally, they found a low incidence of single union deals which contradict any belief that those are the automatic pattern for future union organisation. Moreover as they point out only just over two in every hundred employees in Scotland work in the electronics industry; a proportion below the GB average. Thus they suggest that it would be wrong to assume that the future patterns of work and employment in Scotland will be mainly shaped by what happens in electronics.

One feature of their work which must however be a cause for concern for the trade union movement, is the finding that younger plants are more prevalent in this sector of manufacturing industry and that these are less likely to recognise unions. Coupled with the finding that some companies in this industry are developing non-union human resource management policies, this should again ring alarm bells about what might happen in the future. While the old established plants may remain stable in terms of employment and recognition, newly established plants (if they survive) may not be under any pressure to become unionised when they grow, especially if the 'single status' human resource management policies help create a climate where unions are unwelcome to management and perceived as unnecessary by employees. Indeed MacInnes and Sproull found that of the plants with recognised unions, 55% had been recognised at the time of establishment, and 13% had come after a period of operating of over six years and in 7% of cases over 11 years. This they argue 'suggests that there are some large plants which unions have successfully organised after some years of either indifference or resistance to their efforts',<sup>(28)</sup> but they go on to concede, virtually all of these cases date to the mid-1970s when trade unionism was more buoyant than it is today. Coupled with their finding that recognition is less likely in newly established plants, then it is clear that the successful pattern of establishing recognition at the time of opening has been broken and that therefore new ideas and new methods may be necessary to tackle this problem.

### **Gender and Trade Unionism in Scotland**

One of the key Labour market changes we have detected is the continued increase in women workers, particularly of part-time women workers in the service industries. Indeed the rate of increase of the proportion of women workers has been greater in Scotland compared to the UK in the period 1980-85, so that women were 46.4% of the Scottish 1985 labour force compared to 44.3% in the UK as a whole.<sup>(29)</sup> This means that trade unions will have to recruit more women members if they are to maintain, far less increase, their membership. This in turn may influence the composition of union executives and delegations, and, it could be argued if it does not, male dominated unions may not be able to appeal to the vast army of potential women members. We now turn to an

examination of the position and status of women with the trade union movement in Scotland.

In doing this we are fortunate that there have been two studies of women in unions in Scotland. One, conducted by Esther Breitenbach, reports the situation to 1979<sup>(30)</sup>, while the Trade Union Research Unit (Scotland) has updated the figures to 1986.<sup>(31)</sup>

Breitenbach estimated that in 1979 just over 40% of women workers in Scotland were unionised (compared with just under 38% for GB) and that women formed 35.2% of STUC membership (compared with 28.4% of the TUC).<sup>(32)</sup> She attributed this to the greater preponderance of full time women workers in the Scottish labour force. She also discovered that the unions with a higher proportion of women members in Scotland compared to their GB average were GMWU, TGWU, COHSE and the NUHKW. In the first three cases, this could reflect greater organisation among the higher proportion of public sector workers in Scotland. The second survey was unable to estimate an accurate figure for 1986 due to a low response rate to its questionnaire but put the absolute bottom line of women members at 27.2%, and the 16 (out of 63) affiliates which gave accurate figures had 41.5% women members.<sup>(33)</sup>

Whatever the accurate figure is, it still remains the case in Scotland, as in GB as a whole, that women are under-represented in the hierarchies of trade unions. Breitenbach concluded that the numbers of women full-time officers (FTOs) in unions in Scotland was, with the exception of the Post Office Engineering Union 'in no case commensurate with the size of female membership'.<sup>(34)</sup> On examining women's participation in other levels of union hierarchies she found considerable variation in the level of their activity as measured by office holding from union to union, but felt that 'the most striking feature of women's level of activity is, in general, that it in no way reflects adequately the level of women's membership'.<sup>(35)</sup>

The report prepared from the STUC in 1986 attempted to use statistical analysis to argue that 'the proportion of women in official positions in Trade Unions is directly related to their proportion of membership in Trade Unions.'<sup>(36)</sup> They produced statistically significant evidence to support this view only in the case of women on leading committees in Scotland. This is done on a sample of only 9 unions and all the other regressions were not statistically significant. This seems rather weak evidence, indeed. In fact, Breitenbach had already dismissed the point the STUC researchers were trying to prove when she wrote 'clearly there is a connection between the size of women's membership and their occupation of such positions, at least in the sense that we would not expect women to occupy such positions in unions where they formed only a small minority.'<sup>(37)</sup>

The figures produced in the STUC report, however, continue to show

that women do not hold leading positions in proportion to that which would be expected going simply by membership share. In the case of FTOs only BIFU (one woman rather than two) comes anywhere near a proportionate share. There is evidence of some change in that the TGWU, USDAW, and the EIS have all marginally increased their proportion of women FTOs, but within the EIS, for example, although two thirds of the membership is female, all of the senior officials are men. Similar figures are to be found for other positions such as branch secretary or chairperson. There is evidence of some change since 1979 in that the proportion of women members of the leading Scottish committee of APEX has shot up from 14% to 38%, and of NUPE branch secretaries from 4% to 18%. On the other hand, however, the proportion of women branch secretaries in APEX has declined from 54% to 37%. Where comparisons can be made between the two surveys, the movement is generally small, but in the right direction. We must conclude, therefore, that women are still under-represented in the hierarchies of trade unions and that this continues to be an issue which unions must address.

GMBATU, for example, discovered in 1987 that its female membership was declining less rapidly than its overall membership and consciously began to regeared its activities and concerns towards women. It was recognised that this would pose problems for many male officials who were being asked to bargain on issues they have previously considered soft, or secondary. By the spring of 1988 this policy appeared to be paying off as GMBATU reported a membership increase for the first time since 1979. As John Edmonds put it, 'We are trying to become less macho, distant and remote'.<sup>(38)</sup>

The research evidence on the lack of woman's involvement in unions points to the attitudes of men and the continued expectations of women's domestic roles.<sup>(39)</sup> Many more male trade unionists will have to adopt John Edmond's maxim before women play a fully proportionate role in unions.

### The Role of the STUC

It would not be possible to conclude an overview of trade unionism in Scotland without giving some consideration to the role of the STUC. The STUC has a long tradition of independence being formed in 1897 in response to the 1895 decision of the British TUC to exclude trades councils from direct affiliation.<sup>(40)</sup> Ninety years later there are hardly any separate Scottish trade unions left (SCEBTA, SCWU, SPOA, EIS, SSTA, SFHEA), but the trades councils are still as vociferous as ever, being the main source of left wing views put to Congress. They have also been at the forefront of the moves to create unemployed workers' centres.

While the STUC is an important forum for debate, it has been unable to influence the policies of a Conservative government led from London

with little regard to the precarious parliamentary position of the Tory party in Scotland. The STUC to a large extent operates in a political vacuum without a Scottish Assembly to which it can address its policies and concerns to. Nowhere can this be seen more than with the fate of the document *Scotland: A Land Fit for People*.<sup>(41)</sup> This was presented to the 1987 Congress and represented the STUC's analysis of the state of the Scottish economy and its prescriptions for change. The document was well researched and a widespread circulation had taken place in the movement about its content. It was well received by the media, but two months later a Tory government was again returned to Westminster and so the prospects of implementing the policies were reduced to zero.

As the report stated, 'the establishment of a Scottish Assembly with side ranging economic powers, was 'central' to the creation of a climate and framework within which Scotland and its people can once again flourish'.<sup>(42)</sup> The impetus then shifted to the work of the Standing Commission on the Scottish Economy which drew together a range of expertise across the political spectrum to produce a report on the future of the Scottish economy.<sup>(43)</sup> However, the Conservative party did not play an active part in the proceedings and once again it is unlikely that the government will change its policies.

Clearly, the STUC will continue to champion the cause of industries under threat and initiate campaigns such as the Scottish Health Service Campaign to defend public services and the anti-poll tax campaign. But in the absence of a Scottish Assembly, coupled to the existence of a Tory government, it is unlikely that the STUC will be able to influence decisively key political and economic decisions which will confront Scotland in the next few years.

One area where the STUC is likely to be more involved is that of union recruitment. Campbell Christie expressed his concern at a FBU School at the end of 1987. Unions, he said, had been 'complacent about seeing recruitment as a key union activity and putting resources into the areas where recruitment takes place'.<sup>(44)</sup> The STUC is concerned about the state of unionisation in New Towns and as stated earlier is seeking agreements with the New Town Development Corporations on getting early warnings of new investment.<sup>(45)</sup> This would be with the aim of advising appropriate unions of recruitment opportunities. Here, however, lies a potential problem. While it is in the general interest of the trade union movement and the STUC to ensure as high a union density as possible, it may not be in the particular interest of an individual union to let a rival union organise a new plant, especially if it is on the basis of a single union deal.

This issue came to a head at the beginning of 1988 with the crisis over the proposed Ford plant at Dundee and the dispute between the AEU and TGWU over recognition. The STUC played a very conciliatory role



throughout this affair and is attempting to establish an agreed mode of operation so that new plants will become union rather than non-union plants, even if, from time to time, some particular unions have to suffer disappointments. To this end, the STUC have established a sub-committee on Trade Union Recruitment and Organisation.

The STUC is seeking agreement with the SDA so that the STUC could advise the SDA on the appropriate union(s) to seek recognition. A 1988 Congress motion also committed the STUC to establishing an appropriate mechanism to deal with representation at new work places, with a view to avoiding disputes and being more effective in obtaining recognition.

This issue is related directly to the ability of the TUC to secure an agreement on handling prospective Single Union agreements. At the time of writing this seems likely, at least in the short term, but at the expense of the EETPU being expelled from the TUC. The STUC, unlike the TUC, has not got bogged down in the sole issue of single union deals to the detriment of other policies to aid recruitment and organisation. Nonetheless it is an urgent issue as our earlier overview of the changing state of the labour market and the pressures on trade union recruitment and organisation shows.

#### Summary and Conclusion

There are a number of key points which arise out of this overview of the position of trade unions in Scotland. Both the absolute numbers of people in trade unions and the density has been falling in Scotland as in Great Britain as a whole. But it should be noted that some unions have been expanding and the 1987 TUC figures reveal that 33 out of 83 affiliates increased their membership between 1986 and 1987.<sup>(46)</sup> Much of the decline is attributable to the loss of jobs in the traditionally heavily unionised manufacturing industries. But it is also due to changes in the composition of the workforce – more self-employed, more women, more part-timers, more people in the service industries, fewer in manufacturing and potentially fewer in the public sector. Any future recovery of trade union density cannot rely on the traditional areas of strength; such as manufacturing – because of jobs losses which are unlikely to be recovered – or the public sector – because of the existing high levels of penetration and because the absolute numbers of union members is likely to decline as the number of jobs in the public sector declines.

Unions in Scotland must therefore address certain key questions about recruitment and organisation. The issue must come to the fore. There are signs that this is happening – the establishment of the STUC sub committee on Recruitment and Organisation; the special campaigns by unions such as the TGWU and GMBATU addressed to women, part-timers and youth; the deal for financial services for union members concluded between

GMBATU and TSB (Scotland) and the possible outcome of the TUC Special Review Body. These moves are necessary to develop recruitment tactics relevant to the groups of workers who are under unionised at present – women, part-timers, youth, workers in the service industries and in small companies. Unions will also have to examine ways in which word processing technology can be used to service members directly from permanent offices so that members can receive most of the benefits of membership without there necessarily being employer recognition. The balance of evidence from research in the New Towns suggests that special measures need to be addressed there. Arriving fast is the single European Market and its potential impact on unions.

The STUC appears set to play a leading role in this. It is anxious to see present trends reversed and willing to play an overarching role in the interests of trade unionism rather than that of particular unions. It has the scope to develop such activities in a political climate which precludes the establishment of a Scottish Assembly on which much of its economic and social policies for Scotland is based. In passing such a policy it will, from time to time, come up against objections from particular unions, but the question has to be asked whether fiercely competitive unionism is appropriate in the present circumstances. If the alternative is no trade unionism, then unions will have to co-operate through the medium of the STUC in order to reverse the decline of the 1980s in the 1990s.

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**Glossary**

ABS	Association of Broadcasting Staffs
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
ALCES	Association of Lecturers in Colleges of Education in Scotland
ALCIS	Association of Lecturers in Scottish Central Institutions
APEX	Association of Professional Executive Clerical and Computer Staff
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
ASTMS	Association of Scientific and Managerial Staff
AUT(S)	Association of University Teachers (Scotland)
BETA	Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance
BIFU	Banking Insurance and Finance Union
COHSE	Confederation of Health Service Employees
CPSA	Civil and Public Services Association
CSU	Civil Service Union
EETPU	Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union
EIS	Educational Institute of Scotland
FBU	Fire Brigade Union
FTAT	Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union
GMBATU	General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union
IRSF	Inland Revenue Staff Federation
ISTC	Iron and Steel Trades Confederation
NALGO	National and Local Government Officers Association
NATTKE	National Association of Theatre Technicians and Kinomatic Employees
NATSOPA	National Association of Operative Printers, Graphical and

	Media Personnel
NCU	National Communication Union
NGA	National Graphical Association
NUCPS	National Union of Civil and Public Servants
NUHKW	National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers
NUM	National Union of Mine-Workers
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
NUS	National Union of Seamen
NUTGW	National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers
RCN	Royal College of Nursing
SCEBTA	Scottish Colliery Enginemen, Boilermakers and Tradesmen's Association
SCPS	Society of Civil and Public Servants
SCWU	Scottish Carpet Workers Union
SDA	Scottish Development Agency
SFHEA	Scottish Further and Higher Education Association
SLADE	Society of Lithographic Artists, Designers, Engravers and Process Workers
SOGAT	Society of Graphical and Allied Trades
SPOA	Scottish Prison Officers' Association
SSTA	Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association
STUC	Scottish Trades Union Congress
TASS	Technical and Administrative Staffs Section
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress
TWU	Tobacco Workers' Union
UCATT	Union of Construction and Allied Trades and Technicians
UCW	Union of Communication Workers
USDAW	Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers