

SUMMARY OF THE MARCH 29, 2003 WORKSHOP

Definitely Not Politics as Usual

OVERVIEW

On March 29, about 45 people gathered in Victoria for a workshop to develop action plans.

Four working groups focused on different areas of interest. All the groups identified strong partisanship as an obstacle to cooperation. It was felt that a cooperative movement needs to include genuine grassroots, not only the Greens and NDP. We need to engage the electorate in the political process, beginning with more participatory forums to promote dialogue on issues and common values.

Several groups identified mainstream media as a major obstacle. We need to network with all independent media and use mainstream media by writing op eds and letters. The use of a website, as well as distributing materials at rallies and other public events was suggested by most groups.

SUMMARY OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Basis of Unity: Principles and Action

This group analyzed Discussion Paper 2. This discussion paper suggests principles that are based on the values shared at the January 29 meeting. The following are suggestions for improvement.

A set of principles for a participatory progressive movement should focus on:

- ensuring basic needs, such as land and work
- human rights, social justice, education, safety and harm-reduction, and care of the environment
- sovereignty of First Nations and the priority of land claim settlements
- a new economic system that values all human contributions, whether paid or unpaid and supports a sustainable way of life for every individual (i.e., Guaranteed Liveable Income).

The discussion paper should:

- include an action plan to get wide participation
- promote dialogue
- identify and build on common issues
- not buy into left/right division

Strong and Connected Voice: Outreach and Arts

This group discussed how to build both the numbers and the spectrum of people we are reaching, either as the Broad Coalition or as the Coalition for BC.

- create a list of organizations in Victoria that could become an information network
- focus on the issue of privatization of the commons (what the current government is doing) and the 2005 election (why they have to go)
- create a website to be a clearing house of links to press releases, background information, discussion papers, other organizations, newsletters and independent media
- use phone trees and personal contacts

Suggestions for raising our profile included :

- entertaining and performing arts (i.e., songs, skits, videos)
- involvement in Fun Runs
- forums with NDP and Green parties addressing issues jointly
- socials
- tables at events, especially NDP and Green forums

Political Action: This is an Emergency

This group focused on activism within the parties. We discussed the political work that needs to be done, such as:

- researching barriers such as past baggage, labels and constitutions
- developing an Accord with a simple basis of cooperation and action plan
- taking a resolution to both Green and NDP parties
- taking a simple message to the Constituency Associations — This is an Emergency: Don't Split the Vote
- stressing that proportional representation requires that parties learn to cooperate. attending all conventions, workshops and AGMs of both parties to keep the issue front and centre

Coalition Organizational Options

This group identified three functions of a coalition group: a) contact and communication, b) promote dialogue to identify common ground and explore options, and c) implement coordinated actions.

Suggested actions:

- distribute discussion papers and other material at rallies and other events
- create negotiating teams to go to NDP and Green constituencies to stimulate discussion
- provide a roster of non-partisan facilitators to work with constituencies

They discussed the pros and cons of different organizational structures. We need a structure that:

- is non-hierarchical
- promotes the sharing of functions
- includes the Broad Coalition and Coalition for BC and affiliated groups