

PROGRAMME RESOLUTION OF NSZZ „SOLIDARNOŚĆ” 15TH NATIONAL CONGRESS OF DELEGATES

Ever since the emergence of NSZZ "Solidarność," our objective has been to create a new reality, in which man is the supreme value. We have always been and will be deriving our strength from truth, respect for human dignity, freedom and patriotism. We will nurture these values and base our activities upon them. It is especially important to fill human labour with dignity, which is a responsibility of both, employers and employees. The social teaching of the Roman Catholic church remains the source of knowledge upon which we will be building social order.

1. The Union and the new challenges

NSZZ "Solidarność" as a representative of employees is facing new challenges.

The SLD-UP-PSL government introduces harsh measures resulting in:

- limitation of rights at work and union freedom;
- depriving employees and their families of previously enjoyed social provisions;
- lower wages;
- central management of social funds

Taking advantage of this anti-worker campaign, more and more employers try to maximise profits at the expense of the employees, break the law by not paying statutory benefits, delay wages for many months, and fire NSZZ "Solidarność" activists standing out for rights at work.

This type of conduct works to the detriment of social peace, national economy and democracy in Poland. The liberal circles prevailing in the Polish parliament and the media they control endorse the deceptive opinion that it is the trade unions in general and "Solidarność" in particular that are to blame for the poor condition of the economy and the difficult socio-economic situation.

2. Social policy

Unemployment is the most severe social problem in Poland. As the gap between the haves and the have-nots gets wider, the situation of the lowest-paid and the jobless has been worsening, jobs have been dwindling and unemployment growing, both in its recorded and concealed forms.

These hazards require that our Union undertakes new forms of preventing unemployment, protecting the old-age and disability pensioners, and fighting for decent work conditions by protecting rights at work and collective bargain contracts.

2.1 Dealing with unemployment

It is the responsibility of the public authority in the first place to tackle unemployment. The scale of unemployment requires a profound change in the economic policy and a new social policy. The former should generate jobs, while the latter should improve work and pay conditions, provide the employee with safeguards against various hazards of life, guarantee equality of opportunities and have life-long learning of the workforce and the young as a national priority.

It is necessary to strengthen the institutions of the labour market, implement a national employment policy and uniform standards of service in the labour market, strengthen the special-purpose funds of the labour market and the role of the social partners. It is the government's utmost responsibility to influence the labour market and the skills of the employees, particularly through programmes and legislation that will help to maintain the existing jobs and create new ones.

The State should also reinforce its regional policy and cohesion, as well as promote Polish goods, services and research.

The Union is in favour of increased government spending on infrastructural projects, regional programmes, restructuring, and incentives for employers who create new jobs or train their staff or school leavers.

During the incipient term of office the Union will demand that the Government and Parliament:

- change the law by implementing job-generating legislation;
- significantly increase spending on education and national employment policy;
- introduce the definition of the jobless, principles of employment agency and counselling, and pro-active forms of fighting unemployment into the Labour Code;

- re-establish government labour administration;
- strengthen special-purpose funds of the labour market by securing necessary funding and public control of how it is spent;
- implement various programmes to provide employment for school-leavers;
- conduct dialogue with social partners and grant more powers to representative Employment and Dialogue Commissions;
- comply with articles 65 and 67 of the Polish Constitution and with ILO Employment Policy Convention 122.

The Union will demand that the labour laws be respected, regulation on unlawful employment tightened and that workers in precarious employment be protected.

The Union will give preference to national and local employment policy and retraining, social contracts with employers and Non-Governmental Organisations.

Regional Boards should get involved in occupational activation of the unemployed.

Union-run support fund and active labour exchange through union labour offices and job clubs are indispensable. To be able to help the jobless effectively, the Union must have a reliable database of members.

2.2 Social provisions; protecting families against poverty

The social situation requires that the Government and the Parliament create a system of social provisions, which should narrow the unreasonable gap between the haves and the have-nots.

The Union will seek:

- adoption of social welfare minimum and subsistence level as legal notions;
- introduction of social welfare intervention criterion and a minimum level of welfare provisions under the social security system, based on the basket of goods and services and the expenditure of low-income families;
- determination of the costs of living in the households of old-age and disability pensioners, in order to revise the principles of benefit valuation, particularly the lowest ones;
- regulation levelling up the opportunities of persons with disabilities, granting them right to rehabilitation, education as well as occupational and social self-fulfilment; it must be possible to exercise these rights at all levels of government;
- examination of the prices of medication, energy and other media; as well as a system of compensation for the rising prices to the poorest families;
- introduction by the government of a social housing programme whereby the government will support the construction and operation of dormitories, sheltered accommodation and social boarding houses for the homeless.

The Union will demand the preparation and effectuation by the government of the minimum guaranteed income.

2.3 Real wage growth

The Union will seek:

- real wage increase corresponding to the economic growth of the nation;
- ratification by Poland of Art. 4 section 1 of the European Social Charter, to secure the right to remuneration that will ensure a decent standard of living to employees and their families;
- statutory amendment of the proportion between minimum and average wage;
- enforcement of the laws dealing with timely payment of wages;
- curbs of the "grey zone" for wage levels (also for the social insurance considerations).

2.4 Education, science and culture

With the prospering future of the nation and the generations to come in mind, the Union demands higher government spending in the sectors of culture, education, university-level education; schooling up to the level postulated during the previous National Assemblies of Delegates, and a fair distribution of financial resources. A decline in the public spending in these areas is degrading for the nation and may result in our young people being reduced to second-best social and occupational positions in future Europe.

Good education is the best investment in our future and the future of the generations to come. The Union will therefore demand that educational profiles and methods be compatible with the labour market; that various forms of life-long learning be developed as well as a system of levelling

educational opportunities of people from various parts of the country and various communities. The Union will also seek higher qualifications and salaries for school and university teachers.

NSZZ "Solidarność" will also try to get the Parliament to resume work on the union-sponsored draft of the college and university legislation.

If the economy is to grow properly, the national research and development potential must be duly developed and protected.

2.5 Healthcare

The reform of the healthcare system, due to inadequate funding, is taking place at the expense of the healthcare employees and the patients. The Union therefore demands higher level of health insurance contribution.

The Union will oppose "wildcat" privatisation, scrapping of jobs, decline in the quality and availability of medical service.

2.6 Social insurance

The Union will seek:

- extension by law of the current pension entitlements for special types of jobs;
- a system of early retirement bridging benefits prepared by the government and agreed with the social partners;
- statutory additional funding for the Social Insurance Fund, to finance the early retirement bridging benefits;
- restoration of supervision by public bodies and better state supervision of the 2nd and 3rd pillar pension funds;
- government incentives for employers and employees to stimulate the development of company pension schemes;
- reinstatement of government-funded pension fund contributions of women on maternity leaves at a level not lower than charged on minimum wage.

We believe that these issues should be negotiated within the Tri-partite Commission for Socio-Economic Issues.

The Union will, in cooperation with the State Labour Inspection (PIP), monitor the implementation of the new occupational hazards insurance system.

The Union will demand that a mandatory system of unemployment insurance be introduced, and will set up union funds for the sake of the jobless members.

3. The Union and the economy

Economic globalisation leads to loss by public authority including national governments of any control of the economy and to domination of multinational enterprises over state bodies. This creates a growing imbalance between capital and labour, strengthening the decisive role of the former.

In this situation total privatisation of the national economy, mainly with the involvement of foreign capital, should be replaced by judicious and balanced economic policies of the state towards enterprises, both state- and privately owned.

It is a discredit to the Polish state when enterprises of crucial importance to the national economy are "privatised" by being sold to state-owned enterprises from other countries, as was the case with the TP S.A. (national telecom operator). Privatisation has in many cases led to the collapse of the enterprise in question.

3.1 Economic policies

We expect the government to abide by Art. 20 of the Polish Constitution, i.e. to develop the economic system of Poland on the principles of the social market economy. To save jobs, the Union will make efforts to influence the economic policies of the government. For these reasons the Union will insist that high level of employment and quality skills of the employees be a priority economic objective of the state.

The practice whereby the Treasury abandons state property – enterprises in crisis caused by lack of decision on their future – is unacceptable. In view of large-scale fraudulent activities of people managing the property of the Treasury, we will demand that the Parliament pass a law on the *Office of Solicitor General*.

The State must not put all the enterprise or industry restructuring burden on the employees, in breach of the constitutional principle of solidarity of social partners in economic life. The State should by law ensure a guaranteed wage and social provisions for the employees of enterprises going through the restructuring process. Our Union will demand that the social and economic problems of the ailing industries (agriculture, metallurgy, coal mining, shipbuilding; the chemical, automotive, arms and construction industries) be resolved in a systemic way in an Act of Parliament. We will also demand from the government that recovery packages for these industries be consulted with the trade unions. The bankruptcy and industry salvage legislation must be revised to establish the scope of rights-at-work protection throughout the bankruptcy and the principles of turnaround procedures.

The Government must stimulate business boom, e.g. through a rational energy policy. This should ensure low operating costs of the national economy, among others by securing access to energy sources to every new business entity – in this way our competitive edge in the global market would not only be the low labour costs in Polish enterprises (achieved by redundancies and pay cuts). The State should support Polish capital and prevent profits from being transferred abroad. The Union will continue to demand that the citizens be endowed with the assets held by the State Treasury and that legislative mechanisms are developed of employee participation in enterprise ownership.

We believe that for social and economic considerations, it is necessary to stimulate economic growth in Poland, especially by developing house and road construction, keeping a low VAT on building materials, and by introducing a housing allowance in the personal income tax if a family wants to have one house built or wants to purchase one apartment. The Union will also demand the introduction by an Act of Parliament of low-interest housing loans for families and of financial assistance to municipalities developing social housing. We will again insist that easy terms be created for a housing programme whereby people could save money in housing credit unions or social housing associations.

We believe that the Government should to a greater extent support Polish enterprises with research and development in order to make them more competitive. Encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and adaptability in the labour market, actively supported by the Union, should be the basic objective of the social and economic policies of the State.

The pest of the business life in Poland is the overwhelming corruption. Corruption and social dumping should be eliminated from tender procedures by a statutory provision that hourly rates for labour in the bids must not be lower than what is allowed by the Polish laws.

We will also demand that the government be more resolute than before in fighting monopolistic practices and unfair competition in social provisions and pricing, prejudicial to Polish enterprises.

The Union will press the central and local governments to conduct, within the national economic policy, a policy of balanced development of particular regions through regional programmes of economic development. It is especially important to narrow the gap between the more and the less developed regions (Poland A and B). Funding should be provided for such programmes, especially for infrastructure development and direct investment, which will result in job creation.

Whenever restructuring leads to redundancies, regional programmes of occupational activation in the environment of the enterprise should be organised for those who are made redundant, before the restructuring actually takes place.

4. Internal issues

4.1 Union structures

The organisation of the Union must secure effectiveness in the accomplishment of the goals specified in the Union's constitution and meet the requirements posed by the situation. The Union shall devise methods of analysing its effectiveness, followed by conclusions and ways of effecting them.

At present the number of small organisations is growing, incapable of acting in a professional manner for lack of full-time officials. The establishment of inter-enterprise union organisations requires provisions in the existing laws and the Union's constitution that would make it possible for such organisations to be run by full-time officials. If quality people are to be attracted for the work, their job security and legal protection must be enhanced.

4.2 Training

Mandatory general training courses for union officials of all union structures should remain the basic form of training.

More training courses should be run on organising, especially in newly-established firms.

We will work to upgrade the skills of collective bargaining and drafting of single-enterprise collective bargain agreements, so that more employees are covered.

Members of the Union in multinational enterprises should also be prepared to work with international union organisations and in European Works Councils. Training courses on Poland's integration with the European Union should be a priority, including ones on its anticipated impact on workers and trade unions. Hence a closer cooperation, exchange of experience and joint programmes with western union federations are needed during the incipient term of office.

It is also necessary to develop a training programme for the jobless members of the Union to boost their job-searching skills.

By keeping to the training schedule we should arrive at a human resources policy of the Union and consequently, at having more and more full-time union officials

A series of training courses about mass-media should be conducted for union officials of all levels in order to make them more media-conscious and responsible for the information they communicate to the public.

4.3 Union finance

An important goal of the Union should be the acquisition of sufficient funding for the Union structures, necessary to accomplish the objectives of our statute; this can be achieved through better collection of membership fees as stipulated by the NCD financial resolution and through increased membership.

Furthermore, during the present term of office fundraising schemes should be developed (for the regional boards, branch secretariats, inter-enterprise union organisations and enterprise commissions) in order to obtain funding from other sources. The Union should provide economic consultancy at the national level.

It should also have its own team of auditors.

In the present situation of the Union rational financial management is a must. The National Commission should, by way of a resolution, bind the Regional Boards and Enterprise Commissions to produce to the National Commission and Regional Boards respectively, comprehensive reports from regional or enterprise assemblies of delegates as well as financial information; this is necessary if we are to know what the actual financial situation of the Union is.

4.4 Current information

The information policy of the Union should be improved, as stipulated in the National Commission's strategy, which provides for the setting up of Serwis Informacyjny "Solidarności" ("Solidarność" Newsletter), further growth of "Tygodnik Solidarność" and a better use of the opportunities offered by the web. The task of the press office will now be to shape the image of the Union in the media and to ensure communications between union structures with the help of the Newsletter.

To ensure the swift flow of information in the web is an important task. A quality internet portal of NSZZ "Solidarność" must be created. It should cover a broad spectrum of topics including industrial relations, have a clear ideological image, and have an audience broader than just Union members. Therefore all Union offices should be equipped with computers and IT hardware. In order to achieve this the National Commission should make a standard package of network software available to enterprise commissions, regional boards and branch secretariats, so that all Union documentation including the financial information can be computer-prepared.

Regional boards and branch secretariats should make sure that all union organisations can be contacted by e-mail. The National Commission will be monitoring expenditure by the Union Statutory Responsibilities Support Fund to ensure the creation of an efficient quality IT network.

„Tygodnik Solidarność” is to be the leading magazine of the Union, reaching all enterprise structures. Like other newspapers and periodicals, it should also have its on-line version.

The Union will also make efforts to have the public media less politically controlled.

4.5 Boosting Union membership

The Union will have as many officials and members as possible trained in organising techniques.

The promotion campaign should primarily focus on getting the young (both in schools and in enterprises) interested in the Union. If they have the knowledge of the objectives and tasks of NSZZ "Solidarność," young workers are more likely to join the Union.

The feeling of strength and belonging should be built by the Union with the new forms of communications at every level, among others each member should obtain information about the Union at least once a month.

4.6 International cooperation

Within the international organisations and federations of trade unions which NSZZ "Solidarność" is affiliated with the Union will take up initiatives aimed at mitigating the effects of globalisation, adversely affecting workers.

The Union should also get involved in the activities of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), which are to prepare a new strategy of the international union movement to democratise the world economy and restore the balance between capital and labour. The objective is also to be able to influence the decisions of multinational enterprises, the governments of the richest nations and international organisations.

The Union should also seek trade union unity in the world and campaign for the strengthening, the establishment and growth of independent union movements in all countries.

5. European integration

We fully associate with what John Paul II said in the Polish Parliament:

We must build new European unity, if we want it to be a lasting one, on the spiritual values that once shaped it; and the richness and diversity of cultures and traditions of individual nations must be taken into account. It must be a great European Spiritual Community."

Poland's integration with the European Union is a source of both hopes and fears. Among the latter, the most important are problems of national sovereignty and identity; also the question of meeting the socio-economic standards determined by EU directives and the European Social Charter.

The Union should firmly oppose the solutions now introduced and disadvantageous for workers and their families. The conditions of our entry will be of crucial importance for the labour market in Poland. In particular, we are concerned about further growth of unemployment.

NSZZ "Solidarność" has repeatedly pinpointed the challenges which accompany the process of integration as well as the benefits, but also the sacrifices that the accession entails. Accession negotiations are in their final phase and we will soon be able to evaluate the results. The Union will demand that the Government present a reliable account of the benefits and losses resulting from accession.

It should be the Union's task, before the referendum is held, to furnish its members with reliable information about the effects of integration and to present all the relevant aspects of EU membership.

6. The Union versus political parties and the government

The Union and politics – the relation is best described by the encyclical "Laborem exercens:"

"... the activity of trade unions certainly enters the realm of *"politics"* understood as *judicious care for the common good*. At the same time, it is not the task of trade unions to make "politics" in the sense that is commonly attributed to this word today.

Unions do not have the nature of *political parties* struggling for power and should not be governed by party decisions; nor should they have too close ties with them. If this happens they easily dissociate from what is their proper task, i.e. the protection of the legitimate rights of the working people within the common good of the whole society and become *a tool for other purposes* instead."

The Union should be willing to cooperate with political parties sharing our ideals, to accomplish the goals specified in our programme in the spirit of the encyclical referred to above. The Union will try to make sure that the people who win seats in parliament and local governments are supportive of our programme and profess to make employee-friendly laws, fight unemployment, protect families against poverty and introduce a pro-family tax system.

The Union will not cooperate with post-communist or liberal parties.

A provision precluding members from holding a union post and a seat in parliament at the same time should be entered into the NSZZ "Solidarność" constitution.

We will join in the campaign of pressure on governments, especially the Polish Government, to have the social dimension and ILO basic standards included in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. In order to have the international social standards introduced, in the incipient term of office the Union should seek ratification by Poland of ILO conventions Nos. 102, 131, 150, 152, 156, 158, 159, 168, 173, 181, 183 and the observance of the relevant recommendations. The ratification of EU directives and the European Social Charter should be extended to include Articles 4.1, 10.3, 10.4 and 13.1. The Union will demand that the ratified conventions be respected.

The accomplishment of the tasks mentioned above will result in higher credibility of our Union, larger membership and greater respect for workers by their employees. With the shortage of Polish capital, the practice of liberal economic doctrine and the rising unemployment, Poland needs a strong NSZZ "Solidarność." Only if this comes true will a lasting improvement in the economic and social position of Polish workers and their families be possible.

The National Commission shall determine the deadlines, the means and the individuals responsible for the implementation of the tasks of the present programme.

Warsaw, 28 September 2002 r.

XV National Congress of Delegates
of NSZZ „Solidarność”