

## *SolFed Constitution*

### Section 1: Affiliation to the SolFed

#### 1a) Conditions of affiliation.

Affiliation to the Solidarity Federation is conditional on agreement to abide by the Aims, Principles and Constitution, and on the payment of all applicable subscriptions.

#### 1b) The Aims of the Solidarity Federation.

The Solidarity Federation is an organisation of workers which seeks to destroy capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisations based on the same principles - revolutionary unions. These are not Trades Unions only concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues - both in the workplace and outside - which arise from our oppression. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Unless we organise in this way, politicians - some claiming to be revolutionary - will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of Locals which support the formation of future revolutionary unions and are centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on Direct Action - action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome all working people who agree

with our Aims and Principles, and who will spread propaganda for social revolution and revolutionary unions. We recognise that the class struggle is worldwide, and are affiliated to the International Workers' Association, whose Principles of Revolutionary Unionism we have adopted.

#### 1c) The Principles of Revolutionary Unionism.

i) Revolutionary unionism is based on the class war and holds that all workers must unite in industrial unions that fight for our liberation from the double yoke of capital and the state. Its goal is the re-organisation of society on the basis of libertarian communism, which can only be achieved by the revolutionary action of the working class. Considering that only the industrial unions of the working class are capable of reaching this objective, revolutionary unionism addresses itself to all workers in our capacity as producers, as creators of social wealth, so that it will take root and develop in our class in opposition to the so-called "workers' parties", which it declares incapable of the economic re-organisation of society.

ii) Revolutionary unionism is the sworn enemy of all economic and social monopoly. It aims at the abolition of privilege by the establishment of economic communes and administrative bodies run by the workers in the fields, factories and offices, forming a system of free councils without subordination to any power or political party. Revolutionary unionism poses the economic re-organisation of production as an alternative to the politics of states and parties. It is opposed to the government of people by others and poses self-management as an alternative. Consequently, the goal of revolutionary unionism is not the conquest of political power, but the abolition of all state functions in society. Revolutionary unionism considers that the disappearance of the monopoly of property must also be accompanied by the disappearance of all forms of domination. Statism, however camouflaged, can never be an instrument of human liberation and, on the contrary, will always be the creator of new monopolies and privileges, whatever their basis.

iii) Revolutionary unionism is opposed to all hierarchies, privileges and oppressions, not simply those which are economic in origin. It recognises that oppression can be based on race, gender, sexuality or any other perceived or actual difference, and that these oppressions both must be fought for their own sake, and because they are fundamental to the maintenance of capitalism. However, all oppression, whatever its origin, has an economic aspect and is based on a power relationship. Concepts of "equality" which fail to recognise this fact, and any attempt to fight discrimination without also attacking hierarchy and privilege based on class

will chiefly benefit hitherto excluded sections of privileged classes, and will not end discrimination against those without class privileges, even where they achieve some short term gains.

iv) Revolutionary unionism has a twofold function. It carries on the revolutionary struggle in all countries for the economic, social and intellectual improvement of the working class within the limits of present day society. It also seeks our self-education so that we will be able to competently manage the processes of production and distribution through the socialisation of all wealth. Revolutionary unionism does not accept the idea that the organisation of a social system based exclusively on the producing class can be ordered by simple government decrees. It affirms that it can only be obtained through the common action of all manual and intellectual workers, in every branch of industry, by self-management, in such a way that every region, factory or branch of industry is an autonomous part of the economy and systematically regulates, on a determined plan and on the basis of mutual agreement, the production and distribution processes according to the interests of the community, and the needs of the environment.

v) Revolutionary unionism recognises the need for production which does not damage the environment, and which seeks to minimise the use of finite resources, and wherever possible to use sustainable alternatives. It identifies the drive for profit, rather than ignorance, as the root of the present environmental crisis. Capitalist production must always seek to minimise costs in pursuit of an ever-increasing rate of profit in order to exist, and cannot protect the environment. In particular, the world debt crisis has accelerated the drive towards cash crops at the expense of subsistence farming. This is responsible for rainforest destruction, famine and disease. The fight to save the planet and the fight to destroy capitalism must go hand in hand or both will fail.

vi) Revolutionary unionism is opposed to all organisational tendencies inspired by the centralism of the state and church. These can only prolong the survival of the state and authority, and they systematically stifle the spirit of initiative and any independence of thought. Centralism is the artificial organisation which subjects the so-called lower classes to those who claim to be superior. Centralism leaves the affairs of the whole community in the hands of a few - the individual being turned into a robot with regulated movements and gestures. In the centralised organisation, the needs of society are subordinated to the interests of a few, variety is replaced by uniformity and personal responsibility is replaced by unquestioning obedience. It is for this reason that revolutionary unionism bases its vision of society on a wide

federalist organisation, an organisation which works from the bottom to the top by uniting all forces in the defence of common ideas and interests.

vii) Revolutionary unionism rejects all parliamentary activity and all collaboration with legislative bodies. It holds that even the freest voting system cannot bring about the disappearance of the clear contradictions at the centre of present day society. The parliamentary system has only one goal: to lend a pretence of legitimacy to the reign of falsehood and social injustice.

viii) Revolutionary unionism rejects all arbitrarily created political and national frontiers and declares that what is called nationalism is the religion of the modern state, behind which are concealed the material interests of the ruling classes. Revolutionary unionism recognises only economic and regional differences and demands for all groups the right to self-determination without exception.

ix) It is for these reasons that revolutionary unionism fights against militarism and war. Revolutionary unionism advocates anti-war propaganda and the replacement of permanent armies, which are only the instruments of counter-revolution at the service of capitalism, by workers' militias which, during the revolution, will be controlled by the workers' unions; it demands, as well, the boycott and embargo of all raw materials and products necessary to war, with the exception of a country where the workers are in the midst of a social revolution, in which case it is necessary to help them defend the revolution. Finally, revolutionary unionism advocates the preventative and revolutionary general strike as a means of opposing war and militarism.

x) Revolutionary unionism supports direct action and supports and encourages all struggles which are not in contradiction to its own ends. The means of struggle are: occupations, strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc. Direct action is best expressed through the general strike which must, from the point of view of revolutionary unionism, be the prelude to the social revolution.

xi) While revolutionary unionism is opposed to all organised violence of the state, it realises that there will be extremely violent clashes during the decisive struggles between the capitalism of today and the free communism of tomorrow. Consequently, it recognises as valid that violence which can be used as a means of defence against the violent methods used by the ruling classes - both existing and aspirant - during the social revolution. As expropriation of the land and the means of production can only be carried out and brought to a successful conclusion by the direct intervention of the workers' revolutionary industrial unions, defence of the revolution must also be the task of those unions, not of a military or quasi-military

body independent of them.

xii) It is only through the economic and revolutionary organisations of the working class that it will be possible to bring about our liberation, and to generate the necessary creative energy for the reorganisation of society on the basis of libertarian communism.

### **1d) Subscriptions.**

Subscriptions are payable monthly to the Local to which a member is affiliated. Rates are set by Locals, which pay 20% of their subscription income to the Solidarity Federation as an affiliation fee. In addition, Locals pay an annual subscription to the Solidarity Federation at National Conference for its affiliation to the International Workers' Association. National Minimum Rates for subscriptions are set as follows: Locals - £1.50 per month per member plus £8 per member annually for IWA affiliation.

## **Section 2: Rights & duties of members**

### **2a) The status of members.**

All members have the right to:

- Free expression of their ideas;
- Have their physical and moral integrity respected;
- Attend all events organised by the Solidarity Federation;
- Have full access to information about all Solidarity Federation decisions and activities;
- Remain in disagreement with decisions and activities of the Solidarity Federation, so long as they abide by the Aims, Principles and Constitution.

All members have the duty to:

- Participate in, defend and support the Solidarity Federation, the International Workers' Association, their Aims, Principles, Statutes and affiliates to the fullest extent of their ability;
- Follow and discuss fully issues facing the Solidarity Federation and the IWA in their Networks and Locals, and using the Internal Bulletin;
- Sell and contribute to Direct Action and other SF publications to the best of their ability, and pass on donations and sales to the DA Collective;
- Adhere to the conditions of affiliation.

All affiliates are accountable to the Solidarity Federation for their actions as individuals. This applies to members of Locals and Networks affiliated to the Solidarity Federation. Clear, deliberate, consistent or repeated breaches of the conditions of affiliation may lead to disaffiliation.

### **2b) Locals.**

A Local is formed whenever there are three or more members in a defined geographical area, who should meet at least twice each month. A new Local must be accepted at National Conference, as part of the acceptance of delegates' credentials. All disputes between members in the area (including two "rival" Locals), will be resolved by National Conference where agreement can not be reached locally. Locals must fulfil their obligations under Section 2a) above, but otherwise are expected to use their own initiative in pursuing their activities. However, where there is clear evidence of propaganda or practices contrary to the Aims, Principles and Constitution, this may lead to disaffiliation.

Locals must elect their own Secretary and Treasurer, who should be mandated,

accountable and subject to limited tenure of office on the same basis as National Officers. The Secretary is responsible for providing reports at least quarterly, written credentials and mandates to the Solidarity Federation. The Treasurer is responsible for paying subs to the Solidarity Federation, with lists of members, quarterly, and for issuing and updating Membership Cards to all members of the Local.

## 2c) Industrial Networks.

Networks group together members of the Solidarity Federation who work in the same Industry. Networks must have at least three members. All Network members must also be members of a Local. Networks must be accepted by National Conference. Because of geographical spread, national meetings may be infrequent, but must be convened at least twice each year, to fit in with the internal democracy of the Solidarity Federation. Network propaganda may be supported by Solidarity Federation funds, according to the mandate of the National Treasurer. Network propaganda and activities must not be contrary to the Aims, Principles and Constitution.

## 2d) Isolated members.

All SF members exercise their voting rights through their nearest Local. That Local must also involve all such members in its activities as far as is practicable. At a minimum, the Local's Secretary must ensure that they are involved in decision-making processes, and the Local's Treasurer must collect their subs. In addition, the Local should make specific efforts to support those members who can not regularly attend meetings due to their distance from its area; by organising meetings and actions to suit them, and also by planning activities which will assist them to take steps to form their own Local, as far as possible.

# Section 3: Decision-making

## 3a) National Conference.

Federal decisions are made at the annual National Conference. The function of Conference is to facilitate the work of the Federation, and to share ideas and tactics, not to impose policies on Networks and Locals, which are autonomous, although they must abide by Conference decisions. Conference decides mandates for those commissioned by the Solidarity Federation to carry out duties on its behalf between Conferences, and elects Locals to carry them out. It also decides matters of principle and of a constitutional nature, including issues of affiliation, such as new Locals or Networks, and affiliated groups in arrears with their subs. Federal matters to be decided at Conference include:

- Questions of affiliation, and disputes between affiliated groups;
- Receiving the reports of, mandating and electing National Secretary, National Treasurer, Direct Action Collective, etc.;
- Organisational and constitutional issues;
- International business, including receiving the report of, mandating and electing the International Secretariat and delegates to the IWA Congress; discussion of international issues;
- Discussion and debate about issues facing the Solidarity Federation and its strategy;
- Allegations of propaganda and practices in contrary to the Aims, Principles and Constitution, and to the Principles, Aims and Statutes of the IWA.

National Conference decisions can only be changed by another National Conference. All proposals for National Conference must be sent to the Internal Bulletin three months in advance; all amendments must be sent to the Internal Bulletin two months in advance. It is the responsibility of Locals or Networks making proposals to circulate all relevant papers, documents, etc. two months in advance via the Internal Bulletin. It is the responsibility of Locals to fully discuss the issues and to properly mandate their delegates. It is the responsibility of the National Secretary to facilitate this process by highlighting issues which need resolution in their report to the National Plenary, and to publicise the deadline for Conference proposals. Discussion of current issues should take place all year round, but especially between Plenary and Conference, to ensure the drafting and discussion of proposals on which delegates can be properly mandated.

Decisions should be made by seeking consensus in the first instance. However,

where a vote needs to be taken a 2/3 majority is required for a motion to be carried. Abstentions are not counted. Voting is on the basis of one Local, one vote, but only Locals present at Conference can vote. Where the wording of resolutions needs to be amended, unless an amendment is accepted by the proponents and notified to all Locals at least one month in advance of Conference, a delegate from each of the interested Locals will form a Conference Commission which will draft a final version. This draft will be circulated to the delegates of all Locals in time to be decided as the first item on the agenda of the final session of Conference.

Where there is an urgent issue which requires decision, an Emergency National Conference, on that issue only, may be called by a minimum of three Locals and/or Networks. All relevant papers and documents must be supplied to the National Secretary with the request. Where a Local considers that its delegates have acted in breach of their mandates, they must inform the National Secretary within three months, and include details of the mandate. Where such actions have affected the outcome of a decision, the National Secretary must convene an Emergency National Conference on that issue. The National Secretary will then immediately arrange the meeting and give two months notice via the Internal Bulletin. It is permissible to hold an Emergency Conference at the Plenary, on the same basis as the International Conference.

### **3b) National Plenary.**

The role of the National Plenary is to review how Conference decisions and national mandates have been carried out in the six months after National Conference, and to assess the accuracy of the minutes of the National Conference and make any necessary corrections. Holders of national mandates are also recallable by the Plenary if they have failed to carry out, or have breached, their mandates. Reports will be given by all holders of mandates, and these should focus on technical matters, and any issues which may need resolution at the next National Conference. In addition, the International Secretariat will brief the Federation on issues for discussion at the IWA Plenary. The Agenda for that Plenary will be the basis of the International Conference which will mandate two Solidarity Federation delegates to it, who will be elected by this body. One of these delegates should have attended the previous IWA Plenary or Congress, as appropriate. The mandate and credentials will be presented in writing for the delegates by the International Secretary. Delegates must adhere to their mandate, and submit a written report to the next National Conference.

### **3c) Delegates.**

Only delegates and those with National Mandates, as appropriate, should speak at National Plenary. The same applies to National Conference, with the exception of Discussions which do not require a vote by delegates; or where an individual is required to contribute to a debate (e.g. to account for their conduct). While different individuals may be delegated to speak by their mandating body, they must speak as delegates of that body and not express individual opinions, except as indicated above.

All delegates must be named by their mandating body, and should have written credentials and mandates. Delegates must adhere to their mandate and submit a written report detailing how they carried out their mandate, and points of immediate interest, to the next meeting of their mandating body. A Local should send up to 3 delegates to National Conference or Plenary, and may have an unlimited number of observers. No individual should be mandated by more than one body (e.g. a Local and a Network). Credentials will be established by the National Treasurer, as will voting rights. Delegates from any Local in arrears with subs may speak and vote with the agreement of Conference. However, the onus is on the Local to demonstrate that it has genuinely made every effort to pay its subs. Requests for this must be included, with reasons, in a Local's report for Conference in the pre-Conference Internal Bulletin.

### **3d) Minutes.**

The National Secretary is responsible for the taking and circulation of minutes of National Conference and Plenary. During each session of Conference and Plenary, minutes will be taken by a named individual. The National Secretary will keep a record of which session's minutes were taken by which individual. Minutes must be an accurate record of any decisions taken, resolutions passed and mandates given. It is the responsibility of the Chair to clarify decisions, and to ensure that the meeting and the minute-taker understand the agreement reached. The minutes must also summarise accurately the main points of debate, but should not be a verbatim record. Record of Discussions should be fuller, and reflect all viewpoints expressed. Minutes will be circulated as a supplement with the Internal Bulletin within two months. All minutes of national meetings must include as standard:

- The agenda of the meeting broken down by session;
- The date, period and number of each session of the meeting and attendance;

- A record of chair and minute-taker for each session;
- An accurate record of mandates given;
- The final text of any resolutions carried alongside the record of debate and voting;
- A full record of discussions.

### 3e) IWA Congress.

Conference also mandates and elects up to six delegates to the IWA Congress. One of these delegates should have attended the previous IWA Congress, and one should have attended the previous IWA Plenary, where possible. One delegate will also attend the next IWA Plenary, where possible. Two delegates should attend the full session of the Congress at all times, where possible, others may be needed to participate in Commissions at Congress. Where proposals have been put forward by the Solidarity Federation, one delegate should be assigned to lead on the proposal.

The delegation should act collectively, rotating attendance at sessions where possible. The delegation will submit a report to the next Solidarity Federation Conference or Plenary as appropriate. Delegates are accountable to the Solidarity Federation for their behaviour, and must adhere to their mandate.

## Section 4: National Mandates

### 4a) National Officers.

National Conference will give mandates to Locals to carry out the administration of the Solidarity Federation, and to handle its external relations. The Local will name an individual who will be responsible for ensuring the tasks mandated are carried out. The Local will then support this individual, and name another if they should be unable to continue between Conferences. Mandates are given for a two year period, and will be reviewed fully at Conference, and administratively at each Plenary. Failure to carry out, or breaches of, a mandate will lead to recall of the mandate by National Conference or Plenary. If a National Officer's conduct has been challenged by any other member, Local or Network, or in the case of the International Secretary another Section of the IWA, they may seek the backing of National Conference or Plenary through a vote of confidence. This should be included in their report. The National Officers are:

#### i) The National Secretary.

The National Secretary is responsible for organising National Conference and Plenary, and any extraordinary national events. This includes securing appropriate venues, giving six months' notice and publicising deadlines for proposals and agenda items. The dates and venue of Conference must be confirmed three months in advance; the agenda and proposals must be circulated to Locals and Networks two months in advance; reports, amendments and all relevant papers and documents must be circulated one month in advance. The date and venue of the Plenary must be confirmed two months in advance; the agenda, reports and all relevant papers and documents must be circulated one month in advance.

The National Secretary is also responsible for compiling and circulating the Internal Bulletin on the 1st day of each month, but may commission a named individual to carry it out. The National Secretary will update, compile and circulate the annual Yearbook within two months of National Conference. The National Secretary is also responsible for the maintenance of the Web page, but may commission a named individual to carry it out.

## ii) The External Relations Officer.

The External Relations Officer is responsible for dealing with external contacts in England, Scotland and Wales. This includes compiling and maintaining contact lists and correspondence files in good order. The External Relations Officer will target and pursue contacts. Prospective members will be passed on to the National Treasurer.

The External Relations Officer must pass on all new contacts to their respective Local and Network, as appropriate, and provide the latter with any introductory and educational materials they may need. The External Relations Officer will contact the relevant Local or Network to review the situation regularly.

The External Relations Officer will maintain contact with relevant and sympathetic organisations in England, Scotland and Wales. This will involve circulating relevant publicity materials as required.

## iii) The National Treasurer.

The National Treasurer is responsible for collecting and accounting for all subscriptions, donations, credit notes and pledges. This includes opening and administering a bank account, and circulating payment details to all members. The National Treasurer will produce a financial report each quarter, including a breakdown of subscriptions paid, and arrears. This information will be used to maintain membership records, and to issue membership cards annually, and as appropriate. The National Treasurer will correspond with Locals, Networks and members in arrears about their payments and membership situation. The National Treasurer will pay dues to the IWA quarterly, at the rate of \$3 per member, and subsidise DA £100 per issue, reimburse DA for copies sent to enquirers at £1.50 per copy, and buy 30 copies of each DA for use by the External Relations Secretary. The National Treasurer will make payments as mandated at National Conference.

## 4b) International Secretariat.

The International Secretariat is responsible for all international relations. National Conference will mandate a Local to carry out these duties for two years, to be reviewed at National Conference and Plenaries. The International Secretary will be a named individual, as will any other officers the mandated Local determines should take on specified tasks under the mandate. The International Secretary is responsible for:

- Maintaining contact with the IWA General Secretariat, and circulating all

documents and minutes to the membership;

- Providing a written report, credentials and mandates for delegates to IWA Congress and Plenaries;
- Ensuring delegates attend IWA meetings, carry out their mandates and write reports;
- Sending proposals, agenda items and documents for circulation for IWA Congress to the General Secretariat six months in advance;
- Sending agenda items and documents for circulation for IWA Plenaries to the General Secretariat three months in advance;
- Organising an SF International Conference at each Plenary, as required, to mandate delegates to the IWA Plenary, based on the agenda and documents for the latter, which will be circulated two months in advance;
- Translation of all documents to and from Spanish and English as appropriate;
- Translation to and from other languages as appropriate;
- Collection and payment of the annual affiliation subscriptions to the IWA General Secretariat;
- Accounting for and arranging payment of travel and publishing expenses incurred on international business.

## Section 5: Publications

### 5a) Internal Bulletin.

The National Secretary will be responsible for compiling and circulating the Internal Bulletin each month. All discussion and debate contributions to the Internal Bulletin must be passed on by their Local or Network. Opinions of individuals, Networks or Locals may be expressed, but if the opinion is not that of the Local or Network this must be specified. All individual opinions passed on by a Local or Network will be included in the Internal Bulletin.

In order to facilitate reading, pages must be numbered, and contents listed at the beginning. All contributions must list the contributor, date, which Local it has been sent in by, and all those to whom it has been sent at the top. The contents are structured as follows:

- Reports of those holding national mandates;
- Reports of Locals and Networks;
- International business, including reports of the International Secretariat;
- Activities not included above;
- Discussion papers, subdivided by subject where appropriate.

### 5b) Yearbook.

The National Secretary is responsible for compiling and updating a Yearbook, and for circulating it to all members within two months of Conference.

The Yearbook will include the following information for members:

- The Aims, Principles and Constitution;
- The decisions of National Conference, including National Mandates and the full final text of resolutions carried;
- The dates of the Plenary and of the next National Conference, and deadlines for agenda items and resolutions;
- A Directory of Locals and Networks, holders of National Mandates, IWA General Secretariat, Sections and Friends.

### 5c) Direct Action.

National Conference will mandate and elect a Collective of named individuals who will be responsible for editing and publishing Direct Action as the national organ of the Solidarity Federation. The format and frequency of publication will be determined by the mandate given by National Conference. The DA Collective will be accountable as a collective and as individuals for carrying out their mandate, and for the publication and contents of DA, to National Conference and Plenaries. The DA Collective will present a report to National Conference and Plenaries. The DA Collective is responsible for the following:

- Publishing Direct Action regularly, as frequently as mandated by National Conference;
- Commissioning, translating, and editing material for Direct Action;
- The distribution of Direct Action within and outside the Solidarity Federation;
- The prompt collection of money from sales from all vendors of Direct Action;
- The organisation and maintenance of a system of subscriptions and lists of subscribers;
- The soliciting and collection of donations, and the organisation of fund-raising with the aim of making Direct Action self-financing;
- The research and identification of potential sources of new readers; and the identification, research, and implementation of methods of promoting sales.

Direct Action will include the following:

- Material which explains and promotes the Aims, Principles and activities of the Solidarity Federation and its affiliates, and of the IWA and its affiliates; and which encourages membership;
- Reports, analysis, commentary and reviews of current and historical events, issues and publications from an anarcho-syndicalist perspective;
- Material which promotes Direct Action, its past and forthcoming issues, and which solicits and encourages sales, contributions and financial support from its readers.



#### 5d) Web page.

The National Secretary is responsible for publishing the web page, but may delegate its maintenance to a named individual. The page should be updated quarterly, should be easily accessible to anyone with a web browser, and should include as standard:

- The Aims, Principles and Constitution;
- A Directory of Locals and Networks, IWA General Secretariat, Sections and Friends;
- Selected material from Direct Action, both current and back issues;
- Current national strategy or external discussion documents, including "An outline of our ideas about organisation...";
- Introductory materials produced by the Solidarity Federation, and its affiliates;
- An electronic enquiry form;
- A DA return form.