

SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY

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TRADE UNION AND UNEMPLOYED WORKERS GROUP  
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To all trade union and unemployed members of the Party.

Dear Comrade,

Attached is a copy of the resolutions passed at our first Conference on April 9th last. Two resolutions were deferred to a later date. Consequently we are organising a half-day conference of the Group on Saturday, 24th June at 2.00 p.m. in Dublin. The two outstanding resolutions are also attached. The theme of the conference will be 'Trade Union Democracy and the Rank and File'. Further details will be forwarded to Branches shortly. We ask all trade unionists in the Party to keep that date free.

We also ask that all trade unionists and unemployed members ensure that their names and union-membership are registered with the General Secretary so that the Group can contact them. It is important that all eligible members play an active part in the work of the Group. That the Branches send us information about strikes, disputes and issues affecting their union/so that the industrial and unemployed activity of Party members can be co-ordinated. In the near future the Steering Committee will be getting the various union and job groups off the ground. We urge you to join your particular group. (See resolutions.)

In accordance with the resolutions on unemployment the Group intends to convene an informal open meeting of all unemployed committees, groups and activists in order that the possibility of a broad and united campaign against unemployment can be discussed.

The Steering Committee of the Group is:

Des Derwin, chairperson, (ITGWU & FINGLAS SLP)  
Dermot Whelan (LGPSU & BALLYFERMOT SLP)  
Michael O'Donoghue (Bookbinders Union & ARTANE SLP)  
Tom O'Connor (ASTMS & DUBLIN S-E SLP)  
Andy Johnson (TUI & GALWAY WEST SLP)  
Dermot Byrne (AGEMOU & DUN LAOIGHAIRE SLP)  
(elected at April Conference)  
Des Bonas (ITGWU & Artane)  
Michael O'Keefe (ASTMS & DUBLIN WEST CO. SLP)  
(co-opted; two further co-options have yet to be confirmed with the members in question)

Further information can be had from members of the Steering at the Conference.

Fraternally,

Trade Union and Unemployed Workers Group,  
Steering Committee.

- SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY

TRADE UNION AND UNEMPLOYED WORKERS GROUP

Resolutions passed at the April 9th 1978 Conference

Unemployment and the Unemployed

I. This Conference noted that the Unemployed Workers Association has ceased to exist and believes that the Trade Union Movement should encourage all active initiatives of the unemployed.

The SLP resolves to initiate discussions with unemployed groups, committees and activists, to encourage a broad united unemployed organisation, to launch a campaign against unemployment and for the right to work. Local branches of this organisation should seek affiliation to the Trades Councils.

All unemployed members of the SLP should meet regularly as an unemployed grouping within the T.U. & Unemployed Group.

SLP trade unionists will seek the establishment of Unemployed Committees or Sections in their union branches. The Committees or Sections shall fight to prevent redundancies, strive to involve the unemployed in the affairs of the union, and assist activities of unemployed workers outside the union.

The fight against redundancy and unemployment if it is to unite the employed and the unemployed, on demands such as the 35-hour week or the ban on overtime, can only succeed if it is taken up as part of building a rank and file movement centred on the industrial strength of those at work.

2. That this conference commission the publication of an easy to read, popular and cheap pamphlet on "Fighting for the Right to Work" which takes up the differing arguments about unemployment and our solutions about how best it can be fought.

3. Conference resolves, while fighting for a national minimum wage for the unemployed, to fight for free electricity, gas, rent and T.V. licences for the unemployed and food supplements for unemployed workers children.

4. That Conference supports the Dublin "Fare Fight Campaign" and will work to initiate similar campaigns throughout the 32 counties.

Trades Councils

I. SLP members of the Dublin Trades Council should urge that the theme of the May Day march be 'Unemployment' and that the Dublin Trades Council call on other Trades Councils to hold marches on the same theme, unless mandated otherwise by their Union.

SLP members who are also Trade Union & Unemployed Workers Group

(2)

(T.U.U.W. Group) members shall in all areas endeavour to carry out the following policies:

(1) That in areas where there is no Trades Council they shall organise one through the Irish Congress Of Trade Unions.

(2) That following the setting up of the Trades Council, or where there is one already operating, they shall endeavour to affiliate to the Trades Council through their local trade union branch.

(3) That they should then endeavour to organise support for the Socialist Labour Party's ideas and actions through the co-ordination of our T.U.&U.W. Group.

#### Structure of the T.U.&U.W. Group

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I. That a Steering Committee of five people plus a chairperson, who shall sit on the N.e.c., be elected for a year to co-ordinate and direct the activities of the T.U. & U.W. Group in accordance with party policy and decisions taken at the general meetings of the Group. The Committee may co-opt four extra members. The Committee shall call and organise general meetings of the Group.

The Steering Committee shall function as an industrial committee of the Party and as such it must give an active lead to party members on all major issues and disputes.

#### Wages, Conditions and Bargaining.

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I. This Conference resolves that the policy of SLP trade unionists is:

- 1) to oppose National Wage Agreements in principle and in detail and fight for a full return to Free Collective Bargaining;
- 2) to demand withdrawal of the ICTU from the Employer-Labour Conference, the National Economic and Social Council and all class-collaborationist committees, and to campaign in the rank and file against any reliance on the Labour Court;
- 3) to advocate, and organise for the earliest and widest co-ordination of wage claims on the basis of £15 flat rate increases;
- 4) to work for common demands at plant and/or industry level, for shorter working hours, longer holidays, resistance to productivity and rationalisation deals which lead, directly or indirectly, to loss of jobs, and to fight for full equal pay immediately;
- 5) to fight for a 35-hour week without loss of pay throughout industry;
- 6) to fight for a ban on overtime and a lump sum increase on basic pay to compensate for loss of earnings;
- 7) to fight for a national minimum wage related to average male industrial wages.

This conference urges SLP members in trade unions to press now (4th March) for immediate claims in their unions and workplaces on that basis, particularly in those sectors where the 1977 National Wage Agreement has expired.

(This resolution was formulated for the period between the end of the 1977 NWA and the beginning of the 1978 NWA)

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This conference recognises that such objectives as a national minimum wage and a legislated 35-hour week can only be achieved through the centrally organised, collective strength of the trade union movement, but that present methods of national bargaining, which threaten the independence of the trade union movement, rule out organising for, or attaining, these goals.

2. That an attempt is made to set up a united front to organise and co-ordinate opposition to the National Wage Agreements within the Trade Union Movement on a rank and file basis, and that an attempt be made to get the support of other Parties to co-operate.

#### Union Democracy and the Rank and File.

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1. The Trade Union and Unemployed Group shall work for trade union democracy and the building of an independent rank and file movement, beginning by bringing together SLP trade union activists in a number of work and union areas. The purpose of these groups is to organise, co-ordinate and direct the activities of SLP trade unionists towards the winning of party policy in their workplaces and unions, or local areas (in the case of the unemployed).

Party members from the following areas should meet regularly as a group:

The ITGWU; the WUI; the ATGWU; the ASTMS; Teaching; the Motor Industry; Local Authorities, Health Boards and the Public Service; Trades Council members; the Unemployed; Apprentices; Printing & NUJ.

It shall be the aim of each group to involve fellow trade unionists, who are not SLP members, in common activities on broad demands, in order to build a wider movement of the rank and file.

2. In order to make union democracy a reality for women workers, to bring them into full activity in the unions and to overcome the division in the class between men and women, we campaign for:

- (a) the launching of an intensive drive to unionise all working women;
- (b) the right of women to caucus in the unions;
- (c) free workplace nurseries under trade union control.

(4)

The following two resolutions were deferred to a later date:

I. That this conference recognising the role of the trade union bureaucracy in the maintenance of capitalist class rule, resolves that SLP members actively campaign for the democratic control of the trade unions by the rank and file, based on the following broad principles:

- 1) all officials to be elected and subject to recall;
- 2) all officials to be paid the average industrial wage;
- 3) all strikes in support of trade union principles, conditions or wages to be made official;
- 4) all stages of negotiations to be subject to rank and file ratification;
- 5) all policy making bodies to be made up of elected representatives;
- 6) branch general meetings to be held at least quarterly.

Conference further resolves that, in pursuance of these aims, SLP members take the lead in initiating rank and file groups for democratic reform in all unions, or actively support such groups where already established.

(PROPOSED: John Cane, Rathmines West Branch).

AMMENDMENTS: in 1) delete 'to be elected'; add 'at regular intervals'.  
delete 2).  
in 4) change 'ratification' to 'scrutiny'.  
delete 5)

(PROPOSED: Dermot Whelan, Ballyfermot Branch)

add 7) 'a commitment from all trade unionists to use and expand internal facilities for education and debate'.

(PROPOSED; Jim Maher, Artane Branch).

2. This meeting resolves:

(a) The building of rank and file organisation in the trade union movement is a political task whose goal is always to mobilise the mass of the Labour Movement on a programme of action linked to the goal of the Workers Republic.

The mobilising of the rank and file on issues of trade union democracy is central to the task but it is not a sufficient basis for building the rank and file movement. In this struggle the members of the Party must seek to win rank and file support for a platform of demands which answer the offensive of the capitalist class and the State.

(b) In building the rank and file movement we must not seek to tie it organisationally to the Party and should seek the maximum unity in action with other socialists wherever we find agreement with them or their organisations in mobilising the rank and file.

(c) We must campaign for the rank and file of the trade unions to organise independently of trade union officials so that (1) workers are not left defenceless when their officials weaken or give up the fight for their demands and (2) the rank and file give full support to trade union officials in so far as they fight for the workers' needs.

(5)

(d) Where trade union officials claim to support the rank and file organisations it should be openly demanded of them that they give full support to the demands of the rank and file for trade union democracy.

(e) Initially the principle organisations of the rank and file for which we campaign are Shop Stewards & Rank and File Committees in each union and locally across unions in each town, city etc. We recognise the need also for combine committees and a public sector alliance of the rank and file. We call for the co-ordination of all such organisations under the banner of a National Shop Stewards and Rank and File Movement, on a 32-County basis.

(f) Area shop stewards committees, while in no way waiting for Trades Councils to lead workers' struggles, must (1) openly put demands on them to support these struggles; (2) fight for affiliation to Trades Councils; and (3) fight to win delegates positions in Trades Councils for those committed to the Shopstewards Committee's policies.

(g) We fight to involve rank-and-file organisations in support of all Labour Movement campaigns such as for a free national health service, against cuts in public spending or for action on prices, rents etc.

(PROPOSED; Irish Workers Group tendency.)

**Title:** Trade Union and Unemployed Workers Group:  
Resolutions passed at the April 9th 1978 Conference  
**Organisation:** Socialist Labour Party  
**Date:** 1978

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