

Counter-Proposal on Resistance Funds

Reaction to a report of the Central Section of Geneva of the I.W.A., adopted in a session of the Alliance on August 14, 1869.

Mikhail Bakunin

August 14, 1869

1. There must be created in each section, corporation or society in the International Association a *resistant fund* [*caisse de résistance*].
2. In order to form that fund, each corporative section or society, by a decision taken in the general assembly, modifiable by later assemblies, of the section or corporative society will impose [a contribution] on all its members, always conforming to the rate of their wages.
3. No shareholder, except in very serious cases such as forced unemployment, family misfortunes or prolonged illnesses, cases that will always be recognized by the General Assembly of the section, by the Committee—no one may avoid payment of this contribution, under pain of exclusion pronounced by the General Assembly of their section.
4. It is permitted for several or even all the sections or corporative societies of a single locality to join their individual funds into a single local fund.
But that union must be entirely voluntary on the part of each, no section can or should be forced to join even by a majority that represents all the sections of a locality, minus just one.
The section that refuses in this way to merge its individual resistance fund in that of all the others, as long as it remains faithful to the general, national and local statutes of the International Association, would preserve all its right to the solidarity of all the other sections.
5. All the costs that the members have to cover as members of the International Association, such as the costs of the section and the committee of the section, costs of the Cantonal Committee, Federal Committee as General Council, costs of the delegates for propaganda and of delegates for the Congresses, costs of the Journal, of the Circle – and if they also want it, of the funds for aid and defense, in short all the ordinary and supplementary costs, will be withdrawn from the resistance funds of the sections.
The subscriptions, except in extremely serious cases, recognized as such by the General Assembly of all the sections of a locality, are absolutely prohibited.

6. Each Section or Corporative Society will determine the minimum sum that must properly constitute its resistance fund, which could never have any purpose but to maintain the war, that is to say the rights of the laborers against the bosses, either by nourishing its own resistance, or by making, as a loan, obligatory, or as a gift in aid of the other sections of the locality, nation or other countries, when the need of this aid has been proclaimed by the respective committees.
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7. Each section, at its own risk and perils, has the incontestable right to come to the aid of any other section, even though it does not have any recommendation on the part of any committee. But it is only morally obligated in the case where it has a formal invitation, either on the part of the local Committee, or of the General Assembly of all the sections of the locality, or of the Federal Committee, or the General Committee.
8. In this case, each section or corporative society imposes on itself the loan that, in the situation of the fund, it is capable of making.

Of Strikes

Experience has proven to the international sections of all the countries that the strike is a very dangerous weapon, which undoubtedly bears some very noticeable blows to the interests of the bosses, but which almost never also fails to deeply wound the interests of the laborers.

Strikes, unquestionably, by maintaining a healthy agitation among the workers and kindling in their hearts a deep hatred against bourgeois exploitation, as well as unveiling the depravity of the present social organization, contribute a lot to make our propaganda more incisive and more vivid, deeper and wider. Each strike ended happily has brought us new sections.—But, on the contrary, the strikes that have not succeeded greatly demoralize the workers, kill their confidence in the association and ruin them. Who does not know that even the most happily terminated strikes are always accompanied by suffering and very serious material sacrifices?

From all these considerations it results:

1. That no section in its own interest must decide to strike except in these three cases: either when the state of the market will be such that the triumph will be certain or easy – or when the bosses wish to worsen the situation of their workers; or finally when they want to do the least harm either to their individual dignity, or to their right of association.
2. Each section or corporative society is incidentally perfectly free to begin its isolated strike, without asking the consent of anyone. But then it must know that it damages the principle of the International, and it is just that it not demand aid when it has not had recourse to the solidarity of anyone. – A decision made in isolation by a single section cannot and must not lead the other sections into an involuntary strike; otherwise that would be pure exploitation, a dishonest exploitation of worker fraternity.

3. All the other sections not only have the right but almost the duty to refuse their aid to the section that has begun its strike without consulting them and without having obtained their agreement.
4. In order for a strike to become a matter of solidarity for all the sections in a locality, it must either be accepted by the local Committee or by the General Assembly of all the sections of that locality.—In order for it to be a matter of solidarity for all the sections of a country, it must be proclaimed by the Committee of the country, in French-speaking Switzerland, for example, by the Federal Committee.—In order for it to be a matter of solidarity for all the sections of all the countries, it must be proclaimed by the General Council.

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