



GREATER TORONTO WORKERS' ASSEMBLY

Discussion Bulletin 28 JANUARY 2011

A Response to Paul M's Proposal on the CC
By Vishwa
p. 1

Motion to Strike a Feminist Action Committee
By Élise Thorburn
p. 3

The Theory of the Part-Time Volunteer, Part Three:
Some Thoughts about Ideas
By Charnie Guettel
p. 5

Proposed Endorsement: 'The Workers' Economy,' 9-11 June 2011
By GTWA Coordinating Committee
p. 8

Notice of Next General Assembly of the GTWA
By GTWA Coordinating Committee
p. 10

Bulletin Editors
Call for Contributions to the December Bulletin
p. 11

A Response to Paul M's Proposal on the CC By Vishwa

I'm glad Paul submitted this proposal to the Discussion Bulletin. Assembly members have ample time to look it over and think about it before the February 19th general assembly. I hope more Assembly members will see the Bulletin as a place where they want to submit proposals and comments. I think this would do a lot to enhance participation and the quality of discussion within the Assembly.

I'm also grateful that Paul has opened up the discussion on the role of the CC and, more generally, the functioning of the Assembly. As my comments below make clear, I come at these questions from a very different angle. Nonetheless, I can certainly agree with Paul when he says: "Laying out the exact function of the Coordinating Committee (CC) is an essential step in going forward."

All that being said, I think Assembly members should defeat this proposal if it goes to a vote at the February 19th general assembly. I have four main reasons for opposing this proposal:

1. *The proposal seeks to solve a non-existent problem.* Paul's main concerns appear to be: one, that the role of the CC should not be "one of political leadership but instead of coordination"; and, two, that "neither the CC 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." To my knowledge, though, this is exactly how things have functioned up to this point. The CC has not functioned as a political leadership – at least not in any deliberate or organized manner. And neither the CC nor any subcommittees have circumvented or defied any general-assembly decisions.

2. *The proposal creates onerous and intrusive reporting obligations on the CC and subcommittees, which would be required to post and archive the agendas and minutes of every single one of their meetings on the public Assembly website.* As it stands, CC and subcommittee meetings are open to any Assembly member who wishes to attend; and the CC and subcommittees report on their activities and discussions over the listserv and at general assemblies, giving members the opportunity to learn about their work and raise any comments or criticisms they may have. I am definitely not in favour of the subcommittees (or obviously the CC) functioning in an entirely autonomous way from the

Assembly, whose highest decision-making body (as Paul rightly says) is the regular general assembly. The proposed measures, however, bend the stick much too far in the direction of centralized oversight and control. The proposed measures also seem to suggest that Assembly members have reason to be suspicious of the CC and subcommittees. That isn't the climate we should be creating within the Assembly; and it doesn't strike me as a very good way to encourage participation in the Assembly's different areas of activity.

3. *The proposal would change the rules of the game for a CC that has just recently been elected and begun its work.* It doesn't seem fair to me that people who have volunteered their time and energy for the CC on the basis of one set of rules and expectations should have these changed so soon after beginning their mandate. Any changes to the mandate and functioning of the CC should only come into force when a new CC is elected at the end of 2011.

4. *Passing the proposal would pre-empt the discussion that the Assembly must have on the role of the CC and the overall Assembly project.* Aside from the reporting requirements described in point 2 above, for all intents and purposes the proposal entrenches the status quo. Surely, this is premature. Since the creation of the Assembly we have barely had any opportunity to discuss the political character and work of the Assembly and the internal functioning that is best suited to them. There is an urgent need for such a political and organizational discussion. Thankfully, this appears to be just now getting off the ground with the "discussion and strategy session" planned for the February 19th general assembly.

This isn't the place to spell out the views I will present within the framework of this discussion that is just now beginning. Still, I would like to make two general points.

First – and very much in contrast to the thrust behind Paul's proposal -- I actually feel the current CC is far too weak. It isn't weak in terms of the organizing skills and political seriousness of its individual members. Rather, it is weak in terms of the role the CC is expected or able to play within the Assembly. This has created an unsatisfactory situation all around. For its part, the CC inevitably and quite naturally makes decisions about the functioning and direction of the Assembly but is in a

kind of limbo as to what it is expected or allowed to do. This is fertile ground for frustration and dysfunction. For the Assembly as such, the “chain of command” is a little murky and one can easily get the impression that no one is responsible for anything.

While “administration” and “coordination” are not as politically neutral as Paul seems to suggest, formally speaking the CC has thus far played precisely the role that he wants it to -- a largely administrative one. And yet, given the ambitious political goals the Assembly has (rightfully) set for itself, and the difficult context in which the Assembly has emerged, we actually need far more and far stronger political leadership. Among other things, that means explicitly defining where that leadership is located and how it functions. And we need the differences that naturally exist within the Assembly – especially those around concrete short-term and medium-term political questions that confront the Assembly, as opposed to those of a more abstract and longer term theoretical or historical character -- to be properly aired within the Assembly and democratically reflected within its political leadership.

Political leadership has to be consciously built in an ongoing manner. It will not emerge spontaneously out of the regular general assemblies, whose centrality to the Assembly process has actually been on the wane since the project’s heady early days. Attendance at general assemblies and the calibre of the discussions and of the decisions made there will depend to a considerable extent on the way these discussions are framed by the Assembly’s political leadership – or, put another way, on the political leadership’s ability to engage the Assembly membership and reflect the different opinions and sensibilities within it.

Second, the absence of explicitly defined, organized and ongoing political leadership prevents the Assembly from achieving its potential and actually undermines the “transparency, accountability and inclusion” that Paul rightly seeks.

Since we are all political people, who have all agreed on the need to build an anti-capitalist organization together, I can’t imagine there is disagreement around the need for political initiative and leadership. The real question is: where will this leadership come from? As the old saying goes, politics abhors a vacuum. If we don’t consciously and deliberately build political leadership for the Assembly (in the CC or somewhere else), this leadership will emerge following the old patterns of radical-Left politics in Toronto. It will be cobbled together between representatives of the different tiny radical-Left groupings, with attempts to include

people seen as being representative of different activist formations, more radical sections of organized labour, and variously defined “communities”.

It is a major strength of the CC and Assembly overall that they have involved significant numbers of people with a background in small radical-Left party-political and activist-campaigning formations, and in organized labour, academia, the NDP and NGOs. The problem with the “coalition” or informal model of political leadership, though, is that it tends to cater to the lowest common denominator of the different groupings. It fosters an approach that is careful not to tread on the turf of the different constituent groupings or to challenge the organizational routine and conservatisms these groupings have built up over many years of existence and many years of insertion into organizations and milieux that give them only a partial view of today’s fragmented and uneven socio-economic and political reality. I feel that it is precisely this model of “coalition” politics and informal leadership that has failed the Left in the city very badly over the past quarter century.

Unfortunately, more out of habit and convenience than design, this is essentially how political leadership has been built within the Assembly thus far. It is impressive that the Assembly has been able to achieve as much as it has on this basis, and I attribute this to the high level of goodwill and talent that exists among the different forces and individuals that make up the Assembly’s de facto political leadership inside and outside the CC. There is also a shared understanding that things cannot continue to function as before; that the Assembly creates a rare opportunity that none of the different individual groupings can create or seize on their own; and that the consequences of Assembly failure would be serious and long-lasting.

But this informal, “coalition” model of building political leadership is certainly *not transparent* since it largely takes place informally and behind closed doors. It is *not inclusive*, because it only involves a handful of individuals and organizations and is often based on pre-existing established organizational and personal relationships. Assembly members that do not belong to this informal inner circle or that are not identified as being representatives of some key activist, trade-union or academic current are left on the margins. And it is *not accountable* or democratic, given that the CC has no positive formal mandate or criteria by which it and the Assembly overall can assess our collective work over a given period. Likewise, the “coalition” model undermines accountability and democracy in the Assembly inasmuch as it shifts the

centre of gravity of discussion and decision-making away from the Assembly -- and toward groupings and individuals who may or may not be directly involved in the work of the Assembly.

I also feel that the model of informal political leadership prevailing in the Assembly until now has reached its limits. While I can understand why this model was chosen for the initial precarious phase of the Assembly's life, I believe it is not up to the challenges a more mature Assembly now faces. For one thing, lacking a clearly defined project and leadership structure, the Assembly is vulnerable to the many external and internal pressures that are sure to increase in the new and difficult period of capitalist and right-wing offensive -- and "centre-Left" electoral machinations -- now opening up before us.

For another, the present functioning creates a certain degree of internal paralysis -- at a time when we should be taking new and confident initiatives to build on the strengths and momentum achieved thus far. Simply put, if the Assembly can't build a strong and independent public profile -- in tandem with dynamic and effective internal functioning -- it will run into serious trouble over the next couple of years.

As such, while I hope the Assembly will defeat Paul's proposal for the reasons I have provided above, I also hope that the proposal will focus further attention on the discussion just now beginning on the Assembly's collective project and work and the internal functioning that best suits them.

Motion to Strike a Feminist Action Committee By Élise Thorburn

Rearrangements of the global economy have never been gender neutral, but rather have always been hierarchised based on gender, race and class. In the rearrangements and restructurings of the economy since the 1970s, the role of women has changed dramatically. Women -- particularly young, poor, indigenous and immigrant women -- are central to this restructured workforce. Factory and manufacturing work, the service and retail sector and the IT sector (the "cybertariat"), as well as almost every other area of the global economy, have been rapidly feminised as capital stretches far and wide to expand its reach and recoup its losses. In fact, women comprise 70--90% of the workforce in Export Processing Zones around the world and 60% of employees in the retail sector, globally. Some statistics even show 9 out of 10 women working in the service sector (broadly defined as non-agricultural and non-manufacturing work) in North America. These service and retail sector jobs tend to be part-time, without benefits and ultimately precarious at best

As supply chains are pinched by a drop-off in global demand, it is the women working in export manufacturing, in the garment sector and in the service and retail sectors, who are the first to lose their jobs, the first to be denied pay, and the last to receive notice or pay compensation. Around the world, governments have turned a blind eye. In 2009, the International Labour Organisation predicted that the economic crisis would push a

further 22 million women into unemployment, making female unemployment higher than male unemployment and making the ratio of women pushed into insecure jobs higher than that of men.

Since the 1960s women's participation in the paid workforce has increased dramatically, though in some of the lowest paid and most precarious sectors of the economy. So, the question of "who is the working class" or "who is the worker" desperately needs to be rethought, and it cannot be rethought without insights brought to us through feminist analysis. The feminist movement has contributed to labour, socialist, communist and anarchist struggles since these struggles began and our movements have much to learn from a feminist analysis of labour, the economy and social movements themselves. The concept of class struggle has only been widened and expanded by a feminist analysis, and it is almost taken for granted that no revolutionary movement can exist without a simultaneous struggle against men's domination of women.

Where is the feminist analysis in the daily operations, analysis and work of the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly? How can we claim to be a movement of workers without committing to a feminist analysis of labour? How can we understand other forms of work and labour, like sex work, without a strong grounding in feminist analyses of sexual labour? Without a strong feminist analysis,

how can we connect labour struggles with other pressing issues of the working class such as subsidised child care – which has been dramatically cut in Ontario due to government-imposed “austerity” measures – and domestic and sexual violence – which is a systemic issue that affects all women and trans people, but especially those in positions of precarious employment and poverty?

For these reasons, I propose that the Greater Toronto Workers’ Assembly strike a Feminist Action Committee (FAC).

At the moment, the FAC, as I foresee it would play a number of roles in the Assembly which I will sketch out here. Once struck, the FAC would take on a life of its own, collectively organising itself in the way that it sees fit.

Some sketches, then:

First, the FAC would work towards the long-term project of defining and expanding the definition of the “worker” and of the “working class” in 21st Century capitalism. Understanding who and what the working class is will be fundamental for the continuance of our work and for the project of changing the political landscape. Clearly the old notion of the “worker” and the “working class” as near-exclusively the male factory-worker is wrong, as we increasingly see women filling that traditional “worker” role and the concept of the “factory” expands. Women are increasingly the factory worker – a statement which is especially true if we consider the service and retail sectors as “factories”. The FAC could help the Assembly in expanding and making more relevant the notion of the “worker” and the “working class” to the public, thus contributing to changing the political landscape in which we work.

The Committee would serve as a space for analysing and contextualising the Assembly’s work in a feminist light. The FAC could examine and participate in the work of other committees and campaigns to provide feminist analysis and offer input. The FAC also would be a space to deal with issues of sexism in organising, and a space to ensure that the Assembly stays true to its commitment to anti-capitalist organising with non-oppressive politics. It may also create a space that

many women and trans people will feel comfortable plugging into, and may expand the Assembly’s capacity to recruit new members and effectively initiate outreach.

As well, many women and trans people are angry about the oppression they experience in their daily lives, from, but not limited to, sexual violence, lack of affordable childcare and issues in the workplace. There is a need for spaces for women and trans people to talk about the issues that affect them, to develop their political analysis and to strategize collectively. This is something that is missing in Toronto and the FAC could provide a space for women and trans people to do that.

The FAC could build training and skill-building sessions for women and trans activists, including sponsoring reading groups on complex and challenging topics around economic and political issues.

Making the GTWA accessible to women and trans people means spaces and strategies need to be created to challenge interpersonal and structural sexism within our own movements as well. While issues like childcare and addressing sexual harassment or violence should not be only the responsibility of women, the FAC could be one space where this work takes place.

I will propose that this Committee be struck at the upcoming Assembly meeting on Feb 19th, and I am excited about the work it can possibly carry out and the strength it can bring to the Greater Toronto Workers’ Assembly. While the exact role and activities of a proposed Feminist Action Committee have not yet been entirely worked out, I believe that together we can create a Committee that will make the Assembly stronger. I welcome feedback from Assembly members and others with regard to making this proposal stronger, suggesting changes and adding things they believe have been left out

Please contact me for more information or with any questions.

Elise D. Thorburn

The Theory of the Part-Time Volunteer, Part Three: Some Thoughts about Ideas By Charnie Guettel

I am writing this to people who cannot participate politically without the life of their mind being activated. It was in experiencing exploitation, and then learning about the history of exploitation and resistance to exploitation which made me political in the first place. Politics also taught me how to think: it set me on a path of liberation which began with a liberation of my own mind. And in this period, when so many people are overwhelmed by the difficulties of being political, an organizer needs not just an analysis of capitalism, but a new understanding of organizing, itself. We won't be energized to organize, unless we are excited by new ideas of how to organize. It is becoming more and more evident to political activists that habits of organizing carried over from the past aren't working very well. Coming out of denial about our limitations as organizers in a changed world is a first step. A willingness to try out new ideas might be the next.

It is interesting to me, that the "great works" of the "great revolutionary leaders" seldom concern themselves with everyday organizational questions: questions of consciousness, the psychology of motivation, communication, the use of the sociological material in our own census, the relationships in neighbourhoods, within election machines, political parties -- in short, things the activists sometimes share in passing, but which, like "housekeeping" in the home, is often treated as secondary, not the material for "big ideas".

I really started writing these essays, which grew into a bigger essay, and named the essay "the theory of the part-time volunteer" trying to figure out a way to remain politically active on a very small income, still working full time, and getting older.

I am a part-time volunteer. I observed that I have been most effective, in this century, in an information picket that I have been in for the past four years, on another issue, before I started to try to find a place for myself in the Workers Assembly. So my ideas about leafleting come from a very good recent experience and several others in years past. And in the first two parts of this essay, I tried to develop ideas to expand the leafleting project for the free and accessible transit campaign, in ways that are very particular to the transit campaign. I have come to

believe that I am at point of departure in my own political thinking, and I am appreciating the benefit of political changes I have been feeling in myself, over time, culminating in some realizations I have had around this project.

First of all, what makes a part-time volunteer different from either a full-time organizer, or a full-time revolutionary, is how few meetings a part-time volunteer can possibly attend. I think the left is held together by relatively small number of people who can attend upwards of ten to twenty meetings a month, sometimes meetings almost every day of the month, or even more than one meeting a day. Some organizers have professions and jobs that are designed around "meetings". But most people don't have lives like this.

Realistically even attending one meeting a week, and an action once a week or once a month, would be a stretch for most working people, or indeed for most people. If hundreds of thousands, or even millions of people, go into motion politically, it is because many part-time volunteers are active for short times, or occasionally, not that they all become constant organizers. For most people, even if they have progressive views, a political meeting is a very occasional experience, maybe a few times in a lifetime.

So, if we are talking about numbers, we have to look hard at the culture of meetings. Some of us are ready for this investigation and self-investigation. For those who are all right with going to lots of meetings, I don't know if you would be motivated to question the culture of meetings, itself. I mean, I don't know. I am writing this, because I can't be with you in the many meetings. And I have learned so much from you, and been enriched by contact with so many political friends and received so much encouragement, that stepping away from the culture of meetings requires a very big adjustment.

I am not saying do away with meetings; I am saying something quite different. I am saying that I, as a part-time volunteer, have to step away from the meeting culture, and concentrate putting more energy into the leafleting collective which meets on the street handing out leaflets, because it is a better

use of my political skills, it reaches more people, and it feeds my mind, it connects me politically to my fellow organizers, and it teaches me how to write about the issue at hand. Literally at hand -- I hold the most recent leaflet in my hand. I see how it works. We improve what we are writing on the basis of the responses of strangers. By committing to regular neighbourhood contact at our transit stops, we open a door to our contact with streams of people, live, that will suggest further changes in the use and shape of live information pickets and the writing we do for the leaflets.

And I think this decision I have had to make about the use of my own time, might correspond to the needs of other part-time volunteers, who are scared away from a life of being political, because it just involves too many meetings. By facing up to the limits of my time, and starting from an acceptance of this, I make the writing of this article an act of being a spokesperson for others in the same situation. We are probably the majority.

And I suspect that many of the people who didn't enter, or stay in the meeting culture, in this century, might be open to even *being in* a leafleting collective, if it didn't involve going to meetings.

Having a life of going to meetings

You know there are many thousands of socialists in Canada who are not active politically. It is very strange, really, when you think about it. Many have passed through existing organizations and not found a place for themselves. Maybe things were set up in such a way that there hasn't been a place, or places, for them.

There is a difference between a "campaign" or "project", and commitment to an organization. The free and accessible transit campaign is an anti-capitalist campaign that is probably about the most universal specific working-class demand we could have come up with, in this period, for people outside of organizations, within which to participate. And what is interesting in terms of the growth of someone politically who becomes involved in the campaign, is, that it requires a growth in our own knowledge of the entire politics and economics of public works projects. The campaign itself is a laboratory of anti-capitalist knowledge. That is why the writing of the leaflets and the creation of educational material and public and media statements have become such big tasks. And will become bigger and bigger tasks as the campaign

grows.

The Twenty Minute Leafleting and the "Leafleting Collectives"

I think there are two different aspects to leafleting, involved in my proposal, or you might say my suggestion of taking the expansion of leafleting more seriously.

One is inviting every member of the Workers Assembly to try the "Twenty Minute Leafleting". That is to say, to keep 100 leaflets in your backpack or purse, and just stop on your sidewalk next to your subway, for twenty minutes, and dispense leaflets, with the opening line of "Have you heard about the campaign for free transit for everyone?". If you are shy to be by yourself, arrange to meet a friend. This is way to begin your live presence in the campaign, along with hundreds of others, each by themselves or with one or two people, at transit stops, many on a weekly basis. It is not an "event" leafleting, a leafleting called at certain times and places, with several activists leafleting together. We have had, and will have such events. This is different, and a compliment to that. This is something new. It is a multi-neighbourhood project made possible by each individual deciding the best time and place within their own commuting schedule. Or it could be just on your way to something in the evening, or coming home at the end of the day. It is discovering where and when you would be comfortable handing people leaflets for twenty minutes on a weekly basis. Or a bi-monthly basis. Or a monthly basis. Or once.

My image of blanketing over many different sidewalk locations near the stops of the entire transit system, with the presence of leafleters, for as long as it takes, is also based on a belief that the action and contact with the neighbourhood populations would draw us closer together, as organizers. I lived through a political era, the sixties and seventies, when action collectives were also consciousness-raising groups -- when we took seriously new ideas taken from each other, exchanged views on what we were studying, had some pretty effective actions as a result. I believe we are headed for a period where such formations are going to be on the increase, one way or another. I think we might fashion the transit campaign leafleting collectives to invite this kind of interaction among leafleters. It won't happen in all cases, but it can happen, if we take the experience of leafleting seriously.

The Labour of the Volunteer

The labour of the volunteer is not paid labour. Human beings, particularly under capitalism, have a way of disrespecting the value of unpaid labour. We have a system which depends on the unpaid maintenance labour of people (mostly women) within families, and charities which provide necessities through the unpaid labour of volunteers, (also over represented through women volunteers).

If the labour of volunteers is poorly organized, our labour time is squandered. I think the lack of attention to the realities and experiences of volunteer work, on the part of left-wing analysis, is a carry over from of this undervaluing of the labour time of the activists who do the everyday work, especially the part-time volunteers.

In contrast to this, I am attempting to shine the spotlight directly on the activity of leafleting, and giving it a "status" and "importance" it doesn't really have yet. To do otherwise is to fall back into giving "meetings" and "demonstrations" all the status and importance, and to treat leafleting as an occasional afterthought.

Demonstrations

The left puts a lot of time and money into creating demonstrations. Demonstrations are events in which leftists can celebrate their opinions to each other, because demonstrations are enacted by people who already have convictions about the issue being expressed, the injustices protested. And leftists have a great need to gather with others of like mind and feel themselves to be a part of something. I know that and am part of it.

But event demonstrations don't reach many people, and they don't put us in contact with very many people on a day to day basis. Sometimes there is good coverage, and of course videos reach the Internet. And really the news of demonstrations is what makes many leftists feel unity internationally. But they are a show, and don't provide a means of raising consciousness on an ongoing basis. They are often parades. Nothing wrong with a parade, but it is a limited form of contact.

Banner/Slogan language

Our left-wing culture includes a language of banner phrases, and slogans: it always has, and it probably always will. I am not suggesting that we do away with banner and slogan language, but like parades, it only reaches some people (those already convinced) and only in some ways. I think the stretching of our abilities in the serious writing of leaflets which guide our readers to an understanding of the transformation of the public transit system into a human right for all is going to challenge all of our critical and writing skills. We are going to improve our communication with the population of our city, by learning to write politically all over again. Political writing which convinces, political writing which changes someone's mind, which enlightens and moves someone to read further, is a very difficult art. When we pool our experiences with leaflets written one way, we write the next leaflet having solved something in our understanding about the last leaflet.

We are going to need all kinds of material, directed to many different kinds of people, with different levels of education, written by people with different specialties of knowledge and different writing styles. In a way, the blanketing of the transit system with leafleters is a form of publishing, publishing of a new kind, very specific to providing not just cursory information, like passing a test at school, but creating anti-capitalist information and theory that will be appreciated by people (including us) who are getting this news and research for the first time. We are the voice of reason, here: this is a great cause, and a daring cause, and we are creating this campaign from scratch.

I think maybe it was Saul Alinsky who said there is nothing as powerful as an idea whose time has come. Anyway, I heard him say it in a speech many years ago; he might have been quoting someone else. But if the idea of taking leafleting units -- many units on an everyday basis -- seriously, is one whose time has come, then many of us will take to it.

It is an idea whose time has come for me; I have no idea if it is really exciting to very many other people. I hope so.

-- Charnie Guettel, December 6, 2010.

Proposed Endorsement By GTWA Coordinating Committee

Note: The Coordinating Committee was contacted by Assembly members who are Canadian organizers for the Workers Economy gathering that is happening in Mexico later this year. (See below.) We have provided an endorsement that to be ratified at the February 19th General Assembly. The organizers would like to connect with members who are interested in attending this event and will make a short presentation at the February 19th Assembly. They will be sending greetings to the Workers Economy gathering from the Greater Toronto Workers Assembly and may be organizing a GTWA workshop there. When they return the Canadian delegation will also do a report back for Assembly members.

-- Coordinating Committee

Third International Meeting THE WORKERS' ECONOMY Analyzing and Debating a New Economy from the Perspective of Workers and Self-Management Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco, Mexico City June 9-11, 2011

In recent decades, the management of the global economy has increasingly fallen into the hands of corporations and their neoliberal institutions. Where has it led? We now witness the unequal polarization of the global economy between a handful of rich countries controlling the world's wealth, and a majority of impoverished countries providing the resources and labour needed to support this wealth. At the same time, there has been a polarization of this wealth, now held by fewer and fewer capitalists, while the vast majority of the world's workers become ever more marginalized and insecure. It has also led to the greatest ecological disaster ever produced by humans in world history. Moreover, it has led to the worst economic crisis of the capitalist system since the crash of 1929. Today, corporations hover above the chaos and conflict they have generated and try to salvage their wealth by making the workers of the world pay for the consequences of the crisis. Governments and international institutions are rescuing corporations in crisis while increasing workers' costs of living and decreasing their income in order to pay for corporate bailouts. All of this happens along with the "normal costs" incurred by corporations in the exploitation of work.

The world's workers, however, are not sitting by quietly in the face of this irrational economic reality--irrational, that is, for workers and for humankind, but

rational for the corporations! The workers of the world continue to resist paying the price for this economic leadership and the current crisis. They continue to analyze and challenge the corporate leadership of the economy by forging their own practices and institutions.

Despite the increasing presence of worker led-organizations that resist and move beyond the global economic order, the fragmentation of workers' struggles in each country and in the world stubbornly remains one of the main characteristics of our time. While migrant workers in the US unionize, recalcitrant factory workers in France and South Korea storm managerial offices and take bosses hostage, Greek state workers call general strikes, and workers' cooperatives in India, Venezuela, and Argentina continue to surge, the world-wide conflicts between capital and labor tend to unfold in isolation from each other. Nevertheless, there are many examples of self-management and self-organized economic forms spreading throughout the world, and millions of workers—whose very status as workers is denied—are beginning to recognize each other and the commonality of their struggles within the new and old forms of exploitation and resistance.

In non-hegemonic, if uneven, ways, workers are also inventing alternatives that are not limited to the economic, but that delve into wider cultural processes as well, which, based on non-capitalist

relations of production, have opened more and more spaces for prefigurative politics. These alternative economic institutions are affording workers spaces to discuss issues such as internal power and gender structures, as well as the relationship between workers, workplaces, and their surrounding communities. These processes, visible for example in the recovered factories, workers' cooperatives, and micro-enterprises of the world, although incipient, show that workers *can* present and self-manage a more humane and sustainable alternative to corporate globalization.

Under corporate globalized capitalism, workers, however, have not yet been able to recover and recreate the historical struggles of the past en masse. While this new working class and its juncture with other social movements and forms of struggle have not yet produced a new, world-wide project for the lives of workers, a new project looms on the horizon of history. Given that a workers' alternative to corporate globalization, with its own economic, social and political management, has yet to be outlined, there is still much work to be done.

Bringing together workers, researchers, and activists from around the world to take up these concerns and possibilities, we co-organized and facilitated two international meetings of "The Workers' Economy" in Buenos Aires in 2007 and 2009. Our Third International Meeting will continue the debate concerning workers' alternatives. It proposes gathering together academic and intellectual contributions with the practices and ideas of workers, bringing together researchers, theorists, and political activists with workers from around the world. This Third International Meeting will continue the spirit of the past two International Meetings by systematizing workers' experiences of exploitation, projects of alternative work organizations and institutions, and workers' roles as leaders of their own economic destinies, while also aiming to collaboratively study resistances to capitalists' management of the economy.

This time, the International Meeting will be held in Mexico. For the organizers, this means consolidating the space of debate that the event has generated by accentuating its international character. Mexico is a country where neoliberalism has rampaged against the people and provoked many workers' struggles and myriad social movements of protest. They need support. The Third International Meeting in Mexico will, in particular, be drawing attention to these struggles and reinforcing them.

The Third International Meeting of the Workers' Economy will take place on June 9, 10 and 11 in Mexico City, at the UAM-Xochimilco.

Topics of debate will include, but are not limited to:

1. Analysis of the capitalist management of the economy and proposals for global self-management.
2. The new crisis of global capitalism: analysis and responses from the perspective of the workers' economy.
3. Self-management: the historical assessment.
4. Self-management in its present stage: its problems and potential. Recuperated factories, cooperatives, and attempts at self-management by social movements.
5. Self-management and gender: creating democracy.
6. The socialist experience of workers and analysis of its past and future.
7. The challenges of trade union experiences within neoliberal global capitalism.
8. Informal, precarious, and demeaning work: social exclusion or reconfiguration of work in global capitalism?
9. The universities, the workers and the movements: debates about methodologies and practices of mutual construction.

The Third Meeting will take place over three days, with morning and afternoon sessions, and will be open to the public. There will be plenary sessions and workshops with the presentation of papers, videoconferencing, and a final plenary with discussion and conclusions.

Organizing Committee:

Area Work Studies of the Department of Social Relations of the Autonomous Metropolitan University at Xochimilco and the Open Faculty Program of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires.

Co-organizers (confirmed to now) are the following:

Center for Global Justice, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.
 Institute of Philosophy, Havana, Cuba.
 Faculty of Philosophy and History of the University of Havana.
 Autonomist Argentina Project
<http://www.autonomista.org>.

Program of Anthropology and the History of the Capital-Work Relation in the Contemporary Context, Center for Advanced Studies, National University of Cordoba.

Deadline for sending 250-500 word summaries/abstracts of papers: March 31, 2011

Deadline for sending complete presentations: April 29, 2011.

Contacts:

centrodoc@gmail.com (Centro de Documentación de Empresas Recuperadas, Programa Facultad Abierta, UBA, Argentina).
andres.ruggeri@gmail.com (Andrés Ruggeri, Director, Programa Facultad Abierta)

marcoagomez.gomez@gmail.com (Marco Augusto Gómez Solórzano, Director del Área de Estudios del Trabajo de la UAM-Xochimilco, México)

cpacheco@correo.xoc.uam.mx (Celia Pacheco, Directora Departamento de Relaciones Sociales, UAM-X, México).

For English correspondence and paper submissions:

vieta@york.ca (Marcelo Vieta, York University, Toronto, Canada). Please indicate "The Workers' Economy" in the heading of your email when submitting papers.

More information on the International Meeting "La economía de los trabajadores" and for proceedings of the previous editions of the 2007 and 2009 Meetings, please go to:
www.recuperadasdoc.com.ar

Notice of Next General Assembly of the GTWA By GTWA Coordinating Committee

This is a reminder that the next general assembly will be happening on February 19th, 2011. An updated agenda and registration info. will be posted over email and on our website by February 1st.

See: <http://www.workersassembly.ca/>

All members are encouraged to attend and actively participate. Observers are welcome, so please feel free to bring a friend.

Reminder:

The deadline for the next Discussion Bulletin is February 20th

Our next Assembly is on Feb. 19th. There will be discussion/debate about the lessons from the struggles against Harris and Lastman (Days of Action, strike actions, community mobilizations) and a strategy session on applying these lessons in the current Ford, McGuinty and Harper era. The Internal Discussion Bulletin provides us with an excellent place to begin this work. We strongly urge members to write something up and submit it to get the discussion rolling.

The Bulletin is an open forum for members of the Workers' Assembly to discuss the Assembly and pressing questions facing radical activists in the Toronto area today. You may also be interesting in replying to the submissions circulated in this month's Bulletin, and respectful dialogue over political disagreements are also welcome in the Bulletin.

In fact, submissions are encouraged on any topic bearing on the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly and the activism of its members.

Submissions to the Bulletin should meet the following criteria:

- Less than 2000 words
- Written in language that is accessible to non-academic audiences
- Pertaining to a topic or issue relevant to the Assembly
- Contains no inflammatory or libelous statements against Assembly members or constituent organizations
- Adheres to the Assembly's Policy on Harassment and Discrimination

The deadline for the next Bulletin is 20 February 2011 and submissions should be sent to assembly.bulletin@gmail.com. (The deadline for all issues of the Bulletin is the 20th of the month. Submissions received by the 20th will appear in the Bulletin published at the end of each month.)

If you would like feedback on a first draft, or help with proofreading, etc., editorial volunteers are happy to provide such assistance and/or feedback.

=> How best can we fight back against Rob Ford's agenda?

=> Are there are lessons to be learned from 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?

=> Are there lessons that need to be learned about how best to respond, or how not to respond, to state repression against activists, in light of the G20 crackdown?

These are just a few of the questions that we need to take up and discuss. If you have any thoughts to share on these or other questions facing activists today, please consider jotting down your thoughts and sending them in to our email address: assembly.bulletin@gmail.com