

SECTION A. MEMBERSHIP

A.1. Conditions of membership

Big Flame is a revolutionary socialist organisation. Membership is based on :-

- i) Payment of the agreed membership dues.
- ii) Activity in an area of struggle. Members in workplaces must join and attempt to be active in their appropriate trade union, and members not in waged work must be active in political organisation within the community or in a general political campaign which the organisation is concerned with.
- iii) Activity in the functioning of the organisation :-
 - a) attendance at branch meetings or reasons given for non-attendance.
 - b) selling the publications of the organisation.
- iv) Agreement with the following minimum political basis :-
 - a) socialism requires the destruction of the capitalist state by the self-activity of the working class and its replacement by a system of proletarian democracy. Socialism cannot be won unless a socialist perspective is integrated with a feminist one. There can be no socialism without womens' liberation.
 - b) recognition that traditional models of the revolutionary party are inadequate for a socialist and feminist revolution (being elitist and authoritarian, and involving too narrow a conception of what is political) and commitment to help create a revolutionary party which can play an indispensable role, with the autonomous movements and other mass organisations in achieving socialism.
 - c) recognition of the specific oppression of women, black people and gays. Support for the political and organisational autonomy of these oppressed sections of the population.

A.2. Associate membership

Full membership is confirmed only after a period of at least 3 months of associate membership. Associate members have the same rights and responsibilities as full members, except that they cannot represent Big Flame externally, and are not eligible for elective posts internally except by decision of the NC.

Members will go through an introductory process - contributing their knowledge and experience to Big Flame, taking part in activity and learning about Big Flame, its work and political positions..

At the end of this introductory period, the associate member and the appropriate internal body (the local branch, or where no branch exists, the NC) should reach a decision on full membership. All decisions on full membership are subject to ratification by the NC.

A.3. Associate members right of appeal

Where local branches decide against admitting an associate member to full membership, the associate members have the right of appeal to the NC and to the National Conference. The decision of the National Conference is final.

A.4. Associate groups

The minimum number for the formation of a Big Flame branch is 5. If a group of comrades join together as associate members, they become an associate group, subject to the same conditions as individuals specified in articles A1, A2 and A3 of this section, except that their associate status applies on a collective as well as individual basis. Final decision on an associate group becoming a Big Flame branch resides with the NC.

A.5. Isolated associate members

Where associate members have no Big Flame branch, responsibility for contact, support and preliminary recommendation on membership is that of the nearest local branch or regional organiser. Ultimate responsibility is with the NC.

A.6. Possible exemptions (e.g. fusion)

Groups of comrades, former members of other organisations fusing with or joining Big Flame may in certain circumstances be admitted to full membership without the associate period, at the discretion of the NC.

A.7. Possible exemptions for ex-Big Flame members

Former members who wish to rejoin may, subject to ratification by the NC, be readmitted to full membership without going through associate membership again.

SECTION B. DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

B.1. Right to circulate documents

Any member of Big Flame has the right to circulate documents on any issue. Members must have access to the financial and technical resources of the organisation to circulate material, subject to any collective limitations placed on the whole membership, including the NC, for reasons of security.

B.2. Right of groups and tendencies

Any group of members and associate members has the right to meet and discuss any question facing part or all of the organisation. They have the right to constitute themselves as a tendency. Their discussions and any written or recorded materials are open to all comrades. Such groups or tendencies have the same right to circulate documents as individual members of Big Flame.

SECTION C. DECISION MAKING

C.1. Democratic decision : collective responsibility

Decision making in Big Flame is democratic. Members are subject to the collective responsibility of the organisation after the process of democratic decision making.

C.2. National Conference

The National Conference is the supreme decision making body of the organisation. The period between conferences shall not exceed 18 months.

Motions to the conference will be published at least 7 weeks in advance, with amendments published 3 weeks in advance.

If growth in the membership or any other factor determine that the conference voting be by delegate, this shall conform to the following rules :-

- i) the decision as to whether the conference will be a delegate conference resides with the National Committee, subject to ratification or alteration by conference.
- ii) delegates shall be delegated by local branches, the number of delegates per branch being based on branch membership. The NC shall decide on the ratio of delegates to members deciding on the membership of Big Flame.
- iii) where defined tendencies or political divisions exist, the branches are to take note of these divisions and ensure that they are reflected in the apportioning of delegates.

C.3. National Committee

Between conferences the governing body of the organisation is the National Committee, which (except for the voting delegate from the Womens Commission) is elected by the conference. At present eleven members is sufficient number, a minimum of four being women. Regional imbalances can be redressed at the discretion of the NC by granting it the right to co-opt, or requesting attendance as observers (non-voting) from such areas. It would meet at least monthly. The NC should elect a sub-committee consisting of NC members and others. It should include the National Secretary. Its job should be to administer the day-to-day running of the organisation between NC's. It should be based in one region and consist of between 3-6 people.

The NC has responsibility for appointing or supervising the election of other responsible posts e.g. Industrial Organiser. Unless already a member of the NC these posts would not carry permanent requirement of attendance at the NC and voting rights.

C.4. National Committee - right of members to attend

Subject to practical limits, NC meetings are open to all full members of Big Flame. Any member of Big Flame is entitled, room size permitting, to attend the NC as an observer. But priority speaking rights will be given to observers nominated by the commissions.

C.5. National Committee - and commissions

The activity of Big Flame in particular areas is governed by commissions. Their role is to aid formation of policy in interaction with the NC and Conference; As a mark of its qualitatively different nature, the Womens Commission has the right to elect its own voting delegate to the NC.

In all policy areas covered by a specific commission, the NC shall be guided by the recommendations of that commission, since it is in the commissions that the work of the organisation in different fields is discussed in most detail. When a particular subject is on the agenda, it is the duty of the NC to inform the relevant commission convenor.

C.6. Convening special NCs and conference

A special meeting of the NC shall be promptly convened at the request of either one-third of the NC members or one-third of the branches. A special conference shall be promptly convened by the NC at the request of either one-third of the full members of Big Flame or one-third of the branches.

C.7. NC operation of the constitution

The NC is to draw up and adopt internal regulations for Big Flame which govern the operation of the constitution.

C.8. NC and Discussion Bulletin

The NC has control over and responsibility for the Discussion Bulletin, to which every member has full democratic access. Documents submitted to the Discussion Bulletin must be circulated, unedited and with no censorship, in the first issue scheduled for publication, and in no case more than one calendar month since the appearance of the last one.

C.9. Election of post by conference

The conference shall elect :- Newspaper Editor or collective; National Secretary; Journal editor or collective; Education organiser or collective.

C.10. Time limit on NC membership

No member can serve continuously on the NC for more than 3 years.

BIG FLAME CONSTITUTION 1980

SECTION D. DISCIPLINE

D.1. Grounds for expulsion or sanctions

The organisation has the right to expel or use other sanctions against members for :-

- i) Misuse of the organisation's resources.
- ii) Breaches of revolutionary conduct.
- iii) Serious violations of collective responsibility.

D.2. Sanctions used

Sanctions can be applied to individuals or bodies in Big Flame. These are only :-

- i) A vote of censure.
- ii) Reduction of a branch to associate status, or of an individual member to the status of an associate member.
- iii) Dissolution of a branch or associate group and re-allocation of comrades to new units or at-large status : expulsion of individual members.

D.3. Bodies responsible for sanctions

Sanctions against branches or associate groups are initiated by the NC. Sanctions against individual members are initiated by either the NC or local branches. Sanctions taken by branches are only provisional and are subject to ratification by the Appeals Committee.

D.4. Appeals Committee

Disciplinary procedures are governed by the Appeals Committee. All members or branches and groups have the right of appeal against sanctions and expulsion to the Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee is responsible for the application of the constitution. It will be made up of 5 members elected by ballot at conference. Its members may not be members of the NC. The Appeals Committee must report on all its decisions between conferences to the conference, which has the power to accept, modify or reject the decisions and report.

D.5. Security Commission and Convenor

The Security Commission has general responsibility for security. The Security Convenor is appointed by the NC and it is the responsibility of the convenor to appoint local security officers and to convene the Security commission.

SECTION E. PUBLICATIONS

E.1. Control of publications

All publications of Big Flame - books, pamphlets, newspapers, journals, leaflets - are under the control of the organisation and the ultimate responsibility of the NC.

SECTION F. FINANCES

F.1. National Treasurer and fund-raiser

The National Conference shall elect a treasurer and national fund-raiser, who may be, though this is not advisable, the same person as the National Secretary. The National Treasurer and Fundraiser will be obliged to make regular accounts of their finances.

F.2. Financial reports - branches and national

Each branch of Big Flame is also obliged to keep and make available to its members adequate records of finances. Furthermore, the NC is obliged to present an account of the organisations finances to each conference.

SECTION G. AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

G.1. Amendments to the constitution

Amendments to the constitution are by the National Conference only.

Amendments must receive a simple majority of the votes cast. Amendments must be sent in by the same deadline as that for motions to the conference C2.

Big Flame Constitution as revised and

agreed by National Conference Dec 1980

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear and concise statement of the principles and objectives of the Big Flame movement. It is intended to serve as a guide for all members and to ensure that the movement remains true to its original aims and objectives. The constitution sets out the structure of the movement, the rights and responsibilities of its members, and the procedures for decision-making. It also outlines the movement's commitment to social justice, equality, and the well-being of the community.

In this situation it is necessary for Big Flame to adopt a limited 'urgency' conception of political strategy which grows out of the conditions but is also open to the possibility of more than survival in the coming period. This would be a strategy of more than survival as we must also seek to become involved, where possible, in those struggles which do develop. Our aim in doing so should be to help develop the power and self-confidence of those who are oppressed or exploited to develop and generalize feminist and socialist perspectives and to develop a supportive socialist and feminist culture amongst all areas of people's lives.

The two major problems for the internal organization of Big Flame are: (a) success in integrating socialists and feminists which is both a theoretical and a practical problem (b) success in maintaining and developing a collective practice which overcomes the problems experienced by any local groups.

In our interventions in particular sectors of work or in particular campaigns we should stress the need for unity in action with whoever provides the support and non-activists in our political perspective that we have much to learn as well as something to offer. In our interventions we should also:

- (a) offer genuine support to the autonomous organization of oppressed people alongside the various other tactics and methods we use to try to influence the various other tactics and methods we use and the forms of practice socialist forms into both the demands we pose and the forms of organization through which we attempt to realize them and
- (b) try to link together all aspects of our politics in both theory and practice thus overcoming the way we are fragmented under different and bringing the politics of ideas, work and sex to bear on each other.

We must aim to help create a socialist and feminist culture. This would aim to provide personal and group support for those politically active and some involvement in some activist experimentation and initiative.

We have to be realistic about the present situation. While it is important that we in Big Flame attempt to clarify our politics, that of class perspectives is not the only problem we face. We won't be able to draw many more people that socialist politics simply by a new set of demands, however imaginative. They cannot change the whole economic, political and cultural situation with which we are faced. We should recognize the current limitations of a group the aim of Big Flame and not expect too much from our members or promise too much to others. At the same time we believe that the perspectives and experience of Big Flame have a great deal to offer the socialist and feminist movements.