



GREATER TORONTO WORKERS' ASSEMBLY

Discussion Bulletin 24 DECEMBER 2010

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Proposal on the Role of the Coordinating Committee in the Assembly

By Paul McCrady

As the Assembly moves into its second year, it has become increasingly important that members have a clear understanding of the ways in which the various parts of the Assembly function in relationship to each other, and their overall mandate. Laying out the exact function of the Coordinating Committee is an essential step in going forward. It is my opinion that the role of the CC is to ensure transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in all aspects of the organization. Fundamentally, I hope to maintain the democratic character of the assembly so that those thinking of joining feel a clear sense of ownership over the campaigns and the organization as a whole. To that end, and to begin the conversation around how the assembly and its various committees should function, I have drafted this proposal.

I hope to bring this proposal forward for ratification at the next Assembly, but am equally hopeful that Assembly members will feel encouraged to draft alternative proposals so that a diversity of views might be heard. I will also accept suggestions surrounding my own proposal, keeping in mind that I do not see the role of the CC as one of political leadership but instead that of coordination. In my view, the subcommittees -- which are open to all members and actively focused on campaigns defined by the general assembly -- and the general assembly itself are the most important decision-makers as regards the political direction of the Assembly.

I hope to hear constructive feedback on my proposal and I hope people seriously consider this proposal for adoption at the next assembly.

Paul McCrady – Coordinating Committee member of the GTWA.

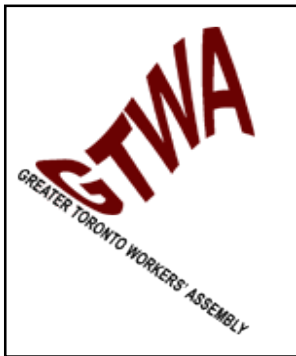
The Proposal

- 1) The highest decision making body of the Workers Assembly is the general assembly. All decisions made by the general assembly are binding and neither the Coordinating Committee nor the subcommittees have the power to overturn these decisions or move the Assembly itself in any direction which might circumvent or defy decisions made during general assemblies.
- 2) The Coordinating Committee will organize the general assemblies: find space, determine a date, do call-outs, and coordinate the proposals and educational aspects of the Assembly on the basis of work carried out with the various subcommittees.
- 3) The Coordinating Committee will coordinate the activity in the subcommittees by doing the following:
 - a) Ensure events set up in one subcommittee do not overlap or conflict with dates set for other subcommittee events, that speakers are not the same, and other minor logistical issues.
 - b) Help subcommittees organize space, find appropriate literature, and promote events when asked by subcommittees for this support.
 - c) Inform subcommittees about the activities of the other subcommittees to ensure transparency and promote connectivity between them.
- 4) The Coordinating Committee will facilitate the coordination efforts of subcommittees to pursue the goals they have determined. Efforts to achieved this should include:
 - a) Making links between members in different subcommittees who might facilitate and advance the goals of each other's subcommittee.
 - b) Finding space for meetings when more than one subcommittee agrees to converge and discuss how they might move their campaigns forward together.
- 5) The Coordinating Committee will ensure transparency, accountability, and inclusion in all Assembly related activities. Efforts to achieve this should include:
 - a) Ensuring that locations and times for the various subcommittee meetings are made generally accessible to the membership. This will likely be worked out through the website so that e-mails do not get excessive.
 - b) Ensuring that minutes of meetings for both the Coordinating Committee and the various subcommittees are posted and archived on the website. This is an oversight position and subcommittees would be expected to provide minutes from their meetings.
 - c) Ensuring that agendas for Coordinating Committee meetings and the various subcommittees are posted and archived on the website. This is again an oversight position; each subcommittee would be expected to

- submit their own agendas.
- d) Helping promote Assembly events, and the Assembly in general to the broadest segments of the working class.
- 6) The Coordinating Committee will send speakers or designate speakers for Assembly-approved events. This should be undertaken by:
- Finding the appropriate speaker from the appropriate subcommittee if the event seems especially related to a specific campaign
 - When an event has a limited relationship to a specific campaign, first determining its relevance and then designating a speaker from the CC to attend.
 - Ensuring that all speakers adhere to the basic principles of the Assembly vision statement of the GTWA and do not advocate personal political viewpoints which might disrespect the plurality of political opinions within the Assembly.
- 7) The Coordinating Committee will, on behalf of the Workers Assembly, endorse events which clearly fit the vision statement of the Workers
- Assembly. The Coordinating Committee must establish an oversight process that enables the Assembly to deal with those cases where endorsement is the subject of clear political divisions within the CC.
- 8) The Coordinating Committee will help other cities interested in beginning a Workers Assembly by explaining our history, sharing our vision statement, our process and our structure. This should be undertaken by:
- Selecting a CC member or subcommittee member who may have stronger links to the city to participate in the process.
 - Establishing and maintaining an ongoing link with that city and the process they begin.
 - Ensuring a clear report is drafted on the process and presented to the GTWA membership through the website and IDB. If ongoing participation is maintained, ongoing reports should be issued.
 - Establishing links with the new WA city and its members if these links might help with the GTWA's subcommittee campaign work in line with our vision statement.

Call for Contributions to the January Bulletin By Bulletin Editors

- ✓ Do you have ideas about how best to build a fightback against Rob Ford's agenda?
- ✓ Do you think there are lessons to be learned from recalling the strengths and weaknesses of the early mobilizing against Mike Harris?
- ✓ Are there aspects of the Assembly project that you feel need further clarification or practical development?
- ✓ Do you have anything to say in reply to any of the contributions in the December 2010 issue?



These are just a few of the many questions that we need to be discussing within the GTWA. The Discussion Bulletin is available as a forum for you to contribute to these important conversations. Please consider jotting down your thoughts and submitting them to our email address: assembly.bulletin@gmail.com

We are not looking for literary masterpieces, but just clear, constructive political arguments or insights that move the conversation along.

The Deadline for Submissions to the January Issue is 20 January 2011.
The publication date should be approximately 23 January.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE for January Issue:
20 January 2011**

It's Called the Queen's Park for a Reason

By Brandon Gray

The Assembly's December 2010 coffee house discussion, on the topic of electoral politics, was the best attended yet. The back room of the Regal Beagle was jammed full, and the comradely conversation was so lively that a spontaneous motion by comrade Ali to extend the discussion was welcomed with overwhelming support. Comrade Ajamu Nangwaya, of CUPE and Common Cause (an anarchist-communist organization in which I am also a member), argued for the anti-statist position of non-participation in bourgeois governmental institutions. Comrades Liz Rowley of the Communist Party and Mary-Jo Nadeau of CAIA both proposed socialist strategies for engaging with the electoral system.

During the discussion, Audre Lorde's remark that "You can't use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house" was cited, and on that point there is great unity. However, this agreement breaks down completely when electoralists predictably add the all-important "but" at the end of this claim, and proceed to insist that we can use those tools to build a little house of our own in which to organize, right beside the master's house. For many of us, the image of this little house will immediately conjure up Malcolm X's analogy of the "house negro" whose home is with the master's. When the "field negro" urges him to join their escape, the "house negro" bitterly refuses, seeing a certain material privilege in remaining within the confines of the master's house (see Malcolm X, "Speech to SNCC Workers," Selma, Alabama, 4 February 1965). History repeatedly attests that this "little house" next to the master's, built with his tools, can never organize the oppressed toilers into anything but nationally divided, passively submissive lambs awaiting slaughter. That is what comes with using the master's tools instead of those of the workers.

If the emancipation of the working class is to be the act of the working class itself then the sole starting point for every revolutionary must be non-hierarchical forms of organizing in workplaces, poor communities, and among rank and file soldiers during wartime. Bourgeois institutions and forms of political representation ensure that the bourgeoisie has a leg to stand on in the proletariat. Those dedicated socialists who fail to uphold a consistent position on this issue are unintentionally serving bourgeois interests, furnishing the dilapidated and bankrupt pillars of capitalism with much needed face-lifts by using radical window-dressing to call the oppressed and immiserated masses to the ballot box. Our fight is at the point of production and in the streets, not in the master's house.

Bourgeois democracy is the sand the bosses and big landowners throw in the eyes of workers. There is no clever way to engage with it and spin it to help the

masses see the way forward, as failed reformists like Lenin and Trotsky advocated. Revolutionaries must focus their efforts on wiping it out. It is no coincidence that it was an anarchist that dispersed the Consistent Assembly of October 1917, while Lenin merely rubber stamped the accomplished fact, his Bolsheviks trailing behind and faltering at every step, deceitfully employing the slogan, "All Power to the Soviets," as a rhetorical device to attain all power to his radical social democratic party. Electoral politics in particular, and statist institutions in general, bind the supposedly "advanced" sections of the workers' movement to the ruling class via its governing institutions in the name of "good governance" and "law and order." Without fail this imposes a strict conservatizing force on organizations that nonetheless delude themselves into thinking they have figured out a clever way to play the parliamentary game—to "win the battle of bourgeois democracy."

While the most familiar examples for workers in Canada and Europe are the Social Democratic parties, of which class-collaborationists like Bob Rae conjure up exactly the right feelings of betrayal and animosity, much more stock is put in the radical wing of this electoral tradition led by Lenin. The German Social-Democratic Party, the diamond of classical social democracy, unparalleled in contemporary politics, revealed just how "independent" they could be while organizing in their little master's house when they voted for war against the workers of Europe. In the Russian example, far from offering advanced "vanguard" leadership to the working class, Lenin's Bolsheviks, basing themselves on their German cousins, consistently trailed behind the most militantly class conscious workers in Petrograd and Moscow throughout 1917, as Trotsky explained in his History of the Russian Revolution. At the outbreak of World War I, the Bolshevik's Duma (parliamentary) wing voted in favour of a proposal to "defend the cultural weal" of Russia against Germany. These are the shining examples of the way forward? To borrow a formulation from Pyotr Kropotkin and Emma Goldman, the Bolsheviks demonstrated how not to make a revolution and they were to the left of their German comrades.

In a time of working class defeat and retreat in the face of one of the most serious crises capitalism has ever faced; when unionization rates have dwindled to their lowest levels ever; when union leaders clad in pin-striped suits arrive in luxury cars at picket lines to stave off militancy so the bosses can quietly eliminate thousands of jobs with a minimum of resistance; when the provincial NDP joins the anti-union chorus and votes for draconian back-to-work legislation—in such a time, why do we apply our meager resources to anything but building a rank and file revolutionary workers' movement that never ceases exposing bureaucrats and bourgeois elections for the frauds they

are? This is the strategy the Workers' Assembly must embrace.

There are no "ifs, ands, or buts" in making a revolution. If we are to emerge from our contemporary reaction steeled and strong, we must stop contradicting ourselves by stating the obvious in one breath and then negating it with the next. Anarchists have a key role to play in influencing other radicals to stay true to their

principles by staying true to the independence of the proletariat and building exclusively proletarian institutions. I think that, by helping our comrades in the Workers' Assembly cross this crucial threshold, we can contribute to building an invaluable capacity for the Assembly to advance the workers' movement by the leaps and bounds that are needed. Anything less is an embrace of the deluge.

SOLIDARITY, RESISTANCE, CHANGE: BUILDING THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

January 29-30, 2011 — Toronto

The Labour Committee of the Greater Toronto Workers Assembly (GTWA) is organizing a conference where activists can come together to talk about the attacks on the working-class in every dimension of our lives, reframe the public discussion and launch a united activist network of workers from all sectors, unions and precarious workers, new immigrants and non-unionized workers to mobilize a new kind of working class movement.

The conference is a chance to come together to build the fight-back we've all been waiting for, but which will never happen unless we make it happen. We need a new kind of fighting working-class movement – a movement that builds across workplaces, communities and unions and the non-unionized majority of the working-class.

This conference will be a space to:

- ★ Explore strategies, share resources and build capacity for resistance and mobilizing to win within our unions, workplaces and our communities
- ★ Discuss challenges within the existing labour movement and how to take back these spaces for working class struggles
- ★ Hear from key note speakers who will share their insights into the global economic situation and how to build a fighting working class movement that is needed to challenge capitalism
- ★ Develop an action plan for participants and the GTWA that will build the strategies and foundation that is necessary to win working class struggles for unionized, precarious, migrant, immigrant, unemployed and/or underemployed workers

Bring your hopes and ideas – as well as all those workers, neighbours, activist, and friends that you regularly interact with who are equally fed-up, frustrated and are hungry for a new beginning. If not now, when?

Dates:

Saturday, January 29, 7-9pm: Features an opening panel and discussion on the state of resistance today
Sunday January 30, 10am-6pm: Offers a keynote speaker, workshops, small group discussion and a large forum to discuss collective action.

Location:

Ryerson Student Centre - Oakham House, 63 Gould Street, Toronto.

Registration Begins: Wednesday, December 22nd on-line – Early registration will help to ensure workshop choices can be met. For more information, to register and check agenda, go to: www.workersassembly.ca

Registration Cost to be paid at conference – sliding scale with suggested rates – \$20 waged, \$10 unwaged/student or pwy. JOIN US!