

YOUTH POLICY

ACTU Congress September 1989

1. This ACTU Congress acknowledges that there is a serious crisis in the relationship between trade unions and the young. Rates of union membership are still lower and are declining faster among workers in the 15-24 age group than in all other age groups.
2. Young people are increasingly unaware or sceptical of trade unions.
3. The issue to be addressed is the promotion of the benefits of trade unionism for young people.
4. The situation must be addressed now and cannot be explained simply by the relatively high proportions of part-time, casual and services sector employment in the youth work-force. The trade union movement must address the particular industrial concerns of young workers if it is to attract their participation, and further, the trade union movement join in tackling the causes of youth poverty. Our principle response must be in the area of youth wages.
5. Congress recognises that junior rates of pay are unacceptably low and in many awards apply to persons aged 18 years and over. These junior rates must be replaced as a result of award restructuring. Congress resolved in 1987 that the only justification for junior rates of pay lay in the provision by employers of appropriate training for young workers (whether by Apprenticeship or otherwise). Where such training does not exist, Congress resolves that the ACTU Executive, in consultation with its Youth Committee, will resource and co-ordinate a campaign for the removal of junior rates from all wage and salary awards during 1990/91. In such a campaign junior rates will be replaced by rates consistent with the new wage system's emphasis on skills training for workers of all ages.
6. This objective must be undertaken as an integral priority issue in award restructuring, of which a key objective is to ensure that training opportunities leading to careers are available to all young people joining the workforce, in all major Award areas.
7. Congress resolves that the ACTU will act to take additional initiatives related to young people during 1990/91.
 - (i) To take specific steps to increase trade union membership of young people, and in particular, young women.
 - (ii) To ensure that superannuation entitlements are extended to young people and that those entitlements are fully vested with the individual employee from the outset of superannuation schemes.
 - (iii) To instigate action to reduce the disproportionately high incidence of workplace injury to young people;

(iv) To contribute towards tackling the continuing high levels of youth unemployment.