

# **Who needs the WSSD?**

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Within the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) in Gauteng, a debate is raging about whether or not the left should participate in the United Nations'-sponsored "NGO Summit" that is being planned for the UN's "Rio +10" conference, which will be held in Johannesburg in 2002.

The Rio + 10 summit by the UN is a follow-up to the UN conference on the environment that was held in 1992 in Rio, Brazil. The UN is inviting non-governmental structures to participate in a parallel "NGO Summit" and is willing to foot the bill.

## **ANARCHIST ROLE**

Now, there is nothing wrong in principle with anti-globalisation activists coming forward to discuss campaigns against – and alternatives to – capitalist globalisation. As anarchists we are ready to use any popular forums as an opportunity to win people to our programme. And where possible we play a leading role in developing and defending such forums as a space for radically democratic grassroots decision-making, and as a platform for direct action against capitalism.

This was, for example, the case for the anti-Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in Quebec in April 2001, where anarchists were key actors in the Anti-Capitalist Convergence (CLAC) and helped establish anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist struggle as the central themes of the anti-FTAA protests. And this is precisely why anarchists support structures such as the APF.

## **CO-OPTATION**

However, the proposed UN-sponsored "NGO Summit" is a different matter entirely. Before we decide to try and "use" this Summit, it is vital to understand the agenda of the UN and other capitalist bodies in organising and funding such Summits in the first place. Since the momentous events in Seattle in 1999 – when protesters disrupted the globalisation summit of the World Trade Organisation – the capitalist class has been under siege at most of its international policy/planning meetings, whether by the IMF, UN or WEF.

In this climate, capital has begun to fund (official) summits for civil society organisations, "NGO Summits" running parallel to the official globalisation summits of the capitalist class. Capital claims that these forums will allow ordinary voices to be heard, and provide a channel for popular concerns to be integrated into the decisions of the official meetings. This is why, for example, the UN poured millions into an "NGO Summit" designed to run parallel to the official World Conference Against Racism summit in Durban.

## **DUAL POWER**

The motives, in other words are clear: the official "NGO Summits" are used to legitimise the capitalists' meetings, whilst also removing the teeth from the anti-globalisation movement. This is exactly why we should not participate in the government – and corporate-run and funded "NGO summits." They hide the undemocratic nature of the gatherings of the capitalist class by posing as democratic spaces. Yet these "NGO Summits" are themselves undemocratic. In return for capitalist blood money, progressives get drawn into stage-managed gatherings in which small groups of delegates draw up documents that are, at best, totally ignored by the official summits, and, at worst, used to legitimise neo-liberal policies.

This type of “participation” also runs totally counter to the spirit of the anti-globalisation movement. The movement has based itself on mass direct action, and on a democratic model of struggle organising. Yet participation in the “NGO Summits” is limited to a few delegates who spend their time fighting with other delegates for money and over the wording of the declaration of the NGO Summits. What we want instead are tens of thousands on the streets, based not on participation within the NGO Summits or official summits, but on direct action against the capitalist class and its agents, a mass struggle against capitalism, for libertarian communism, for anarchism. We must organise outside and against the capitalist class and the governments, creating a new world that can crush the world of wage-slavery, unemployment and racial oppression.

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