

Left regroupment/refoundation

by [Ozleft](#)

Resolution and motions on left regroupment-refoundation today

Solidarity, a revolutionary, socialist, democratic, feminist, anti-racist organisation in the US

[This resolution, submitted by the Solidarity Political Committee, was adopted by Solidarity's national convention, July 24-28, 2002. A motion was also adopted to admit members of the Trotskyist League, a small group based in Detroit and linked internationally to the International Trotskyist Opposition, to membership of Solidarity.]

Solidarity believes that the creation of new forms of revolutionary socialist organisation would mark an important step forward for socialist politics in the US. The shape taken by a revolutionary refoundation could have a variety of possible contours, depending on the actual unfolding of any process of regroupment and renewal. (Or, nothing much could happen; sadly, that's also a possibility.)

The collapse of the bureaucratic post-capitalist regimes in the East and the emergence of the new anti-capitalist global justice movement makes such a new revolutionary socialist organisation both possible and desirable. However imperative it might be, history does show that socialist refoundation will not come about spontaneously, but will require the conscious engagement of old and new anti-capitalist currents. To be viable, such a newly created organisation should incorporate not only

those existing organisations that are non-vanguardist in character, but newer and younger layers of radical and revolutionary activists.

Refoundation has the potential of creating a new organisation that would bring together currents which historically and in present practice are considerably more distant from each other. Structures and modes of comradely collaboration will be necessary in order to allow for authentic coexistence and cross-fertilisation of tendencies. The search for dialogue and partnerships is not necessarily guided by “who’s closest to us”. That would eliminate much of the emergent leadership in the anti-globalisation movement, and a wide swatch of the left wing of people of colour movements. The stepping off point is not only the desire to build a stronger and more effective socialist presence, but also the genuine belief that we can all learn from one another.

In addition to differences in politics, culture and practice among groups and currents, we have to work through the challenges posed by our lack of direct contact in movement organisations and campaigns. It is important that we understand the barriers this absence of shared experience creates for our ability to work on collective projects in the movements. This reflects the weak state of the US left in the current political period. Shared experience of trust and confidence are best developed through common work.

Solidarity brings to this process a firm grounding in the politics of “socialism from below”. The bedrock of these politics is that working and oppressed people, through the experience of struggles around their own self-interest, can develop a broader,

radical and even revolutionary understanding of the world. Socialism can only be the product of the self-organisation and self-activity of working and oppressed people, and any viable socialism must be based on the democratic rule of working and oppressed people. We expect that all participants in the process of left regroupment and refoundation will be joined in this fundamental understanding, however differently a broad array of organisations and individuals express the concept.

We also bring to the process a particular understanding of reformism. We clearly distinguish the struggle for reform – for the immediate interests and needs of workers and oppressed – from reformist strategies based on the substitution of the actions of elites (trade union officials, Democratic Party politicians) for the struggles of working and oppressed people. We understand that reformism, as opposed to the need for reforms, is an obstacle to the development of revolutionary consciousness and to organising effective fights for reforms. Our general conception is best explained and tested in action with our perspective partners.

Solidarity has a consistent and well-grounded track record of labour activism. Our work building Labor Notes, various reform movements, and to a lesser extent student-labour solidarity and community-labour organisations is a solid resource we can bring to a socialist renewal. Our accumulated experience with what we term the “rank and file strategy” is one of our strongest contributions. Our general conception is best explained and tested in action with our perspective partners, where differences (or indifference to the role of the organised working class) can be explored and debated.

Solidarity has also developed a theoretically sophisticated and well-grounded analysis of contemporary capitalism. Our analysis of “lean production” allows us to understand that the growth of low-wage/no-wage work and the intensified exploitation of full-time, relatively well-paid workers is part of the same process of capitalist restructuring. We have also developed important analyses of how the internationalisation of “lean production” has shaped the new forms of capitalist “globalisation”.

A difference – and a challenge – we can already pinpoint

Solidarity’s position on independent political action and independence from the Democratic Party is a minority one in the presently existing socialist left, and most likely among newly radicalised activists. The difference was sharpest at the point of the 1988 campaign of Jesse Jackson for president. Since then, the growing together of the two capitalist parties has become evident to most socialists, particularly in the era of “globalisation”. The notion of socialists pursuing a strategy of “work inside the Democratic Party” has lost much of its appeal, even within the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). For our potential partners from the old left, life has made this question less important.

The question for Solidarity – and for any socialist refoundation – is whether it is possible to construct an organised voice for socialism where different strategies for class independence can democratically and publicly co-exist in the same organisation. From our perspective the development of the so-called two-party system is leading others to the same general conclusions we have espoused. We hope to find ways to prevent this question

from becoming a major obstacle to our participation in socialist renewal. The answer lies in how any new organisational structures would incorporate and create space for unsettled differences, especially substantial ones.

Weaknesses we cannot solve on our own

Solidarity has much to learn from other potential partners in the process of left refoundation. While we have made major efforts to develop our analysis of racism and to begin to recruit a layer of activists of colour, we have been much less successful than other groups coming from the “anti-revisionist” tradition. Our own composition as an organisation severely limits our ability to develop anything like a political perspective on the communities of colour, let alone attract members of colour.

Solidarity has more limited experience in community based organisation, or among low wage/no wage unorganised workers, particularly immigrant workers, than other currents. Our successes in recruiting young activists playing leadership roles in our organisation pales in comparison to the thousands of anti-capitalist young people leading the global justice movement, many of them adhering to anarchist and “anti-authoritarian” currents. We have had some success in convincing young people originally attracted to the empty promises of the Sweeny AFL-CIO leadership, but a reinvigorated socialist pole could go further in posing alternatives to those young people seeking to play a role in the [missing word] of the labour movement.

Motions

1. Solidarity will be a full participant in the left refoundation-regroupment initiative launched by Freedom Road Socialist Organisation, as a good beginning to the type of process we seek. We see this initiative as an opportunity for revolutionaries in the US to explore possibilities for new forms of organisation that are democratic, multi-racial and feminist. Solidarity seeks to broaden participation in the left refoundation-regroupment to include other revolutionary, democratic trends, including, but not to Left Turn, the Socialist Party and pro-working-class, anti-racist currents in the anarchist milieu.

2. Solidarity does not view any issues, by themselves, as an obstacle to a process of comradely and respectful discussion, debate, joint activity and possible organisational refoundation. Even if it proves impossible to reconcile our political and cultural differences to the point of a creating a new organisational structure together, we welcome joint work and comradely debate and discussion among US revolutionary left groups as a desirable goal in itself. Not only would such discussions help clarify issues of long standing among the existing revolutionary left organisations, but all of us would gain from the input and new questions, and new answers, raised by a new generation of revolutionaries.

3. Solidarity will encourage all manner of discussion and common activity that could attract new and younger activists to the process of left refoundation. In terms of activism, we need to find ways to work together in the labour and social movements. On a local level, we need to find ways to work together with other organised currents interested in this process, and with independent activists in the antiwar, global justice and

labour movements. The Labor Left is one model of how to organise common activity nationally, and Solidarity has and will continue to participate in this formation. Collaboration in promoting War Times may also be an important opportunity to test our ability to work together nationally against the new imperialist war drive.

4. Solidarity should encourage ways of making left reformation more accessible to newer and unaffiliated activists. Among the activities we should promote are public forums on key issues facing a new revolutionary left; retreats of activists in different political arenas to discuss key issues, the exchange of articles – and editors where possible – in our various publications; and the publication of joint pamphlets.

In particular, Solidarity will encourage the publication of a multigroup discussion bulletin on specific themes (anti-racist perspectives and strategy, antiwar and global justice organising, socialist activism in the working class, etc). The discussion bulletin would not be strictly “internal” to the participating organisations, but would also be a tool for outreach. Each formation would take responsibility for contributing as well as distributing this joint discussion. Activists who are not members of the participating groups would also be welcome in its pages. The major purpose of such a discussion bulleting would be to get newer activists to contribute.

5. The incoming PC will be charged with implementing these motions. The PC will develop a perspective on what collaborative work is already happening between our members and other organisations involved in or interested in left reformation, and will develop ideas about expanding

possibilities for collaboration in movement work. The PC will also be responsible for development of proposals to advance the process, appoint Solidarity representatives to various left refoundation meetings, circulate reports on regroupment activity, and work with the NC and the commissions to move the process forward.

The PC, with the approval of the NC, is authorised to create a Regroupment Commission to assist in the implementation of these motions. Solidarity will commit financial resources to support the continued process of left refoundation, including travel to meetings and logistical/infrastructural needs.

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