

# **Constitution**

Workers Solidarity Movement

April 2012

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## **Preamble**

The world's wealth is produced by us, the working class. We ought to enjoy the benefits.

We want to abolish the system of capitalism which places wealth and power in the hands of a few, and replace it with workers control and socialism. We do not mean the farce called 'socialism' practiced in Russia, China, and other police states – the system in those countries is no more than another form of capitalism.

We stand for a new society where there will be no bosses or bureaucrats. A society which will be run in a really democratic way by working people, through councils in the workplaces and community. We want to abolish authoritarian relationships and replace them with control from the bottom up – not the top down.

All the industries, all the means of production and distribution will be commonly owned, and placed under the management of those working in them. Production will be organised and planned by the federation of workers councils, not for profit but to meet peoples' needs. The guiding principle will be "from each according to ability, to each according to need".

We are opposed to all coercive authority, we believe that the only permissible limit on the freedom of the individual is that they do not encroach on the freedom of others.

We do not ask to be made rulers nor do we intend to seize power "on behalf of the working class". Instead we hold that socialism can only be created by the mass of ordinary people. Anything less is bound to lead to no more than replacing one set of bosses with another.

We are opposed to the state because it is not neutral, it can not be made to serve the interests of workers. The structures of the state are only necessary when a minority seeks to rule over the majority. We can create our own structures, which will be open and democratic, to ensure the efficient running of everyday life.

We are proud to be part of the tradition of libertarian socialism, of anarchism. The anarchist movement has taken root in the working class of many counties because it serves their interests – not the interests of the power seekers and professional politicians.

In short we fight for the immediate needs and interests of the working class under the existing set up, while seeking to encourage the necessary political understanding and activity to overthrow capitalism and its state, and lead to the birth of an anarchist society.

## **Core Principles**

We have detailed position papers on all the areas where we are active. These form the collectively agreed policy of the WSM. Disagreement and debate around these papers is continuous, these collective position are constantly being modified so obviously we do not expect members to agree with every detail. All members are however expected to broadly agree with points 1 to 9 below which outline the core of our anarchism.

1. Anarchism will be created by the class struggle between the vast majority of society (the working class) and the tiny minority that currently rule. A successful revolution will require that anarchist ideas become the leading ideas within the working class. This will not happen spontaneously. Our role is to make anarchist ideas the leading ideas or, as it is sometimes expressed, to become a "leadership of ideas".

2. We reject the idea that society can be changed through ‘good people’ gaining control of the power structures. This means we reject both the electoral strategy of the social democratic and green parties and the ‘revolutionary’ strategy of the various left groups. Instead we advocate for direct, participatory, democratic institutions which will make the state obsolete.
3. We identify ourselves as anarchists and with the “platformist”, anarchist-communist or especifista tradition of anarchism. We broadly identify with the theoretical base of this tradition and the organisational practice it argues for, but not necessarily everything else it has done or said, so it is a starting point for our politics and not an end point.
4. The core ideas of this tradition that we identify with are the need for anarchist political organisations that seek to develop:
  - Theoretical Unity
  - Tactical Unity
  - Collective Action and Discipline
  - Federalism
5. A major focus of our activity is our work within the economic organizations of the working class (labour organizations, trade unions, syndicates) where this is a possibility. We therefore reject views that dismiss activity in the unions because as members of the working class it is only natural that we should also be members of these mass organizations. Within them we fight for the democratic structures typical of anarcho-syndicalist unions like the 1930’s CNT. However, the unions no matter how revolutionary cannot replace the need for anarchist political organisation(s).
6. We also see it as vital to work in struggles that happen outside the unions and the workplace. These include struggles against particular oppressions, imperialism and indeed the struggles of the working class for a decent place and environment in which to live. Our general approach to these, like our approach to the unions, is to involve ourselves with mass movements and within these movements, in order to promote anarchist methods of organisation involving direct democracy and direct action.
7. We actively oppose all manifestations of prejudice within the workers’ movement and society in general and we work alongside those struggling against, for example, racism, sexism, religious sectarianism, queerphobia, intersexphobia, and ableism, as a priority. We see the success of a revolution and the successful elimination of these oppressions after the revolution being determined by the building of such struggles in the pre-revolutionary period. The methods of struggle that we promote are a preparation for the running of society along anarchist and communist lines after the revolution.
8. We oppose imperialism but put forward anarchism as an alternative goal to nationalism. We defend grassroots anti-imperialist movements while arguing for an anarchist rather than nationalist strategy.

9. Revolution must aim to bring human society into harmony with the rest of nature, for our own basic quality of life and for the sake of other species. This aim is not fundamentally opposed to technological development or mass society, which are always expressions of the current social system. Rather, we strive for a libertarian, ecological, technology.
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## **1. Name:**

- a. The name of the organisation is the Workers Solidarity Movement.

## **2. Membership:**

- a. Members are required to agree to work and argue for WSM policies in their public political activity, abide by its constitution and code of conduct and pay dues
- b. Members are responsible to their branch and to the National Conference for their political activities. Every member must be a member of a branch.
- c. Memberships may be temporarily or permanently removed through our complaints procedure.

## **3. Branches:**

- a. The basic unit of the organisation is the branch, which consists of at least three persons in a given area or workplace.
- b. Where no branch exists in an area, members will be attached to the nearest branch and considered full members of it.
- c. Branches must meet at least once every two weeks and are required to send a delegate to every delegate council.

## **4. National Conference:**

- a. Members meet in National Conference at least twice a year to review their activities, decide policy, elect the National Officers and delegate other responsibilities. Conference be held in Spring and Autumn of each year. Both conferences shall open with a discussion of perspectives and will take reports from national officers and committees. Conference may, by majority vote, modify or suspend the agenda.
- b. All members are entitled to attend and vote at National Conferences.
- c. National Conference is the supreme decision making body.

- d. Prior to National Conference all members will receive an agenda.
- e. Where members are unable to attend, they may have a proxy vote cast on any specific issue they wish.
- f. Any branch may call an extraordinary National Conference if at least four weeks notice is given in the Internal Bulletin.

## 5. The Delegate Council

- 1. The Delegate Council is responsible for the day-to-day co-ordination of the organisation's work between conferences.
- 2. The Delegate Council is made up of the internal secretary (as chair), one 6-month branch delegate and one rotating branch delegate for branches with more than 10 members."
- 3. Delegate Council meetings
  - 1. The Delegate Council meets at least once a month or more often if necessary. All members are entitled to attend and speak at the Delegate Council meetings, but only branch delegates have voting rights.
  - 2. An agenda will always be circulated at least 7 days prior to meetings. Branches should arrange to meet and mandate their delegate in the week before the Delegate Council meeting. Items can be placed on the agenda by any
    - a. WSM branch,
    - b. an individual submitting it in writing to the Internal Secretary up to 7 days before the meeting.
    - c. An agenda template of Branch Reports, Working Group Reports, Motions, Discussion Items and AOB will be used. Working Groups need only give reports to every second Delegate Council. Reports can be submitted in advance to the internal website.
  - 3. Ten days notice of Delegate Council meetings should be given.
  - 4. The delegates have the right to accept proposed amendments.
- 4. Holding the Delegate Council meeting
  - 1. The Internal Secretary will attend all Delegate Council meetings. The National Treasurer and International Secretary need not do so unless
    - i. they have not provided a detailed, written report in the three weeks before the Delegate Council meets,
    - ii. a branch has requested they attend the meeting.

None of the National officers has a vote at the Delegate Council meeting.

2. Each branch of the organisation able to provide the needed infrastructure will host the Delegate Council in rotation.
5. Delegate Council decision making
  - i. Branches issues high-level goals to delegates.
  - ii. Branch includes suggested methods of implementing the high-level goals.
  - iii. Delegate Council discusses the high-level goals and if there is general agreement then it moves on to negotiate on the implementation methods coming from each of the branches.
  - iv. Delegate Council can vote on policy, with delegates voting according to their best judgement as to what the opinion of the branch would be on the end proposal under discussion. Delegates carry the number of votes of people who were at the last branch meeting prior to DC where motions were discussed.
  - v. Delegate Council can discuss and decide items that are not on the agenda. Delegates must report to their branches the reason why Delegate Council took such action.
5. The National Conference may overturn any decision of the Delegate Council.
6. Minutes of all Delegate Council meetings will be circulated to the WSM web site

#### 7. **Emergency Delegate Council**

The Emergency Delegate Council's role is to make decisions on an emergency basis. There are three situations in which a decision can be made by the Emergency Delegate Council

- a. New circumstances have arisen which call for a new decision to be made or an old decision to be altered.
  - b. New information has come to light which call for a new decision to be made or an old decision to be altered.
  - c. The security of the organisation is under threat.
- Emergency Delegate Council is co-ordinated by the Internal Secretary in a non-voting role and is made up of each branch's national delegate.  
An Emergency Delegate council can be called:
    1. i) through a motion passed by a branch ii) through petition by 10% of the membership iii) at the request of one third of the delegate council delegates iv) at the request of any two national officers.
    2. The motion may not contradict existing WSM policy or our constitution.
    3. The motion must indicate the reason a motion has been sent to the EDC, by indicating which of the four situations in which the EDC are allowed to take a decision apply (these are outlined above).
    4. The motion may not overturn decisions of either Conference or of Delegate Council but may make interim policy and administrative decisions.

5. The decision must be of a significance that it cannot be made by a national officer within their existing mandate.
- Delegates are required to vote on EDC decisions in line with what they think would be the feeling in their branch on the topic. Where possible they should consult with as many members of the branch as possible although for very urgent decisions this may not be possible.  
Before making a decision on a motion, the EDC must first agree that proposers are justified in asking the EDC to make a decision, that is, the EDC must agree that it is necessary for the EDC to intervene, as one of the following three instances exist;
    - a. New circumstances have arisen which call for a new decision to be made or an old decision to be altered.
    - b. New information has come to light which call for a new decision to be made or an old decision to be altered.
    - c. The security of the organisation is under threat.
  - All EDC decisions will be immediately posted on our web-page, made a sticky until the next Delegate Council and brought to Conference or Delegate Council for ratification or rejection. A thread on our web-page, in the left hand box, will record all the decisions of the Emergency Delegate Council. and a report on these decisions will be brought to each conference.

## 6. Working Groups

Working groups should be created through a written motion to National Conference, Delegate Council or, for local work, a branch meeting that specifies what the mandate of the group is, what period it should complete its work by and what, if any, financial resources are being allocated to it.

All members of a working group must be able to fully commit to the work of that group for the expected period of its activity. Members who cannot do this may be asked by the group to contribute in some other way. We expect groups to be small in number so that members will be able to dedicate themselves to one or no more than two such groups rather than trying to spread their activity over several.

At the point of creation one member of the group should take on responsibility for being the co-ordinator. This means they are responsible for calling meetings, keeping work moving along, making sure there is a report to DC and for being the contact person for the rest of the organisation to ask questions of the group. The co-ordinator can be changed at any meeting of the group.

Any member who goes on leave will be considered to have resigned from any working groups they are on and should be replaced at the next meeting of DC or whatever body created that group.

Any group that fails to submit a written report to Delegate Council when required by the time of the motion deadline will be considered to have dissolved and an item will be added to that DC agenda by the Internal Secretary to confirm that the groups work is either finished, no longer



relevant or to co-opt a new group from interested members. Delegates should seek nominations for replacements on the group at the branch meeting before DC.

Each working group will have a thread on the internal forum where it will post updates on activity and where other members of WSM can ask questions etc. It will be the responsibility of the co-ordinator to maintain this thread.

## **7. Organisational principles:**

- a. All decisions are taken by majority vote.
- b. No position within the organisation, either at local or national level, may be held by the same member for more than three years in succession.
- c. Minutes are kept of all meetings and are available to any member for inspection. Any member may attend any WSM meeting as an observer.
- d. No member may hold more than two positions, either local or national within the organisation. When nominations are being sought for positions those already holding a local or national position should be accepted only if no one who does not hold a position comes forward.

## **8. Minority rights:**

- a. Official policy is that agreed at National Conferences.
- b. Minorities who disagree with any policy or members who wish to act on an issue for which no policy exists, have the right to act as they see fit as long as they make it clear that their position does not reflect that of the organisation, and as long as such a position does not take them outside the constitution of the WSM.
- c. Individual members are free to engage in any political activity which does not contradict existing policy. In general they are expected to argue for and implement organisational policy in their public political work. Where they disagree with existing policy they are free to argue within the organisation for a new policy.
- d. If they are speaking as a WSM member at any event they are expected not to contradict existing policies. This does not apply if they are speaking as a mandated delegate of a union or campaigning group. It also does not apply if they are speaking in an individual capacity at a debate or public meeting but in this case they should indicate that they are disagreeing with the policy of the WSM.
- e. In Trade Unions and campaign groups members are expected not to argue against whatever tactics the WSM has agreed as a strategy for that issue. Again this does not apply where they carry a mandate from a section of that group or union.

If delegates are unmandated they are free to vote as they please provided their vote does not go against long term WSM policy.

## **9. Internal Bulletin:**

- a. The IB will be produced before each national conference by the Internal Secretary.
- b. It is sent to all members, and at the discretion of Delegate Council to supporters
- c. The IB contains reports from Branches, Commissions, National Officers, etc. as well as proposals and discussion articles submitted by members.
- d. Members will be given an account on the internal WSM website. No post can be reposted off the site without the permission of the sender – any member who reposts without permission will be removed from the website pending expulsion.

## **10. National officers:**

- a. Conference elects a National Secretary, an Internal Secretary, National Treasurer, one or more International Secretaries. It may create and fill other national positions as it sees fit.
- b. All national officers are subject to recall by the Delegate Council.
- c. Election to WSM national officer positions shall be by secret ballot. Where a position is uncontested the ratification ballot shall also be by secret ballot.
- d. The responsibilities of the National Officers are:

### **National Secretary**

- i. To be the first spokesperson for the organisation.
- ii. To keep a record of all national correspondence.
- iii. To write a report on National Conference for indymedia, anarkismo, etc.
- iv. To co-ordinate the Engagement process as laid down in the Membership & Engagement paper.

### **Internal Secretary**

- i. To coordinate Delegate Council and to ensure that mandates are recorded and carried out.
- ii. To coordinate National Conference and to ensure that mandates are recorded and carried out.
- iii. To produce the pre-National Conference Internal Bulletin
- iv. To be a member of the Emergency Delegate Council
- v. To be responsible for editing the WSM internal web page.

### **National Treasurer**

- i. To keep a record of all funds and financial transactions at national level.
- ii. To place in each IB a financial statement.

### **International Secretary**

- i. To send similar organisations abroad our publications and to correspond with individuals and organisations who are not signed up to the Anarkismo statement.
- ii. To organise the translation of articles from foreign papers, and to be responsible for the writing of articles when requested by contacts abroad.
- iii. To place a report in each IB.

### **Anarkismo secretary**

- i. have a high level of internet access and regular online availability
- ii. take part in discussion, debate and voting on the Anarkismo editorial forum
- iii. will republish all public WSM material on Anarkismo.net
- iv. will be responsible for all communication with organisations and individuals who are signed up to the Anarkismo.net statement
- v. is mandated to generate and sign collective Anarkismo.net statements that are compatible with WSM policy
- vi. will provide a written report each month to delegate council outlining activity in the previous month.

## **11. Publications:**

- a. Conference elects the editorial groups for all the WSM publications and can mandate these groups as it sees fit.
- b. Where an article submitted for publication is rejected the author may request an explanation to be given in the IB.
- c. The responsibility for any other national publications is also decided by conference.

## **12. Finance:**

- a. Membership dues are as laid down in the Membership & Engagement paper
- b. Any member more than three months behind in their dues is deemed to have resigned.

- c. Half of this money is retained by the branch, and half is sent to the National Treasurer for the use of the organisation at a national level.
- d. National Conference, or in its place the Delegate Council, may place a special levy on members to finance specific projects.

### **13. Policy process**

(this section is currently in the process of being replaced.)

1. The policy of the WSM is first and foremost the position papers as drawn up and amended by national conference. All other policy decisions must be compatible with these position papers and are changed or reversed by any subsequent motions passed by national conference. Position papers lapse after three years unless they are ratified by national conference. The Internal Secretary is responsible for ensuring that Position Papers due ratification are included in the agenda of national conference
2. The strategic outlook of the WSM will come from its Sectoral Analysis & Orientation papers. These aim to link our political analysis with the future direction of our energy and resources. These papers are in the process of construction and will appear publically as they are ratified by National Conference.
3. Position papers are divided into a general section and a short term perspectives section. The general section contains the theoretical position of the organisation on the question and should be framed in a way that will not allow it to become quickly dated. The short term perspectives section outlines the organisations policy on immediate questions and the tactics we intend to implement. This section lapses after two years unless it is ratified by National Conference or Delegate Committee
4. Individual branches can define their own policy on particular areas providing it is compatible with the Position Papers and decisions of Delegate Council. It is expected that this will be used to customise general tactics for local use and to generate policy tailored to specific local issues.

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Constitution  
April 2012

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The document that gives the basic definition of the Workers Solidarity Movement and which lays down how we make decisions and how we operate. Last updated at Spring 2012 National Conference.

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