

## **Constitution of the Socialist Party**

**as adopted at the Special Conference 20/07/2024 by delegate votes: 74 in favour; 0 against; 1 abstention.**

### **Clause 1. Aims and Objectives**

1. The Socialist Party is a revolutionary organisation striving to unite the working class and oppressed in a struggle to overthrow capitalism – the source of exploitation, oppression, environmental destruction and war – and bring about a socialist society in Ireland, North and South, and globally.
2. We organise in the North and South of Ireland to develop a transitional programme for socialist change and are collaborating with others around the world to rebuild a genuinely Marxist international. Our political ideas and activism stand in the tradition of genuine Marxism, as represented by such figures as Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky. We believe the key force necessary to carry through the socialist transformation of society is the multi-gendered, multi-ethnic working class which alone possesses the capacity to end capitalism and establish a socialist economic and social system.
3. Such a system – where the key sectors of the economy are publicly owned and democratically controlled by the working-class majority – is the only possible way to avert ecological catastrophe and create an environmentally sustainable future of equality and dignity for all.
4. The struggle for socialism – genuine liberation and equality – must make central the fight against all forms of oppression: xenophobia, misogyny, racism, LGBTQ+phobia, ableism etc.
5. History and our experience shows workers, young and oppressed people will engage in mass struggle and revolutionary movements. One essential factor that is needed for such movements to be successful is a revolutionary organisation, which – armed with the right analyses, strategies and with roots in the working class and the oppressed – can point a way forward. We therefore seek to build a mass revolutionary party with an active political membership rooted in workplaces, communities, schools and colleges capable of playing a leading role in the struggle of working-class people and in revolutionary movements.
6. The Socialist Party opposes sectarianism in all its forms. We actively and consciously fight for unity of the working class – between Catholics and Protestants, along with those from other backgrounds; between workers and young people North and South as well as with our siblings in Scotland, England and Wales and for international working-class unity. Capitalism is incapable of resolving the division that arises from conflicting national aspirations in Ireland. However, on the basis of the necessity of a united working class struggle against the conditions of capitalism and for socialist change, the working class can create the basis for strong and transformative unity. Working-class people have the power and motivation to resolve the current conflict of national aspirations between those from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds through socialist change based on mutual respect and cooperation, including guarantees of rights of minorities up to and including the right to establish a separate socialist state if necessary. However, our preference is to reflect the unity of the working class in a unitary socialist state in Ireland,

as part of a voluntary socialist federation of Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales entered on a free and equal basis as part of a socialist Europe.

## **Clause 2. International affiliation**

1. We recognise the struggle for socialist change requires the building of revolutionary movements internationally. Our struggle is not restricted to only one part of the world, one region or country. Learning and reflecting from our experiences in Ireland and as a section of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) and later International Socialist Alternative (ISA), we are actively pursuing, together with others internationally, the building of a Marxist international worthy of that name. That will require theoretical, political, economic, organisational and financial struggle. Such an International needs revolutionary forms of organising as part of a genuinely democratic centralist approach (as explained in Clause 4(B)), along with a transitional revolutionary programme that seeks to engage actively with struggles and movements of working-class people, while clearly explaining the need for revolutionary socialist change.
2. An International must resist the pressures of bureaucratism, sectarianism and opportunism through open, non-dogmatic collaboration internationally, and concrete participation in struggles domestically, to develop a genuinely international outlook. It must put socialist feminism and a principled approach to safeguarding at its core.
3. When joining the Socialist Party, members commit to building such forces internationally which necessitates each member paying an international subscription to fund such work.

## **Clause 3. Party Organisation**

1. The Socialist Party is one organisation, covering the whole of the island of Ireland, North and South.
2. Reflecting the different political realities North and South, the organisation is organised into two regions. Nonetheless, we strive for the maximum coordination of the work North and South and national structures supersede regional or other structures.

## **Clause 4. Membership**

### **(A) Eligibility**

1. Following a process of discussion, a person who is committed to actively struggling to achieve the aims of the organisation is eligible to join. Commitment to join means agreeing to participate in internal discussions as well as the activities of the party in line with the democratic decisions of the party. This involves commitment of time as well as to support the party financially as detailed in Clause 4(2). Prospective members are required to read and endorse this constitution, and the code of conduct and other policies which have the purpose of ensuring we achieve and maintain the best possible internal environment for all members to participate and politically develop to the fullest possible extent. As a party of the working class, the diversity of the working class is expected to be seen in the membership. The party wants to organise all ethnicities, sexualities, genders, linguistic groups, and communities.
2. Membership shall be decided at branch level but must be endorsed by the National Conference, National Committee or a body established under Clause 14 mandated to review membership. Membership should be reviewed annually in branches in

conjunction with the National Conference, National Committee or a body established under Clause 14.

(B) Rights and responsibilities of membership

1. As a democratic centralist organisation the Socialist Party requires the fullest possible participation of the membership in making important decisions through the structures outlined in this constitution. Ensuring the maximum participation of all members in internal discussions is essential especially through discussions in branches. This is the responsibility of all members but those on elected bodies have an additional responsibility to ensure the maximum level of participation in internal discussions which includes a responsibility to raise differing views or assessments, opinions or disagreements. Notwithstanding the importance of full discussion, it is also essential to recognise that events can throw up situations, both challenges and opportunities, that require quick decisions meaning that extensive discussion throughout the party is not possible. In such situations, it may be necessary for elected leading bodies such as the National Committee or the National Executive Committee to make decisions on behalf of the organisation, which of course can be reviewed by the whole party subsequently.
2. Where a decision is made there shall be unity in action in its implementation. Such an approach combining internal democratic discussion with united action is the essence of democratic centralist organising.
3. Members' responsibilities include attendance at branch meetings, party activities and payment of a financial subscription (usually monthly). The party will endeavour to ensure all possible measures are taken to assist with any additional accessibility needs. The responsibility of members extends to the continuous process of political development and education including through internal discussions. We are in the process of building an organisation of "cadre" – of individuals who have accrued an understanding of Marxism (a method to analyse and understand the capitalist system, society and how change occurs) and are capable of applying this method to develop and fight for our programme and build a movement for socialist change.
4. Members 3 months or more in arrears on the financial subscription shall have their voting rights suspended. There may be exceptional cases agreed by the National Executive Committee where a member is unable to pay a financial subscription due to financial hardship or other personal circumstances without this affecting membership rights.
5. Members shall strive to recruit new members to the party; to sell publications of the party; to spread support for the ideas and the programme of the party; and to advance their knowledge and learning on Marxist ideas and aid others in doing so.
6. Members holding elected office, trade union positions or other such positions have a political responsibility to act to further the working-class movement and struggle for socialist change. No member should seek such positions for personal financial benefits and any expenses obtained above legitimate expenses incurred must be utilised to support campaigns and initiatives. In the case of remunerated elected or union positions members who hold such positions should live on a workers' wage. Members who favour seeking elected office in a state institution or in a trade union, student organisation, or mass campaign should raise this for discussion, including with the NEC in advance. Members holding any elected office or position in the movement shall work in

conjunction with the National Executive Committee, National Committee or any body established under clause 14. Prior to being nominated to election to a state institution members shall be required to have the approval of the National Executive Committee, National Committee or National Conference.

7. While publicly adhering to the democratic decisions of the party, members have a right to hold a minority position and present their views internally. Members have the right to organise to win support for their positions by establishing a specific platform. Where members decide there are more developed differences they may form a faction.
8. Factions have the right to have their views circulated internally to all members through the structures of the party and mediums such as internal members' bulletins. They have the right to representation of their views at relevant discussions including at the National Committee and this should be facilitated with due consideration given to the issues discussed and the size of any faction(s) support. Members of factions also continue to have a responsibility to abide by the majority decision of the party. The party membership has a right to debates being conducted in a structured manner to ensure the work of the party can continue.

#### (C) Removal of membership

1. The National Executive Committee or other appropriate bodies established under Clause 14 may remove from membership any member who is 6 months or more in arrears on financial subscriptions or is not actively involved in the life of the party and has not engaged with requests to remedy this.
2. The National Executive Committee, National Committee or National Conference may qualify, suspend or remove membership of a member who has violated democratic decisions made, or whose actions or conduct is contrary to the aims or values of the party including by breaching our code of conduct; or who is damaging the reputation and standing of the party.
3. The National Executive Committee may qualify or suspend membership pending an investigation into a member's conduct.
4. Decisions on disciplinary action may have an immediate effect. A person subject to a disciplinary decision has a right to seek that that decision be overturned or altered by the next highest body, unless that disciplinary action is following a safeguarding investigation. As outlined in Clause 11, there is a right to appeal to the Appeals Commission on the process of a disciplinary decision. In safeguarding cases, in order to protect the confidentiality of those directly impacted and especially of victims and survivors the Party may adopt procedures so that a member's right to appeal is exhausted after the Appeals Commission.

#### **Clause 5: Branches**

1. The basic unit of the party is the branch, which shall be made up of no fewer than three members. Branches are often linked to a geographical area but may also be linked to workplaces or based on other organisational considerations particularly where there are multiple branches in the same town / city / area. A branch must be recognised by the National Committee or National Conference or a body established under Clause 14 that has been delegated this task from the National Committee or National Conference.

Branches should normally meet once a week and include discussion on political issues, political education and the campaigning work of the party.

2. Each branch should elect a branch committee that will act as a collective leadership and will be responsible for the direction of the branch, the selling of publications, political education, recruitment, finances and the activities of the branch in line with the perspectives, strategy and overall priorities of the party. As far as practicable, the branch committee should be elected annually by a vote at a branch meeting.

#### **Clause 6. National Conference**

1. The National Conference is the highest decision making body of the Socialist Party.
2. All members of the Socialist Party are entitled to participate in pre-Conference discussion. Decisions at the National Conference shall be taken by elected delegates and shall be taken by majority vote. The National Conference shall determine its own rules and standing orders.
3. Delegates are to be elected by branches on the basis of 1 delegate per every 3 members or part thereof, this ratio may be altered by the National Committee in exceptional circumstances. Members who are not part of a branch shall meet collectively in advance of the National Conference and constitute a grouping for the purpose of electing delegates on the same ratio as the branches. This should be organised separately North and South to ensure balance reflective of the membership. Where the election of delegates in a given branch or group of non-branch members has more nominations than delegate positions the method of election shall be a proportional system, the detailed procedures of which shall be determined by the National Committee or a body it delegates to outline such procedures.
4. The Socialist Party endeavours to hold the National Conference annually, and no less than every 2 years except in exceptional circumstances. National Conferences can be held as frequently as required.
5. The National Conference shall be convened by a decision of the National Committee. The National Conference may also be convened by notice being given by at least a third of National Committee members, a third of all branches or a third of the membership.
6. Notification of the dates and arrangements for the National Conference as well as any texts to be voted on should be circulated to the full membership as early as possible.
7. The agenda of a National Conference is decided by the National Conference itself. At the beginning of the National Conference, a team of chairs shall be elected by delegates. This team is tasked with the running and chairing of the National Conference and implementing the rules and standing orders of the National Conference.
8. The National Conference shall elect the National Committee; Safeguarding Officers; the Appeals Commission; a number of members of the Conference Organising Committee, the Audit Committee and the Trustees. The National Conference has the right to establish any other bodies that it deems necessary. Subject to other provisions in this Constitution, the method of election of these bodies shall be determined by the National Conference itself.

9. While organisational details provide a formalised structure, the lifeblood of internal democracy lies in the full engagement and participation of members in advancing the revolutionary socialist programme.

#### **Clause 7. National Committee**

1. The National Committee has the authority of the National Conference between the sittings of the National Conference. It constitutes the collective leadership of the party between conferences. The National Committee is tasked with ongoing discussion and analysis of perspectives and unfolding developments but also with the identification of political questions and issues that require further discussion throughout the branches and membership and with the implementation of discussions as required. The National Committee collectively, as well as the individual members, is also responsible for implementing the decisions, plans and orientation agreed by the National Conference and for driving the optimum development of the Party and its fields of work.
2. The National Committee shall be elected by the National Conference and must be made up of members from the North and the South. The method of election is to be decided by the National Conference. When electing the National Committee it is good practice for the National Conference to give due consideration to the overall balance of the makeup of the National Committee such as gender identity, experience, community background, and the specific circumstances and priorities of the party at that time.
3. The National Committee shall elect the National Executive Committee and has the right to recall the National Executive Committee.
4. The National Committee has the ability to set up working groups as it sees fit which shall be accountable to the National Executive Committee and the National Committee, but may also include members who are not part of the National Committee.

#### **Clause 8. National Executive Committee**

1. The National Executive Committee is accountable to and elected by the National Committee. It must be made up of members of the National Committee from both regions.
2. The National Executive Committee is tasked with the day-to-day oversight of the party's work and the political and practical tasks that flow from this.
3. The National Executive Committee has responsibility for taking on and organising the full time and part time staff in keeping with the overall priorities of the Party. The taking on of any full time or part time staff shall be endorsed by the National Committee.
4. It is best practice to elect the National Executive Committee at the first meeting of a new National Committee after the National Conference but it can subsequently be re-elected at any stage at the discretion of the National Committee.

#### **Clause 9. Conference Organising Committee**

1. The Conference Organising Committee shall consist of not less than three members.
2. Three members shall be elected by the National Conference, one of whom shall be a member from each of the two regions. Casual vacancies among members elected by the National Conference shall be filled by the National Committee.

3. The National Committee may elect up to 3 additional members to the Conference Organising Committee. When electing its members of the Conference Organising Committee the National Committee shall give due regard to having a good balance between the two regions and giving appropriate representation to any factions or different viewpoints.
4. The role of the Conference Organising Committee is to organise the next National Conference after being convened as outlined in Clause 6(5). This should be done in conjunction with the National Executive Committee and encompass the practical tasks of organising a National Conference as well as proposing an agenda.

#### **Clause 10. Safeguarding Officers**

1. The Safeguarding Officers shall strive to promote the safeguarding – physical, mental and otherwise – of all members of the Socialist Party and anyone affected by actions of party members and will uphold this constitution, the rights and responsibilities of members, the Code of Conduct, and the democratic traditions and fair practices of the Socialist Party.
2. The Safeguarding Officers shall be elected by the National Conference as outlined by the Procedures on Safeguarding or any other relevant policies and decisions adopted. In such policies, in order to ensure the appropriate level of expertise among safeguarding officers, the right to nominate candidates for safeguarding officers shall be limited to the National Committee or a body, or bodies, established under Clause 14 and that has been delegated this task by the National Committee. This is to ensure that safeguarding officers have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding.

#### **Clause 11. Appeals Commission**

1. The Appeals Commission shall uphold this constitution, the rights and responsibilities of members, and the democratic traditions and fair practices of the Socialist Party. The Appeals Commission does not have authority over the content of the party's political programme and policy.
2. (1) The Appeals Commission shall consist of no less than 3 members elected by the National Conference.  
  
(2) There shall be at least 1 member of the Appeals Commission from each of the two regions.  
  
(3) Members of the Appeals Commission may not be members of the National Committee, full-time party workers, or safeguarding officers.  
  
(4) Candidates for the Appeals Commission must be in good standing.  
  
(5) Casual vacancies on the Appeals Commission may be filled by the National Committee. The existence of casual vacancies does not invalidate decisions of the Appeals Commission.
3. The highest appeals body is the National Conference, unless that disciplinary action is following a safeguarding investigation. In such cases in order to protect the confidentiality of those directly impacted and especially victims and survivors, the Party may adopt procedures so that a member's right to appeal is exhausted after the Appeals Commission.

4. In the first instance, appeals shall be brought through the democratic structures of the party. The Appeals Commission may hear appeals after a matter has been heard by the National Committee, however the Appeals Commission may hear an appeal prior to a matter being brought to the National Committee where the Appeals Commission deems it appropriate.

#### **Clause 12. Audit Committee**

1. The Audit Committee shall have the authority to audit the finances of the party.
2. Members of the Audit Committee shall have access to accurate information on party finances.
3. The Audit Committee shall make a report to the National Conference and may make reports to the National Committee.
4. The Audit Committee shall be elected by the National Conference and consist of at least 3 members, at least 1 from each of the two regions. Candidates for the Audit Committee shall be in good standing. In order to ensure the appropriate level of expertise, the right to nominate candidates for the Audit Committee shall be limited to the National Committee or a body, or bodies, established under Clause 14 that have been delegated this task by the National Committee. Casual vacancies in the Audit Committee shall be filled by the National Committee. Members of the National Executive Committee and full-time party workers with financial responsibilities are not eligible for membership of the Audit Committee.

#### **Clause 13. Trustees**

1. The National Conference shall elect three trustees of the Socialist Party. They are responsible for any assets of the Socialist Party.
2. Trustees must be in good standing and there must be at least one from each of the two regions.

#### **Clause 14. Other bodies and structures**

1. Other structures and bodies may be required at times. This can include Regional Committees and/or Regional Executive Committees. In such cases the composition of committees must be decided by the members in the relevant region with decisions made on a case-by-case basis on the most appropriate method of election.
2. In recognition of the critical role of young people in the struggle to build a revolutionary party and international, and in the overthrow of capitalism a particular emphasis is placed on the recruitment and development of youth cadre (as explained in Clause 4(B)3). This will be a foundation stone upon which a revolutionary international will be built. In order to achieve this fundamental objective the National Conference, National Committee or any body established under Clause 14 may establish party youth organisations or take initiatives to assist in the political development of younger members.
3. Other structures to organise different aspects of the party's work may also be required. This includes the work in smaller geographical areas (cities or districts) as well as specific areas of work, such as youth work, trade union work or an editorial board. These could be

in one region or organised across the two regions. These can be set up by the National Conference, National Committee or National Executive Committee and are accountable to the structure that set up the body.

4. Regional Executives may also set up working groups or caucuses as required; this must be reported to the National Committee.

**Clause 15: Amending the constitution**

1. This constitution can be amended by a majority vote of delegates at the National Conference.

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