RUPERT MURDOCH and the fight to break his scab operations at Wapping and Kinning Park, Glasgow, was never far away from the minds of Scottish trade unionists when they met in Aberdeen in April.

The Scottish TUC, representing 900,000 trade unionists, in a major debate showed their anger at the attempt by Murdoch to outlaw trade unionism at News International and backed the print unions' great struggle to stop him.

In what is becoming an annual event since the advent of Margaret Thatcher, a section of workers facing the consequences of her battle to weaken trade unions in their fight for wages, conditions and jobs were at a trade union conference seeking the movement's support.

Scottish TUC

This time pickets from Wapping were cheered by the conference, and they returned the compliment. In previous years it was the health workers, shipyard workers and the miners who had appeared where print workers stood at Aberdeen.

The Scottish Labour movement declared its "unequivocal support for the boycott of Murdoch titles".

This part of the campaign, which could be in danger of being forgotten in the white heat of picketing, was reinforced by National Officer Eddie Martin who underlined that "every copy cancellation makes a difference".

The resolution, moved by SOGAT and the NGA, urged all unions, including the EETPU, to "play a full part" in campaigning to secure recognition and employment of the members of traditional printing unions in Wapping and Kinning Park.

The reference to the electricians union was a recurring theme in debates as their role in the Murdoch's titles' dispute "deeply embarrassing and abhorrent".

Terry McManus, in his address to the conference, referred to Murdoch's multi-national media mafia and said: "His scab mob techniques at Wapping belong to Al Capone, not to our industrial tradition."

Mr Gill called for support for the print trade unions, asking for "both financial and physical assistance".

A plan for a future Labour government to reverse the freedom of the unions to take effective industrial action was agreed, with the print unions' present dispute again at the forefront of discussions.

It was made clear to the Labour leaders that delegates wanted the scrapping of all anti-trade union laws and the immunities from legal action in the course of an industrial dispute restored, freeing them to take action "without being subject to legal challenge".

The STUC also want legal provision for "positive rights" protecting and advancing the conditions of individuals.

With NGA and SOGAT pickets listening in the gallery, John Mitchell told of the rights needed to organise effective action without the threat of dismissal and subsequent selective re-employment.

Speaking of the situation the NGA and SOGAT were now in, he said: "Having democratically to strike, unions must be set free of legal action." Such legal assault was now coming close to disabling SOGAT, as it virtually had the NUM and the NGA before, he emphasised.

The congress believed there was a whole range of laws needed for individuals in fields like equal pay for work of equal value, maternity rights, protection of part-time workers and home workers. NALGO deputy general secretary John Jinkinson emphasised the need for immunities, but believed that 'positive rights-only' legislation could be used as a back-door way of keeping aspects of Tory laws under a different name.

As the first important trade union conference of the season, the Scottish TUC is usually the first sounding-board for the movement and helps to set the agenda on important issues that are exercising the minds of trade unionists.

As the possibility of a General Election comes nearer, the trade unions and the Labour Party are seeking common accord on what policies could best lead to a victory and by
Scottish TUC

● From Page 10

carrying them out in government best meet the aspirations of working people after the disastrous Tory years.

There is little doubt that an end to mass unemployment, the rebuilding of British industry and the provision of help for the worst off in British society are the priorities that must be dealt with.

The role workers will have to play in Labour's plans through a restraint on wages, if any, was aired from several quarters in Aberdeen.

There was unanimous support from the delegates for a motion moved by the Society of Civil and Public Servants emphatically rejecting "any economic policy which restricts wages by any means including incomes policy".

But all does not happen on the conference floor and in Aberdeen the leaders of two of Britain's biggest unions seemed to declare for a wages strategy under Labour that could involve 'self-discipline' on pay.

Labour leader Neil Kinnock also told a press conference he was confident he would get the support of government of trade union leaders for a measure of pay restraint in the first two years.

No matter what the problems are, the Scottish TUC delegates were of one voice in their backing for the need for a Labour government to make a start in curing the ills that beset Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole.

The victims of the miners strike, sacked for defending their jobs, came again to the conference to ask for support — a timely reminder to print workers of the need to fight for a successful conclusion to their dispute.

A feature of the Scottish TUC is always their concern with international affairs and their environment — only natural in a country of such magnificent landscape.

In the wake of the American attack on Libya they voted in an emergency resolution for the removal of all US bases in Britain in the interests of world peace. This is in opposition to Labour Party and TUC policy which calls for the removal of only nuclear bases.

And, although it came before the news of the nuclear power station accident in the Soviet Union, they decided only narrowly for the expansion of the nuclear powered Dounreay station in the North of Scotland.

The STUC was saddened by the death of its general secretary, Jimmy Milne, only days before the opening of the conference in Aberdeen.

Aberdeen was the home of Mr Milne, and the conference was held in the town to pay tribute to him on what would have been his retirement.

Mr Campbell Christie, lately general secretary of the Society of Civil and Public Servants, was due to take over at the end of the conference but did so right from the conference's inception.

ICTU WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Women's ICTU backs the sacked 5,500

● NGA delegates at the Women's ICTU Conference held in Dublin: Ruth Tallion (Northern Ireland Branch) and Rosemary Beecon (Limerick Branch).

DELEGATES to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Women's Conference responded warmly to an appeal on behalf of the 5,500 print workers sacked by Rupert Murdoch.

NGA and NUJ delegates came to the rostrum to put the case for union solidarity with the sacked workers and their families.

The NGA had a motion before conference on the need for greater resources to be allocated to screening for breast and cervical cancers — a major cause of death for Irish women. The Northern Ireland ICTU Women's Committee launched a new pamphlet on this issue at the conference. 'A Screen in Time Saves Lives' can be obtained from the ICTU.

NGA delegates at the Women's ICTU Conference held in Dublin: Ruth Tallion (Northern Ireland Branch) and Rosemary Beecon (Limerick Branch).