

Workshop 4 notes

‘Turning the tables on the state’ Achieving human & social rights in the 21st century

Saturday, 11 March

An “awareness campaign” was suggested which would lead to better organisation and to linking up, and one person in our group said we need more people like Brian Haw (who has been camped in parliament Square for years).

There was a discussion on individual rights and collective rights and the question was asked: Are we appealing to the state for our rights? Or are we really talking about building new forms of political representation against the present state?

You may appeal to the state for the release of an individual prisoner, but the long-term strategy is to take actions arising from the understanding that the state is the problem. The tables were turned on the state when the judiciary declared the detention of the Belmarsh prisoners illegal, but it was just one issue. The state came back with control orders for the prisoners, against the spirit of the law and has now extended the use of these control orders.

Every apparent victory, it was pointed out, in this period of history sees them (the state and its forces) coming back and strengthening their power.

All the big issues have a common source, and it is our job to develop the understanding that the state is and always will defend the status quo. Built up over centuries, it does not negotiate on the fundamentals.

List of Rights

1. Right of free movement without being stopped and put under suspicion because of race or creed.
2. Right to stay within your own community without being at the mercy of market forces pushing you out.
3. Right to control your own life, to breathe fresh air and drink clean water.
4. Right to dignity at work, free from exploitation, and with it the right to free association and the right to organise.
5. Right to a decent standard of living, free from GM foods etc and not dependant on the exploitation of others.
6. Right to bring down tyrannical regimes.

These rights in addition to or to be incorporated into other rights.

What political changes are necessary for all this?

De-centralisation of power to the communities with representative democracy at local level, but not possible under the present system.

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The co-ordination of all the different groups was suggested.

Will the state stand by while changes are made by popular demand?

With the coming period of chaos arising from the globalised economy and, climate change and the poisoning of the planet everything is going to get stirred up.

One of the ways of challenging the state that our group put forward was the concept of Dual Power, to support the building of genuinely democratic and popular institutions, which would or could, for a time co-exist with the institutions of the old order.

The group also discussed the concept of a rule of law, but in a more advanced society, with property and factories owned in common, and the necessity of building new legal rights and a framework of law of the new social order.