

REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST STUDENTS' FEDERATION (LEICESTER BRANCH)

RESOLUTION

Manifesto for a political programme

1. RSSF affirms its support for workers' control of industry, tenants' control of housing, students' and teachers' control of education, and for the victory of liberation movements in the third world.
2. RSSF opposes all forms of discrimination and is anxious to lend its support to any minority engaged in/struggles^{progressive} against such discrimination.
3. RSSF commits itself in principle to all anti-capitalist and anti-fascist and anti-imperialist struggles and resolutely opposes all forms of class domination and class collaboration.
4. RSSF resolutely opposes the wage freeze and price and rent increases, and is anxious to lend its support to any group of workers or tenants engaged in struggles against them.
5. RSSF does not believe its aims can be achieved through parliamentary means and therefore constitutes itself as an extra-parliamentary opposition.
6. RSSF extends to all left students and student organisations the invitation to cooperate with it in supporting and organising for clauses I-4, and extends fraternal greetings to organisations abroad already doing so.
7. RSSF resolutely opposes ruling-class control, and middle-class strangleholds on higher education, and determines to struggle for an education system involving comprehensive higher education, the abolition of the binary system, the public schools and the grammar schools; the joint control of curricula by pupils and teachers, and the recognition of revolutionary socialist culture.
8. RSSF believes that existing political parties and trade unions cannot sustain revolutionary socialist programmes either structurally or politically. It affirms that it is neither meaningful nor valuable to attempt to take these organisations over. While retaining support for their defensive struggles, it believes that new, participatory mass-base organisations are required to overthrow capitalism.
9. RSSF believes that students can play some part in the building of such organisations and in the linking of struggles of existing militant groups. Particularly, however, it sees its role as developing the consciousness of youth as a sector, for it believes that within the milieu of education it can fruitfully make contact with sections of the two million full or part-time students in Britain.
10. RSSF also believes that the institutions of higher education are a comparatively weak link in British capitalism, and that the ruling class' field of action can be severely restricted by correctly waged struggles for student control and universities of revolutionary criticism.

Proposals for the structure and constitution of RSSF

ARTICLE I · MEMBERSHIP

Those individuals who accept the aims and objectives as contained in the Manifesto of the RSSF shall become members upon paying the quarterly subscription of ten shillings on application.

ARTICLE II · THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE (NC)

1. The NC shall be the supreme body of the RSSF, both with regard to policy and organisation.
2. The NC shall not be a delegate but a membership conference.
3. There shall be an NC in the last week of November and in the first week of May each year.
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4. An Emergency NC shall be held if called for by ten per cent of the membership.
5. All proposals for the regular NC shall be forwarded to the National Coordination Committee not later than one month in advance.

ARTICLE III THE NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (NCC)

- 1) The NCC shall consist of one delegate from each of the following regions: Wales, Scotland, Ireland, North East England, North West, Midlands London and Home Counties, and South West - and/or one delegate for each branch with thirty or more members.
- 2) The NCC shall meet at least once a month, the quorum being two-thirds. The meetings shall be held each time in a different region.
3. The NCC shall implement the decisions of the National Conference and shall be responsible for the day to day running of RSSF but shall take no decisions on policy.
4. The NCC shall print and publish national leaflets and posters.
5. The NCC shall compose a weekly newsletter.
6. The NCC shall maintain fraternal relations with organisations abroad that the National Conference nominates.
7. The NCC shall prepare the National Conferences.
8. The NCC shall submit a written report of its activities to the bi-annual National Conference.
9. The NCC shall maintain accounts.

ARTICLE IV LOCAL BRANCHES

1. Within the framework of NC decisions each branch shall have complete autonomy in political activity in co-ordination with other branches and organisation, and in its own structure.
- 2) The minimum administrative task of each branch shall be as follows:
 - a) To circulate to members all national documents which reach it from other branches or from the NCC.
 - b) To collect members' dues and forward fifty percent of them to the NCC.
 - c) To appoint and instruct delegates for the NCC if the branch has thirty or more members.

ARTICLE V CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Constitutional amendments shall be decided by a simple majority at NC.

DOCUMENT

Arguments for political programme and organisational proposals:
remarks on strategy.=====

I. What should RSSF do?

Even if a Leninist party were possible or desirable in Britain today, RSSF in no sense could become it. Even if the events of France could be made to show that with an 'alternative leadership' the workers would have seized power, RSSF could under no circumstances pretend to that leadership in Britain.

The transformation of the consciousness of workers must be the working-class' own task. Neither students, nor a party can substitute for them - either by taking over the universities, transforming bourgeois culture or by issuing orders to them. And if students see their role as merely one of mechanical 'detonation' of workers, then we believe that they likewise are misunderstanding their potential.

Our first principle is workers' control of industry: how can this principle be reconciled with the work of a student organisation? First we must look at comparative levels of consciousness. At the moment there is no organised group of workers in Britain demanding workers' control, although there are a large proportion who are waging defensive struggles to maintain the gains they have made. There is no artificial demand that we can conjure up and proclaim 'here is what will transform you from being a class-in-yourself to a class-for-yourself'. The demand for workers' power is a demand that will be born for workers through their own revolutionary struggles.

What of the level of consciousness of students? With some isolated exceptions most of their struggles in Britain have objectively also been defensive - over victimisation or born of a desire to re-establish the types of relations which existed in colleges before their bureaucratisation and depersonalization - the struggles for 'participation' - indeed, although they may represent a response to situations of control, none have as yet begun to demand control. Isolated militancy - the level at which workers' organisations have been trapped for generations - has come to characterize the students scene. Thus the problem, in both cases is one of political consciousness - how to facilitate the making of anti-capitalist demands - and how to build an organisation capable of sustaining this struggle.

2. What can RSSF do?

What work are revolutionary students best fitted for? At the last RSSF conference the question was posed in the following form: 'Should we be at the factory gates or be struggling for reforms inside our own institutions?' For us, this is a false and unhelpful formulation of a serious problem - a problem that is both theoretical and practical. It is theoretical in the sense that some kind of decision has to be made from our principles, but it is also practical when faced by students like those of Kent, whose university is located in an area almost devoid of an industrial working-class.

Our analysis has so far suggested that the problem that confronts us in all milieux is one of facilitation, rather than detonation or leadership. Let us therefore ask how we can best facilitate changes of consciousness amongst firstly, those within our own milieu, and secondly amongst the broader section of the population we are most a part of - youth. The obvious answer to the first question is through precipitating conflicts within colleges which politicize their participants and break them from their class roots. (But it is another task to justify such struggles in non-instrumental terms; see below). The second strategy is ideologically clearer: we do not have to prove that youth is a class in order to nominate its working class section as a potential revolutionary subject: we can merely point to France. It must be our first task to define our strategy toward it.

We suggest the following: as students we share a common situation in some respects with school-children and day-release apprentices. In our educational institutions we are subject to the same authority relationships - differentiated by different ideologies and levels of sophistication, but basically common ground. By inserting ourselves into these situations we are inserting ourselves into the milieu of the young worker and the young worker-to-be. By creating a political culture, by facilitating the raising of demands

for control in these institutions, we are facilitating the future raising of demands for control by young workers in their work situations. This is not a quantitative voluntarism, but a step toward a strategy for a qualitative movement from defensive to offensive struggle.

We are not suggesting that this strategy could be operationalized overnight. It may take us a decade to reach youth as a whole sector - for analogously to tenants' work it involves not so much the making of brief contacts in struggles which may only occur annually, but the making of necessarily transient contacts amongst a sector of the population which is by definition its most fluctuating.

We recognize therefore that what to us would be intermediary forms of struggle-alliances with workers, tenants and immigrants, will often take first place for groups who see as their task the direct alliance of students and workers forged through industrial struggle, etc. And we also recognize that no organisation which wishes to call itself socialist can afford to avoid such struggles. What we are attempting to convey is that there is no short-cut 'either/or' alternative from which can be chosen the only valid form of political work.

Work within the universities and colleges

In terms of these institutions being our own milieu, work within the universities appears to need no justification. And yet it can quite clearly be seen that except in the most instrumental terms of recruiting a few cadres, most university struggles today have been time-consuming, pointless and irrelevant for student revolutionaries. A new strategy of student struggle must be developed before we can wholeheartedly commit ourselves to work in our own milieu - and that strategy, in turn (along with the considerations mentioned above) should inform a certain kind of organisational form.

For correct struggle within each university specific tactics can only be the product of that experience of the institution (its ideology, flexibility or intransigence of its administrators, the strength of the union, etc) which revolutionaries within it possess. For correct struggle within each institution of higher education must involve the ability to put the correct demands at the correct time - that is, demands which can mobilize support but not be met at times which will politicize the support, paralyse the institutions' normal functioning and create within it a political culture which can be retroactive upon society and upon our movement.

Yet all this begs a crucial question: what is the point of struggles within the universities? In what way can they facilitate the collapse of capitalism?

We believe that the institutions of higher education - and the universities in particular represent important and vulnerable links in the chain of capitalism. The university represents a forcing-house for capitalism's future managers, bureaucrats, scientists and apologists. It represents a laboratory for many of its military, technological and sociological experiments. We believe that the ruling class' field of action can be severely retarded by the opening up of the university as a second revolutionary front, i.e., by the creation of a serious and prolonged crisis which both prevents the work mentioned above being carried out and prevents the cranking out of conformist cadres. The university is vulnerable because of the gigantic and complex numbers of contradictions which become transparent within its walls - the contradiction of 'equality of opportunity' and the actual class-composition of the university intake, the contradiction of humanitarianism and the amount of destructive research that it propagates, the contradiction of egalitarianism and the abysmal domination into passivity of the majority of students, the contradiction of liberalism and the banally obvious and childish numbers of social controls, the contradiction of university autonomy and the accountability of their administrations to the treasury, the contradiction of the myth of the well-rounded renaissance man of letters and the fragmented one who is generally produced, the contradiction of the community of scholars and the employment of fixed failure rates and irrelevant examinations. Above all, the contradiction of academic freedom set against the straitjacket of university curricula - curricula to fit bourgeois society... curricula which expropriate from the student what is promised him.

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Yet up to the time of writing few university struggles have exploited more than a couple of these contradictions - and few socialist students have managed to articulate their struggles into exposures. Until various RSSF groups can produce tactics for challenging universities by using all these contradictions, and until those struggles can be managed so as not to be isolated from workers - i.e., until they can be coordinated with the wider struggles ^{and strategies} mentioned above - all that campus explosions will leave behind them is rubble.

4. Organisation

In order to best facilitate the development of these struggles, and to allow individual groups the scope to chose beyond the proposals, we propose an organisational form which comprehends the political autonomy of each group while attempting to preserve a framework of a national organisation which can provide contact between those, a flexible but principled political position and a central bureau for the day-to-day administration of the Federation's practical and external affairs.

We also propose that RSSF does not at present publish a newspaper, chiefly for financial reasons, but that it does publish a weekly newsletter containing notifications etc, for its own membership.

Technically as well as politically, it is desirable to extend RSSF membership beyond colleges and universities and into cities. We therefore propose that in each college represented at this conference the branch have the minimum political responsibility of contacting other educational institutions in their areas, including schools, as a step toward the setting-up of area RSSF branches and the facilitation of our broader strategic proposals.