

Zabalaza Books' AgitProp Series #5

# REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNIONISM: *THE KEY TO REVOLUTION*



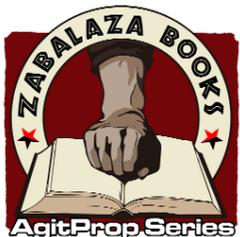
***Read, Copy, Distribute***  
**Viva Revolutionary Industrial  
Unionism!**

***Down with Capitalism!***

**Forward to Workers Self-  
Management of the Economy!**

*"Knowledge is the key to be free!"*

Based on a text of the ex-Workers Solidarity Federation of South Africa. For more information and links to organisations that are fighting for this today, visit the Zabalaza Books website.



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*"Knowledge is the key to be free!"*

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

BUT the unions can do MUCH more. The unions must not only fight the bosses in the here and now. We must use them to organise 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 our organisations defeating the bosses. They can only come through revolutionary industrial unionism (anarcho-syndicalism).

### ★ **Why Do We Need Trade Unions?**

**Trade unions are built because of our need to unite against the bosses. The bosses exploit us but we are many and the bosses are few. We do all the work, and the bosses get all the money.**

**We built the trade unions to fight back against the bosses.**

The unions give workers power, because they unite many of us into one strong organisation. The unions give us power, because they can organise us 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.

*This is the programme of Revolutionary Industrial Unionism (anarcho-syndicalism).*

### ★ **Building Tomorrow Today**

#### **To sum up, we believe that we must:**

- ▶ build workers' democratic 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 socially 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.
- ▶ at least 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 per industry, and a super-federation embracing all the trade unions.
- ▶ withdrawal of unions from all "worker participation" and "joint decision-making" schemes as these are just tricks of the bosses.

federation. Let's merge all progressive unions together, and unite all workers regardless of race or belief.

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 self-management, 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 our NEEDS - not the 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 militia.

*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 to build the schools, clinics, houses and everything we need. The wealth is there - we made it, let's take it back!*

### ★ **Are There Problems in the Unions?**

**Yes, there are some important problems. We 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 us, and many see the union as "just another job".

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

Sometimes this means that they do not support our struggles. Often they make undemocratic decisions. 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 us on the shopfloor.**

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

**BUT it is only through revolutionary trade union action - the taking over of the land and factories by the trade unions - that true socialism can come about. Socialism will never come through parliament. The unions must seize the land and factories and place them under workers self-management.**

**This is the core of our programme: revolutionary industrial unionism (anarcho-syndicalism).**

This cannot be done through appointing new full-time officials. It can only be done by making sure the unions are controlled by us on the shopfloor. 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. They should encourage workers unity and resistance to the bosses. These opposition groups must 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 Socialism?**

**Yes, the unions can.**

**But only if three things happen:**

- ▶ the unions are democratically controlled by the workers on the shopfloor.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ all unions are united into ONE BIG UNION controlled by the workers.

### ★ **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 ever arrested in a strike, we workers are. The bosses are the real rulers of our so-called "democracy".***

Parliament does not have real power. Real power lies in the company board-rooms, 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 ourselves, through our 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 we 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 our struggle.

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