

# The role of the rs21 Steering Group

*This motion was submitted by the rs21 Steering Group and agreed by the February 2023 All Member Assembly.*

## **The political context**

There are opportunities for rs21 to continue to grow, as well as threats to workers and the left. Support for the current strike wave is widespread. The Tories are far behind in the polls, but also face a much deeper crisis – dominated by hard-right Brexiteers, they no longer act as the political voice of a major current in the ruling class, their historical role. Labour has moved to occupy the centrist ground vacated by Cameron and May, and inspires few. Capitalism is failing to deliver a bare minimum for millions, especially younger people, factors which lay behind support for Corbyn. Many of those who believed it was possible to change society through the Labour Party now see that this approach is a dead end, and can be won to revolutionary politics. As regards threats, the Tories are seeking to scapegoat groups like migrants and trans people, and to restrict the rights to strike and to protest. Currently there exists no major far-right force in Britain, but with economic and political crisis spurring the growth of such groups around the world, we have no reason to think this will always be the case.

## **How we organise**

We are a small organisation with few resources, which seeks to democratically organise workers and oppressed people. This means that we need to strike a balance between formal, centralised decision making and allowing individuals and groups to respond to changing situations and take initiatives. Formal and centralised procedures can become bureaucratic and undemocratic. An informal structure where people are free to take initiatives looks more attractive on the face of it. But a new initiative may take resources away from plans which have been democratically agreed, and informal structures can allow people who are more articulate or charismatic, or have more time, to have more influence than others. So loose, informal structures can become undemocratic too. If we are to use resources effectively, and facilitate involvement of all members, we need to strike a balance. We need to have a formal element to our systems because this makes it clear how change happens, and so facilitates debate between members. Formal structures also allow members to hold people in elected positions accountable.

## **The Steering Group**

The Steering Group (SG) is the political and organisational leadership of rs21 between All Member Assemblies (AMAs), where it is elected and to which it is accountable. rs21's paid workers are accountable to the SG. SG members play a key role in carrying through decisions taken at AMAs and by the SG itself. A key aspect of this is engaging with local groups, fractions and members to win as much of the organisation as possible

to carrying through its democratic decisions and priorities so that our limited resources are used as effectively as possible.

The SG must ensure its capacity is used as effectively as possible for key political priorities and not soaked up with organisational administration. Where appropriate, decisions should be delegated to paid staff or groups of members – whether on or off SG – whom the SG suitably empowers and makes accountable.

## **Specific proposals**

### **SG elections and terms**

We need a more stable leadership, which has time to get used to working together, and which is recognised within rs21 as the leadership and so can be held accountable. We therefore propose that the whole of the SG be elected at once for a term of a year. The current SG is dissolved as of this AMA, where we will elect a completely new set of SG members.

Note that this motion doesn't propose any change to the following existing arrangements:

- The number of directly elected SG members is 11, of whom no more than 6 can be men. One must be from Scotland. The Website Editor is automatically an SG member in addition to the 11 others.
- Organisers, Publications Worker, the Website Editor and other non-SG roles can be elected at AMAs as appropriate.
- We will continue to use the same election procedure as at present.
- The AMA remains rs21's supreme body, and can always remove individuals from the SG or dissolve the whole SG.

### **Plan for the year**

The newly-elected SG should, within a month, put together a plan for the organisation's activities during the following year. The plan should include some measurable goals so we can assess at the year end how well we did - the plan stops us bullshitting ourselves as an organisation and keeps the SG accountable. Of course unexpected things may well happen during the year so that the plan needs to be revised. A brief discussion of progress against the plan should be included on the agenda of each AMA.