

A World to Win – there's a climate for change

Notes from workshop on 'political and economic change'

The workshop discussed the dangers of authoritarian rule in a new political democracy and how they might be overcome.

Workshop participants agreed that having strong, independent trade unions within an explicit democratic constitution would be necessary.

Delegates and representatives in new democratic bodies that replaced the parliamentary state would be accountable and subject to instant recall by their electorate. They would also not get excessive salaries.

It was thought that a system of co-operative ownership and self-management of industry and services would help reduce the dangers of authoritarianism. They would be accountable to assemblies and local communities and consumers.

Information and communication technologies could be used to involve as many people as possible in decision-making. Consultation using ICT would be meaningful and take place before decisions were made, with people's views being decisive, whereas today their views are ignored if they do not fit with official proposals.

It was also thought that organisations like AWTW should demonstrate their own internal democracy as a way of convincing people that it was possible to do politics in an open and transparent way.

While there are no guarantees against the abuse of power, the workshop thought that accountability at all levels was the key. In addition, society would have to learn from history, including the experiences of Stalinism in the former Soviet Union.

AWTW was proposing a new, *transitional* state in place of the present institutions. The aim was to create bodies that did not stand above society, like the police do in present society.

In tackling the question of how we achieved political and economic change, the workshop agreed that the strategy involved work on several fronts: building AWTW, working with other organisations, especially those already involved in not-for-profit working, using methods of 'peaceful subversion', and seeing change as a process involving the mass of the people. One participant pointed out that the corporations were nothing without their workforce and it was a question of workers realising that power and using it to transfer ownership.

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www.aworldtowin.net

info@aworldtowin.net