Richard Hardy, Prospect, moving Composite A on behalf of the General Council.

Congress, it is fitting that we are here in Aberdeen, a region which has become synonymous with Scotland’s oil and gas industry, and where well-paid jobs have sustained the regional economy.

Workers in Aberdeen are looking for leadership as we transition to a low-carbon economy.

And, in my opinion, there is no better place to look for leadership on this issue than the Scottish trade union movement.

In recent years, the STUC has:

called for and won the establishment of a Just Transition Commission.

published research on green jobs;

supported workers organising on climate in the public sector;

held Government to account on their failure to deliver jobs in offshore wind;

developed campaigns on buses, homes and jobs; and

Spoke truth to power within the steel fences of COP26.

But, perhaps more importantly, than this, the STUC and its affiliates are building alliances with environmentalists and communities on the ground.

And those alliances are why, in November, we saw more than 100,000 people marching through the cold and wet streets of Glasgow for radical action on climate change.

That unity is why we saw young climate activists joining railway workers and refuse workers on the picket line during COP26.

As our General Secretary has and the STUC is showing by example, the red movement must become more green, and the green movement must become more red”

So be in no doubt, the STUC is absolutely committed to building a low-carbon economy and meeting climate change targets. However, the reality is that the current approach to decarbonisation is based on a market model which outsources our natural resources, offshores our jobs, ships turbines half way round the world on diesel barges, and taxes our poorest households. We will not deliver a Just Transition for workers by relying on a neo-liberal, market driven solution. We’ve had 40 years of waiting for capitalism to deliver, the evidence of it’s failure to deliver Just Transitions is evident across the steel and coal communities of Lanarkshire, Ayrshire and Fife.

Equally as a movement we now have to engage and embrace existing technologies which will deliver for our members, our communities and our class, we cannot keep kicking the can down the road waiting for the next technological advance to solve our net zero targets in the nick of time

Let’s look at some of the companies that won lease to develop Scotland’s seabed in the recent ScotWind auction.

SSE – hiking up fuel bills while raking in profits and who have a history of using subcontractors who pay seafarers less than the minimum wage and avoid taxes;

BP – which its own Chief Officer now classes as a ‘cash machine, with more cash than we know what to do with’ as oil prices shoot through the roof; and

Shell – infamous for workers rights abuses in Nigeria.

These companies are happy to offshore work to places like Dubai, where 50% of construction workers don’t receive their wages on time, and where, according to the ITUC, the kafala system operates as a form of modern slavery.

So let me say this to the Scottish Government – you cannot claim to be a world leader on Just Transition while outsourcing our natural resources and offshoring jobs to countries where human rights abuses are endemic.

Congress, we are facing the largest fall in living standards for decades. But this crisis makes a just transition to net zero more important than ever. Retrofitting our homes, taking public transport networks back into public control, and investing in publicly-owned green energy – these measures will all tackle climate change but crucially they will tackle the cost of living crisis too. Those projects and that investment will also drive the creation of high quality unionised jobs with both longevity and career development which are vital to a Just Transition

Congress, there is far more that unites us than that which divides us. Our fight is not a binary choice between low-carbon and high-carbon jobs; it is a choice

between workers and bosses; and

between a socially just, sustainable economy and the economy of today where carbon emissions and shareholder profits rise, while jobs are offshored and terms and conditions are cut.

Scotland’s unions each have a different stake in this debate, but we are clear that market-driven policies are not the answer. We need huge levels of investment in the green economy. But it must come with strict conditions on companies, collective bargaining structures, and a fundamental change in patterns of ownership in our economy.

Please support the motion.