

Dissent! - A Network of Resistance Against the G8



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1. Introduction to the Dissent! Network

The G8 (Group of Eight, most industrialised nations) Summits are hosted, on rotation, by the group's member states. In 2005 the Summit is to be held in the UK at Gleneagles in Perthshire, Scotland (around 60 miles north of Edinburgh). The Dissent! Network, has formed to provide a networking tool to co-ordinate radical resistance to the Summit.

The Network was formed in the autumn of 2003 by a group of people who have previously been involved in radical ecological direct action, Peoples' Global Action, the anti-war movement and the global anti-capitalist movement which has emerged around meetings of the international elite over the past few years.

The Network has no central office, no spokespeople, no membership list and no paid staff. It's a mechanism for communication and co-ordination between local groups and working groups involved in building resistance to the G8, and capitalism in general. It hopes to exist long after the world leaders have returned home in the early summer of 2005.

Dissent! is open to anybody willing to work within the Hallmarks of Peoples' Global Action (PGA). PGA was founded in February 1998 by hundreds of people from social movements as diverse as the Brazilian landless peasants movement (MST), Reclaim the Streets in the UK, the Zapatistas in Mexico, radical ecologists from the Ukraine, Maori from New Zealand and squatters from across Europe, all of whom had gathered in Geneva for the founding conference. The PGA Network was created as a tool for co-ordination and communication between groups, movements and individuals wanting to organise global anti-capitalist resistance, particularly to international organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and to draw attention to the possibility of alternative forms of social organisation. The PGA, and the movements involved within it, were instrumental in initiating and co-ordinating the global days of action against the last G8 meeting in the UK in Birmingham 1988, the day of action in financial centres around the world on June 18th 1999, and the events in Seattle and around the globe which coincided with the WTO Ministerial in November 1999. The Hallmarks are as follows:

1. A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism; all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalisation.
2. We reject all forms and systems of domination and discrimination including, but not limited to, patriarchy, racism and religious fundamentalism of all creeds. We embrace the full dignity of all human beings.
3. A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organisations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker.

4. A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements' struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximise respect for life and oppressed peoples' rights, as well as the construction of local alternatives to global capitalism.
5. An organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy.

2. Decisions agreed by the Dissent! Network

i. Our Basic Principles.

The very first decision we made, was to adopt the Peoples Global Action (PGA)Hallmarks as the guiding principles of the network. To find out more about PGA see www.agp.org

ii. How the Network Makes Decisions.

The previous Dissent! gathering reached consensus that:

(1) The Dissent! Network holds bi-monthly gatherings. The Gatherings are the only Network decision making body - email lists and web discussion forums are not where Network decisions are made! Local groups are autonomous from one another and are able to take any form of action they choose. Local Dissent! Network groups should not speak for the whole network.

(2) Local groups should also consider, however, that the actions which they take will actually reflect on the network as a whole.

The Dissent! Network is therefore primarily a networking tool. Where decisions are made consensus decision-making provides the model for how they are made. Consensus normally works around a proposal, which, hopefully is submitted beforehand so that people have time to consider it. The proposal is presented and any concerns are discussed. The proposal is then amended until a consensus is reached. At the heart of this process are principles that include trust, respect, recognition that everyone has the right to be heard and to contribute (i.e. equal access to power), a unity of purpose and commitment to that purpose and a commitment to the principle of co-operation. At these gatherings we seek to reach consensus on most issues, although this is not always possible and often there is no need to reach 'one decision' at the end of a useful discussion. To help reach consensus, and to encourage the greatest possible participation, various 'consensus tools' will be used at this gathering. These include good facilitation, various hand signals, go-rounds and the breaking up into small and larger sized groups. These methods should be explained by the facilitator at the start of each discussion, but if you wish to know more about how we are using them please contact members of the process group at this gathering.

iii. Using The Name.

At the first network-wide gathering we agreed the name 'Dissent! A Network of Resistance, against the G8'. However, this is only our shared name, and in keeping with the principles of decentralisation and local autonomy, we agreed that local groups would use their own names, images and publicity as they chose. In order to avoid confusion, and to prevent individuals speaking 'on behalf' of the network, local groups are asked not to call themselves 'Sunderland Dissent!' etc. but choose their own name.

iv. Media Policy.

After a long discussion the Nottingham gathering decided, in respect of the diversity and autonomy of those within the network, that the media policy is "Anyone who claims to speak on behalf of this network is lying". In Manchester this was clarified: There is no press/media working group. Any network presswork is limited to written statements agreed on by a Dissent! gathering. However, local groups are autonomous and therefore free to produce their own publicity, do media work or whatever. When talking about Dissent! it should be made absolutely clear that they cannot speak on behalf of other groups in the network. Remember, journalists can be (wilfully) very stupid about this. They will make people out to be spokespeople even if it is explicit that they are not.

v. Calls for Action and Statements of Solidarity

Calls to action and statements of solidarity are put out at Dissent! gatherings - the original idea for these can come from anywhere within the network. At the last gathering in Bradford we agreed to "Call for convergences in Scotland with the objective of shutting down the G8 in July 2005 whilst building alternatives to capitalism."

3. Working Groups

Generally if something needs to be done, we set up a working group to do it and so network-wide issues (funding, the website, international networking etc.) are all dealt with by working groups. You can join or set up a working group at the gathering. Each working group reports back to the whole network at these gatherings.

Present working groups include:

- Education/Roadshow, Fundraising, Gathering (this group changes according to where the gathering is held), International Networking, Process Group (membership changes at each gathering), Medical Support, Festival of Dissent!, Newsletter, Publicity (currently not running as covered by local groups), Research, Skill Sharing & Translating, Training and Website.

Please see the website for contact details, the newsletter or ask the process group.

4. Local groups/Info points

One of the aims of the Dissent! network was to enable people who were interested in resisting the G8 to meet other people in their local area and take action. Anyone, who agrees to work within the PGA hallmarks can set up a local group or join an existing one. Members of Dissent are not just organizing against the G8, but are primarily aiming to build a sustainable movement. We hope that local groups will be open access points for others to join and be involved in organising local actions, benefit gigs, hosting trainings, educational events and engaging with their local community. You do not, however, have to be in a local group to be involved with the Dissent! Network. For a list of current local groups please see the website www.dissent.org.uk

Groups/Info points currently exist in: Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Derby, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hull, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Sheffield and Worthing.

Contact details can be found on the website, in the newsletter or ask the process group.

5. Previous gatherings.

Gatherings have taken place in Nottingham in the autumn of 2003, Brighton in winter 2004, Manchester in spring 2004 and Bradford in summer 2004. There will be a folder available at the gathering with a copy of the minutes from Bradford. All minutes are available online at www.dissent.org.uk.

Feedback form

Ideally, at the end of the gathering there would be time for every individual to give feedback on the meeting, and the direction the network is taking. Given the time constraints, we may have to deal with this through these forms. The feedback will be reported back to the network. Use the back of the page if needed, or attach your manifesto.

Feedback on the gathering (please list any concerns, constructive suggestions, ideas, criticisms, and positive comments). What worked, what did not? Which items went well, which needed improvement?

Feedback on the Dissent Network: How do you feel about the direction the network is heading? List any concerns, constructive suggestions, ideas, criticisms, and positive comments.

The Next Gathering: What would you like to see discussed at the next gathering? Feel free to list agenda items or write in a proposal.

Name and contact info (optional):