

Revolutionary Trade Unionism

The road to workers freedom

Workers' Solidarity Federation

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INTRODUCTION

The trade unions are the combat organisations of the working class. They were built to defend and advance workers interests against the bosses.

BUT the unions can MUCH more. The unions must not only fight the bosses in the here and now. They must organise the workers for a revolutionary general strike in which we the workers take the land and factories from the bosses, and run them ourselves in the interests of the workers and the poor.

Socialism and freedom will never come through parliament. They can only come through workers struggle and workers organisations defeating the bosses. They can only come through revolutionary industrial unionism (anarcho-syndicalism).

This booklet was written by the Workers Solidarity Federation.

We are not a trade union. We are an organisation for militant workers who believe in revolutionary industrial unionism. An organisation for militant workers who want to win their own trade unions over to the path of revolutionary industrial unionism.

If we want to spread these ideas, we must work together. That is why you should join the Workers Solidarity Federation.

WHY DO WE NEED TRADE UNIONS?

Trade unions are built because workers need to unite against the bosses. The bosses exploit the workers. The workers are many, the bosses are few. But the workers do all the work, and the bosses get all the money.

Workers built trade unions to fight back against the bosses.

The unions give workers power, because they unite many workers into one strong organisation. The unions give workers power, because they can organise workers to hit the boss where it hurts most– in the pocket. This is because the unions can disrupt production (the source of the bosses wealth) through mass action

The unions unite workers — they promote strength and the confidence to unite and fight-back against the bosses.

This is while all bosses really hate the unions.

ARE THERE PROBLEMS IN THE UNIONS?

Yes, there are some important problems. Workers need to take these problems seriously.

The first problem is that the unions are increasingly run by full-time officials. These officials get paid more than the workers, and many see the union as “just another job”.

These leaders become conservative. They do not want too much union militancy. These leaders are not on the shopfloor anymore. They forget what it is like. Instead they prefer to spend their time negotiating.

Sometimes this means that they do not support the workers struggles. Sometimes they make undemocratic decisions. Some even use union money to get rich.

Many oppose socialism. They would prefer to make money by going into business later.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The unions have to be made into real fighting organisations which are run and controlled by workers on the shopfloor.

This cannot be done through appointing new full-time officials. It can only be done by making sure the unions are controlled by the workers. Decisions must be made through mass meetings and the election of workplace-based shop-steward councils.

To make sure this happens, militant workers and shop-stewards should form opposition groups inside the unions. These opposition groups would try to make sure that the unions are democratic. These opposition groups would encourage workers unity and resistance to the bosses. These opposition groups would fight for equal rights for women. The role of these groups is to defend the unions traditions.

We do not need a leadership of paid officials. Union work should be done by ordinary workers and shop-stewards.

CAN THE UNIONS BUILD REAL SOCIALISM?

Yes, the unions can.

But only if three things happen:

1. the unions are democratically controlled by the workers
2. the unions change their policies to accept the idea that the unions must seize the land and factories and place them under workers' self-management.
3. all unions are united into ONE BIG UNION controlled by the workers.

REAL SOCIALISM AND GOVERNMENT

Many unions have abandoned a socialist struggle. Some say they are socialist, but see socialism as something that will come about through the government.

But socialism will never come about through government. Government supports the bosses. No bosses are never arrested in a strike, we workers are. The bosses are the real rulers of South Africa.

Parliament does not have real power. Real power lies in the company boardrooms, the army and police, and the upper levels of State officials. The politicians do not mind- they live the sweet life that workers only dream about.

So MR FAT CAT has a stranglehold over the destiny of the workers. He exploits us in the factory, and dominates the country as well.

Real socialism can ONLY come about if the workers themselves, through their trade unions, act to seize and manage the land and factories. And replace the government with a working-classes democracy based on the unions.

This can only happen if the workers agree that this is the way forward. In other words, we must convince all workers of this truth. Then we can make our unions accept this policy.

ONE BIG UNION

We need to keep the unions independent of all political parties. Political parties cannot deliver freedom– only the workers can free the workers.

Political parties are one of the main reasons that unions are divided. It makes sense to unite all workers into ONE BIG UNION.

But today the unions are divided between those who support this party, those who support that. This weakens the workers struggle.

We should unite all the unions- one industry, one union, one country, one federation.

Lets merge all progressive unions together, and unite all workers regardless of race or belief. Lets unite men and women workers, workers of all colours, and South Africa and immigrant workers.

One Big Union means strength, the power to smash the bosses and take the factories and land.

THE REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL STRIKE

The road to workers power, socialism and working-class democracy is mass action. Not through elections. Everyday, we must fight the bosses– strikes, go-slows, occupations are the weapons of the workers.

And one day, when we are united enough, we must call a REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL STRIKE. Instead of staying home, or marching in town, we must go to the workplaces and take them over. Put them under workers control, and kick the bosses out. We can run the factories and the farms– we do all the work anyway.

Working alongside working-class community structures and poor rural people, the revolutionary trade unions will end this capitalist system. No more fat cats.

Instead of taking orders from the bosses, we can run the workplaces democratically, through our unions. We can link with other workers and workers communities across the country and across the world.

We can plan production to meet workers NEED not bosses GREED. Instead of capitalism, we will have socialism and working-class democracy. Instead of a world of bosses, we will have a workers world, defended by a workers army.

Only through this revolutionary general strike can we end capitalist exploitation and the legacy of apartheid oppression. We can use the wealth of the country and trot build the schools, clinics, houses and everything we need. The wealth is there, we made it, lets take it back

This is what we mean by Revolutionary Industrial Unionism (anarcho-syndicalism).

BUILDING TOMORROW TODAY

To sum up, we believe that we must

- build workers control of the unions

- win the unions to revolutionary industrial unionism
- unite all unions into One Big Union

In the short-term, this is what we should fight for

- independence of the unions from all alliances with political parties
- fight all laws that restrict the right to strike or interfere in internal union affairs.
- oppose all attempts at union bashing by the bosses.
- national minimum wage
- the creation of well paid and social useful jobs
- oppose all productivity deals that bring job losses.
- organise the unemployed.
- fight against workplace apartheid
- equal rights for women in the unions and in the workplace.
- six months paid maternity leave with no job loss.
- all strikes should be automatically made official by the unions so long as they do not contradict trade union principles.
- merger of the unions to form one-union-one-industry, and a super-federation embracing all the trade unions.
- withdrawal of unions from all “worker participation” and “joint decision-making” schemes including NEDLAC– these are bosses’ tricks

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN THE WORKERS SOLIDARITY FEDERATION

The Workers Solidarity Federation is NOT a trade union. The Workers Solidarity Federation is NOT a political party that runs in elections.

The Workers Solidarity Federation is a revolutionary industrial unionist/ anarcho-syndicalist political organisation for militant workers, youth and poor people. We stand for socialism through revolutionary industrial unionism. We call this “Anarcho-syndicalism”.

The Workers Solidarity Federation has the following aims:

- promote the ideas of socialism through revolutionary industrial unionism/ anarcho-syndicalism
- promote workers struggle and workers organisation

We are a small organisation, and encourage everyone who agrees with our ideas to become involved in our activities. These include supporting strikes, union activism, supporting progressive struggles, writing and selling a workers newspaper called Workers Solidarity, and holding public meetings.

**ONLY THE WORKERS CAN FREE THE WORKERS!!!
FIGHT THE BOSSES! PHAMBILI BASABENZI!**

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