

2nd COLLEGE OF COMPLEXES TALK:

"*Democracy for America: Anti-Election/ DO NOT VOTE Campaign*"

5 July 2014

In my last College of Complexes presentation a few months ago I described my experience with Occupy Chicago, and I touched very briefly on the ideologies of anarchism and socialism, which were prevalent among Occupiers. I asserted that these ideologies were a major cause of Occupy's failure. I also described the new organization that some of us former Occupiers started, Democracy for the USA. Today I'd like to expand on my critique of anarchism and socialism, and then go on to explain Democracy for the USA's anti-election campaign. I want to emphasize that my criticisms of anarchism and socialism are philosophical, not personal. I have a lot of friends and acquaintances who call themselves anarchists and socialists, and of course I respect them nonetheless. My problem is with the broad ideologies, not with individuals. I think it's critical that we confront these ideologies intellectually, since they dominate the Left, and in my opinion are holding it back.

A long time ago an anarchist friend of mine gave me a book on anarchism by David Graeber. I so much disagreed with Graeber's arguments that I wrote a little review of the book for my friend. In that review I noted Graeber's utter lack of realism and his extreme naiveté. Just recently I was given another book by Graeber to read by another friend, this one entitled *The Democracy Project: A History, a Crisis, a Movement* (2013). The title refers to Occupy Wall Street, which Graeber considers to have been a democratic movement par excellence. Graeber was a primary founder and leader of Occupy Wall Street, so the book is both a personal history and a more abstract discourse on democracy. It's actually quite interesting and a pretty good read. But I still have the same basic criticisms of Graeber's anarchist philosophy as before; in fact the book helped me see more clearly than ever where Occupy went wrong, why it failed.

I have two major problems with anarchists' political thinking, as reflected in Graeber's book. One is the way they see the left movement in relation to the existing political system, and the other is their notion of what a democracy is.

Graeber explains that when the Occupy movement rose up, Occupiers rejected the existing political order entirely and instead worked to create "free spaces" outside of the state. These spaces would be a "counterpoise" to the existing order, where "forms of direct democracy . . . could operate within self-governing communities." So from the beginning Occupiers weren't so much interested in transforming the current political system as escaping from it. Literally they were basically separatists. This explains the whole encampment thing. Graeber notes that, historically, anarchists' rejection of existing society "has been more likely to take the form of flight, defection, and the creation of new communities than of revolutionary confrontation with the powers-that-be." He explains that Occupy pursued a "dual power strategy: we are trying to create liberated territories outside of the existing political, legal, and economic order." Since anarchists are opposed to the state as such, they're not interested in creating an alternative governmental edifice; furthermore, they consider a democratic state to be a contradiction in terms. So they're fundamentally small-minded. Generally speaking, Occupiers were not really committed to confronting, bringing down, and replacing the representative state. Instead they were satisfied to hide from it in little pockets, whether in encampments, or, after these were broken up, in small groups working on relatively small projects in individual neighborhoods.

The second problem with anarchist philosophy is that it has an unreal conception of democracy. Graeber says that democracy is not straightforward majority rule. It's not a system of government at all but rather a set of social and cultural attitudes, a "democratic sensibility." Quoting Graeber: "[it's] just the belief that humans are fundamentally equal and ought to be allowed to manage their collective affairs in an egalitarian fashion, using whatever means appear most conducive." And to Graeber the most conducive means is the consensus process, not voting. He favors consensus over voting because he wants to avoid divisions into winners and losers, which voting obviously creates. Most importantly, "no one [sh]ould be physically coerced to go along with a decision" they disagree with. Instead, "proposals [are to] be continually refashioned in a spirit of compromise, creativity, [and reasonableness,] until they reach a form . . . amenable to everyone." This explains why some members of Occupy Chicago were opposed to voting on proposals, which I thought was very strange. To my logical mind you present a proposal, you discuss it as long as you want and amend it if necessary, and then the group decides on it by voting for or against. End of story. But some Occupiers saw things differently. They disliked voting, apparently because it was an open acknowledgement of disagreement, which they abhorred.

"Anarchism" means "without rulers": anarchists want to be free of *any* forms of power or domination, including majority rule. They reject the physical enforcement of decisions, rules, and laws by the threat of prisons or police. So what would be the political structure of the "free" society of anarchists' dreams? Graeber repeatedly states that he doesn't know. He says he's "[not] interested in working out . . . the detailed architecture of what a free society would be like." Like other anarchists he rejects detailed models of proposed systems of power, since he feels there should be no such thing as systems of power. This is probably why he rejects Athens as a model of democracy, and instead professes to see examples of democracy among the American Indians and among pirates, on the early American frontier, and in village councils in Africa, India, Bali, and Bolivia--in fact "in all times and places." Athens had clear-cut institutions of government which you can study, as so many historians have done, and which you can more or less replicate. But Graeber prefers variety and "improvisation" to settled institutions. There's an inherent and deliberate vagueness and extemporaneousness about anarchism, and this no doubt explains why Chicago Occupiers were so uninterested in the precise models of government that I would constantly describe to them. They didn't want to hear about concrete systems. In general, Occupiers were not really committed to meaningful democracy, that is, to majority rule through community assemblies. This explains why they were so quick to abandon their own General Assembly--a quintessentially democratic gathering which many of them found to be more of an annoyance than an inspiring model of democracy.

So there you have it. I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time refuting all of this. To me anarchists' strategies are patently misguided if not downright foolish. Their aversion to governmental authority is childish. Who's going to operate public transportation? Who's going to ensure food safety? Society needs a good deal of administrative order and regulation. People can't do any darn thing they please. That's the reality of life. Anarchism is ultimately individualistic, whereas a viable society is ultimately collectivist, with government being the agent and the guardian of the collective will. Government is there first and foremost to protect society from anti-social individuals. There has always been and there will always be government. Why? Because, although most people are in fact reasonable, there have always been and there will always be idiots, murderers, thieves, rogues, and all kinds of anti-social people (not least among the rich, by the way)--people who will want to flout societal norms and thereby disturb, hurt, or take advantage of their fellow citizens. You have to be able to lay down the law and say "NO! You can't do that!" Or "You're going to do what we all decided to do!" And you have to be able to back this up with force. Not only is it futile to try to get away from the state, which is all-encompassing and almost omnipotent, but you *need* a state. It's just a matter of what *kind* of state.

Consensus doesn't work even among like-minded people in relatively small groups, much less in society with its huge numbers and disparate populations. There have always been and there will always be irreconcilable differences among people. Yet societal decisions have to be made, and obstinate people have to be compelled to respect the collective will. Without laws enforced by police and courts, there will be people flying through red lights, people stealing and robbing all over the place, corporations dumping even more pollutants into the environment, all kinds of fraud everywhere you turn, people clear-cutting every forest and killing every whale and every elephant until they're all gone, etc., etc., etc. People barely obey the laws even now, with a coercive state in place. How can anybody with any common sense expect that people will suddenly turn into angels the minute you get rid of law-enforcement? It sounds a bit clichéd, but you have to understand human nature. I believe that most people are basically "good" (however you want to define "good"). The problem is that there are jackasses among us, and we have to contain them and keep them from harming the rest of us or impeding societal progress.

There are absolutely critical decisions to be made in society today. In my opinion, for instance (and this is just a very partial list), we have to get rid of handguns and assault rifles [this was written before my awareness of "mass shooting" hoaxes], we have to make the rich pay vastly higher taxes, we have to stop this nonsense of charter schools and the privatization of education, we have to stop the digging up and the burning of fossil fuels, we have to reduce the human population, we have to pretty much eliminate the military/intelligence/surveillance apparatus (in other words the Pentagon, the CIA, and the NSA), we have to stringently and effectively control corporations in all kinds of ways. There *will* be winners and losers in all of these decisions. There *will not necessarily* be a lot of compromise. And of course there will be virulent opposition from powerful forces to progressive measures such as these. Other thinking people will have somewhat different lists of the things they feel have to be done. But certainly society has to change drastically; we can't continue on the destructive, suicidal path we're on. The bottom line is that we, the citizens, have to assert control over our society and run it for the common good, rather than continue to let it be run by powerful interests for their selfish purposes. Whatever measures we finally decide on democratically, they have to be carried out decisively (or else what's the point?), and this means that there will have to be effective governmental mechanisms to see that this is done.

In sum, given the faulty anarchist ideas of so many Occupiers, it's not all that surprising that Occupy did not go farther than it did, or that its appeal quickly dwindled. People want and need concrete solutions, not fairy-tale appeals to "peace, love, and understanding."

I'd like to talk briefly about the second of the two dominant ideologies on the Left and within Occupy, namely socialism, and more specifically about the difference between socialism and democracy. A few months ago I went to a forum on the environment held by a group named System Change not Climate Change. This was the same group that had organized the Earth Day rally at the Thompson Center a couple of days before. This group calls itself an "ecosocialist coalition," and they're the kind of people that largely populated Occupy in its heyday. During the forum I asked what specifically was the "system" they wanted to change. The answer was the capitalist system. So it's the country's *economic* system, not its *political* system, which is their primary concern. Yet they call themselves democrats and talk constantly about democracy, and like many socialists they would probably claim that socialism *is* democracy.

More recently I came to a College of Complexes lecture right here by David Steele, who spoke, among other things, about socialists' incessant condemnation of capitalism. He made the point that, as a matter of fact, regardless of whether you love capitalism or hate it, it's quite robust; it's a going concern. It's not going away anytime soon. So on the one hand you

have a Left dominated by avowed anticapitalists, with Occupiers constantly ranting about capitalism and identifying it as the main problem we face, and on the other hand you have a pretty much capitalist world. When I lived in LA (quite a while ago) I would often drive for mile after mile on its long commercial streets and marvel at the endless rows of businesses large and small (of course you can see this in Chicago and other large cities as well, but it's most striking in LA). Are anticapitalists really going to condemn all these people involved in all these enterprises? The evidence suggests that business entrepreneurship--the creation and selling of products for gain, usually entailing the hiring of workers--is a pretty natural human activity. Obviously there's a major disjuncture here. You can't be a populist, as leftists claim to be, and at the same time condemn what so many ordinary people do and for the most part are content doing, namely running businesses or working in them.

There are in fact major problems with socialism from a democratic point of view. First of all, what exactly *is* "capitalism," and what exactly is the problem with it? Is it buying and selling? trade (domestic or international)? money? private property in general? privately owned businesses in particular? corporations? profit-making? the employer/employee relationship? The reality is that a doctrinaire, absolutist anti-capitalist stance is a nonstarter in American society, which is notoriously business-oriented. Many reasonable people, myself included, don't have a huge problem with capitalism as such. Our problem is with unregulated, out-of-control capitalism--especially finance/monopoly capitalism as opposed to competitive, small-producer capitalism. There are all kinds of ways that capitalism, corporations, and the rich can be contained without eliminating capitalism altogether. Corporations and the rich can be made to pay much more in taxes and prevented from evading taxation, the anti-trust laws can be enforced to prevent monopolies and oligopolies, private for-profit insurance can be abolished, stock trading can be taxed to prevent rampant speculation and undeserved profits, dangerous financial instruments like derivatives can be prohibited, executive pay can be curtailed, unemployment can be eliminated by the government guaranteeing everyone a job, unions can be encouraged rather than discouraged, utilities and banks can be nationalized, corporations can be made to pay for the damage they cause to the environment or prohibited from causing such damage in the first place. These kinds of controls are things that most people already agree with. They don't require getting rid of capitalism completely, which is something the vast majority of Americans I'm sure don't favor.

A second problem with the socialists' obsession with capitalism, which of course is an *economic* phenomenon, is that because of this obsession they generally have little or nothing to say about political systems or political power. In fact many socialists don't have a problem with the representative system and its elitist electoralism. They would be quite content with socialists winning office in elections--in fact they rejoice on the rare occasions when this occurs. Or, if they do reject representative politics, they turn not to democracy but to authoritarianism or dictatorship. To heck with majority rule--they know the correct way to run society, especially the economy, and they'll put those policies in place regardless of public opinion. This attitude is a major reason why communist revolutions have always resulted in dictatorships. Another reason is the seemingly innocuous notion of the withering away of the state. Classical Marxism posits that after the victorious proletarian revolution, class conflict will disappear, and the state, which under capitalism was an instrument of class domination, will naturally disappear as well. In a post-capitalist world people will agree on all basic things, and governmental functions will become unproblematic and routine, indeed automatic; there will no longer be any need for a large, power-wielding, coercive state. With this vision of a stateless utopia as an ideal, socialists see no great need to worry about forms of government. But as I explained earlier in relation to anarchism, these kinds of ideas are sheer nonsense. Conflict is inherent to society for the simple and inescapable reason that society is a vast collection of heterogeneous human beings with conflicting interests. The problem is not how to eliminate conflict, which is impossible, but how to resolve it and contain it and thereby maintain a civil, well-functioning society. And the way to do this is not by trying to wish away the state, but rather by instituting majority rule through a democratic state. There is no "withering

away of the state" in democracy or any other society. But precisely because socialist regimes deny the need for, and the inevitable emergence of, a powerful state, they willy-nilly end up with the worst possible result--rank dictatorships.

So there's in fact a huge difference between democracy and socialism, and you pretty much have to choose which one you prioritize. Democracy is a system of government, one consisting of certain specific political institutions that allow the people to rule themselves. Socialism, on the other hand, is basically a set of policy prescriptions, mainly economic. The logical priority here is (1) government, (2) policies, not the other way around. Governments formulate and enact policies; policies don't fall out of the sky and implement themselves. Unless you plan to be a dictator, you need democracy to win your favored policies. And yet many Occupiers were more interested in socialism than democracy. They were entranced by the individual issues and failed to see the imperative need to change (not just evade) the entire political system--the way things operate. In democracy the people, not socialist rulers or technocrats, will democratically decide what to do about capitalism--whether to contain it, modify it, or eliminate it. If socialist policies are good for the people (and many are) they'll be adopted by the people. We have to confront our many deep problems and solve them ourselves. Dictatorship, even in the name of socialism, defeats the purpose of human freedom and results in an ugly dystopian nightmare, as history has amply demonstrated.

To sum up: the Left has to get over both anarchism and socialism. I know this is asking a lot; these ideologies have been around a very long time and are deeply entrenched. But we need to embrace a new ideology, which I'll call "democratism": the belief that the most essential need of society is a concrete governmental system of power that enables the people to rule themselves.

So far I've spoken about Occupiers' ideologies. I'd also like to say a few things about Occupy's main tactic after the occupations ended, namely protest marches. Unless it grows to gargantuan proportions and has the explicit aim of overturning the state, protest is nothing more than a mode of petitioning for redress of grievances, something which is our explicit right even under the current oligarchical regime. So there's nothing radical or revolutionary about run-of-the-mill protest in and of itself. Anti-abortionists protest; the KKK protests; the so-called Tea Party protests. Protest is nothing new. People have been protesting at least since the Middle Ages. Protest is essentially people shouting at their rulers to do X, or to not do Y; it generally doesn't change the structure of power or the political process. Within limits, the rulers of our current representative system don't actually have much of a problem with people protesting. They even invite it, because it allows people to let off steam. When millions of Americans protested the Iraq War, George W. Bush said (more or less), "That's great! That's people expressing their opinion; that's democracy." Oligarchical governments like ours expect people to resist their decisions at times, but that doesn't mean they don't retain ultimate power, or that they won't keep on making decisions that defy public opinion. Protest is mostly political theater; it's part of the game.

I drive a cab for a living, and oftentimes, the day after a protest, I'll be driving down State Street or Michigan Avenue where there had been a march, or I'll pass by the Federal Plaza or Daley Plaza where there had been a rally, and I'll reflect that everything looks perfectly normal. People and businesses are going about their usual routines. Government officials are in their offices carrying on the business of government as always. It's business as usual, as if nothing had happened. And the reality is that in effect nothing did happen. A few people came together to make some noise for a couple of hours and then went home. So what? The fact of the matter is that protests don't significantly change *the way things operate*. Protesters are like sheep running around yelling at wolves to not be wolves, but leaving them in charge. Surprise, surprise: the next day the wolves are still wolves, doing what wolves do.

Leftist commentators often bring up the women's suffrage movement and the civil rights movement as examples of successful revolution through protest. In fact there was nothing revolutionary about these movements. They didn't change the structure of government one iota. They just let more people into the same game. So now you have female voters and black voters (alongside white male voters) electing female politicians and black politicians (along with white male politicians) to serve the billionaires and screw the people. This greater inclusiveness is indeed a cultural blow to overt sexism and racism, but politically it's superficial; it's not radical change. It certainly didn't eliminate *structural* sexism and racism, which, as with the mass incarceration of black men, continue in more subtle and devious forms under the reigning plutocracy.

If you don't have revolutionary aims, even humongous protest can be useless. Right now in Egypt the so-called revolution there is back to square one. Why is this? Because the initial uprising didn't have a democratic agenda. The protesters merely wanted free elections. When they got them and the Muslim Brotherhood was voted into power, they found that this was no good. So they called the military back in to overthrow the obnoxious elected government, and now they're as far from democracy as ever.

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Turning finally to Democracy for the USA: our principal strategy at the moment is to oppose voting in elections. We believe that the current representative system is not only rotten and corrupt, but fundamentally and irretrievably undemocratic. If we want to seriously change this country and the world, we have to stop participating in this system. And the main way that we're asked to participate is by voting. Although our rulers compete among themselves for our votes, they care less who we vote for than that we play the game and vote. The two major parties just take turns. Voting Republican is obviously voting for corporate and elite rule. But so is voting Democratic--just in a slightly different flavor. The Democratic Party is beholden to Wall Street through and through. Just look at Obama's cabinet appointments: they're a bunch of corporatists. Even voting third party is playing the plutocrats' game. Everyone knows they don't have a snowball's chance in hell of winning any significant number of major offices, since they don't have the necessary corporate backing. So the whole electoral business is a colossal sham. The winners in election campaigns will almost exclusively be rich people and tools of rich people no matter who you vote for--election after election after election. A handful of progressives *will* make it into the ruling club, all the better to trick you into thinking that voting is the path to a new world. It's not. Elite rule is the intended outcome of the electoral process. From the beginning of this nation the Antifederalists pointed out that voting is a waste of time for ordinary people. The game is rigged. Plutocracy is built into our constitution. What we need is an entirely new constitution, a new political system. We describe this system in detail on our website, democracyfortheUSA.org. I'll just say for now that a real democracy consists of two institutions: (1) a network of community assemblies of all the citizens as the legislative body, and (2) a set of random-sample councils as the agenda-setting executive bodies. With these two institutions the people will actually rule themselves, entirely without politicians beholden to the rich and the corporations.

Occupy talk

POWER

The first concept I'd like to talk about is power. Who has power in this society? Congress and the president have power. They can start wars at the drop of a hat, wars that kill hundreds of thousands of people. They can raise our taxes and give tax breaks to billionaires. The mayor has power. He can do all kinds of big things like shut down schools and

health clinics, make the school day longer, expand or close airports, etc. And behind these officeholders are rich people who control them with vast amounts of money and all kinds of connections. So our job as a radical organization, I think, is to change this elitist structure of power. We can put pressure on government officials through agitation, but they don't have to listen to us. Bush and Cheney completely ignored the millions of people who protested the Iraq war. And these Chicago mayors of ours couldn't care less what we think.

So if we want to get certain things done and prevent other things from being done, we need to obtain power. This may seem obvious, but I think it's something many activists forget.

SOCIALISM

So, looking at alternative ideologies, what might be a solution? One of the alternative ideologies that has been offered to us for a couple of hundred years is socialism. There's a lot that's attractive about socialism, but it has major problems. Socialism is basically a set of policy proposals. Socialists say we should have public ownership of utilities and basic industries. We should have free education, full employment, and free health care. There should be no racism, sexism, etc. These are all good things that all progressives can agree on. But socialism says hardly anything about power, about forms of government.

So historically you have socialist parties either (1) entering the liberal representative system and often becoming co-opted into neoliberalism, like England's Labor Party and Greece's ruling socialist party; or (2) you have socialist parties becoming communist dictatorships, like the Soviet Union. Socialist parties can become dictatorships because they were never democratic to begin with. They feel they know what's right and they'll do it, regardless of the will of the people.

There's a direct line from Marx the theorist to Lenin the revolutionary to Stalin the absolute dictator. None of them were democrats, and at each stage in the practical application of socialist government the absence of a democratic ethos became more critical, and thus authoritarianism developed.

"Confronted with ignorance and apathy, with 'obstruction,' 'sabotage' and even physical resistance, the Russian Bolshevik Communist Party found itself committed to more and more [repression] . . . liquidations, 'pacifications,' mass deportations and 'purgues.' In this they resembled far more a militant sect, whose members are convinced that they alone in the universe are the depositories of absolute truth, than any European political party. . . . [Just as the Catholics of the Spanish Inquisition imposed their dogmas on heretics to the point of burning them at the stake] so the Russian Bolshevik Party [pushed] . . . its own dogma based on the teachings of Marx, plus the supplements and commentaries of Lenin. . . . And if there were no other way of [imposing] it, they too resorted [to killing the heretics]."

The Dark Side of the Moon

"The Communists of Lenin's day were firmly convinced that they had discovered the historical laws of development. . . . The theory of revolutionary Marxism inspired them with the conviction that they were the executors of historical necessity. . . . The correct policy in every situation was merely a question of the proper application of the scientific principles of Marxism. Once in possession of the truth, one is entitled to demand unquestioning obedience from one's followers, and that was the basis of Lenin's insistence on strict Party discipline and the acceptance of the one true ideology."

So, for all their talk about rights and justice, ultimately socialists will take power any way they can. They won't necessarily establish democracies; in fact they never have.

ANARCHISM

Another major theoretical alternative to the liberal-representative system is anarchism. Let's take Bakunin. Bakunin was a contemporary of Marx and he was extremely critical of Marxism.

"We do not accept, even in the process of revolutionary transition, either constituent assemblies, provisional governments, or so-called revolutionary dictatorships; because we are convinced that revolution is only sincere, honest, and real in the hands of the masses, and that when it is concentrated into those of a few ruling individuals it inevitably and immediately becomes reaction . . . The Marxists profess quite different ideas. They are worshippers of State power . . . and champions of order established from the top downwards, always in the name of universal suffrage and the sovereignty of the masses, for whom they save the honour and privilege of obeying . . . elected masters."

Bakunin was perfectly right in his criticism of Marxists. Since they're careless about the structure of government, they can't be trusted to establish a democratic government rather than an authoritarian government. Bakunin was also right to insist that the organization of political life should go from the "base to the summit" rather than from the "summit to the base." This is a key principle of democracy. Power has to be vested in the majority of the people, not in any minority. But, since he was an anarchist and didn't believe in the state, Bakunin failed to develop a model of a democratic state. Democracy isn't just the absence of minority rule. It's the active rule of the majority through a particular kind of government.

Spain

We can see the historical failure of anarchism most starkly in the Spanish Revolution and Civil War of the 1930s. At its height the anarchists were the strongest faction among the opposition forces, more dominant than the republicans, the socialists, and the communists. When the republic replaced the monarchy, the anarchists at first refused to enter the government, since they were anti-government. The socialists and the other factions, having no problem with the representative system, took over the government and started to repress the anarchists. Finally, since the anarchists knew implicitly that some kind of government was necessary, they entered it, but on very unequal terms that didn't reflect their popular support. Eventually they were disarmed and crushed by their antagonists, and the progressive forces lost the civil war to the fascists.

In Catalonia:

Obad de Santillan:

"We could have been supreme . . . declared the Generalitat a thing of the past, and instituted in its place the real power of the people. But we did not believe in dictatorship when it was exercised against us, nor did we wish to exercise a dictatorship ourselves at the expense of others. [We decided that] the Generalitat government should remain."

Major Escofet:

"[The CNT leadership] had no plan, no clear doctrine, no idea what they should do or what they should allow others to

do. The CNT concept of libertarian communism was devoid of realism and was silent as to the road it should follow in a revolutionary period."

Helmut Ruediger:

"Those who say that the CNT should have established its own dictatorship in 1936 do not know what they are demanding . . . The CNT would have needed a government program, a program for exercising power . . . training in the exercise of power, an economic plan centrally directed, and experience in the use of the state apparatus . . . The CNT had none of these."

DEMOCRACY

So what's the solution to this problem of government? The answer isn't to accept just any government, like the socialists do, and it isn't to reject government altogether, like the anarchists do. The answer is to create a democratic government.

Democracy isn't all that complicated. There are two parts to a democratic government. The first part is the sovereign legislative body. This is the set of people who decide on laws, policies, and governmental actions. In a democracy this is all the people gathered in an Assembly (or, in larger societies, Assemblies). The second part is the executive body. This is a coordinating committee composed of a random sample of the general population. There are no elections. Everyone has an equal opportunity to serve. The council has three main functions. It draws up the agenda for the Assembly meetings, it facilitates the Assembly meetings, and it executes the Assembly's decisions through the agencies of government.

One model of democracy is right here: Occupy (even though it's just an organization). The legislative part of the governmental structure is our General Assembly. This is the decision-making body of Occupy. We have no boss, no director, no chairman, no president. We're all equal and we can all speak freely. Everyone's vote on proposals counts equally. The executive part of the governmental structure is Secretariat. The function of Secretariat has been changing and diminishing lately but at first it was the agenda-setting and Assembly-facilitating committee. Anyone is free to join Secretariat; it's not an exclusive club.

For a societal model of democracy we can take ancient Athens. By our modern standards Athens was imperfect. There were slaves and women weren't allowed to vote--this was how it was in all ancient societies. But the citizen body was very large: tens of thousands of ordinary people--mostly workers, traders, and farmers--and they all had the right to attend the Assembly and speak there. The herald opened the Assembly meeting with the pronouncement: "Who wishes to speak?" This is equivalent to when we say "Stack is open" in our GA. The Athenians had no single ruler or small group of rulers; they ruled themselves collectively. The executive part of the government was the Council of Five Hundred. This was the coordinating committee that set the agenda for the Assembly, facilitated the Assembly meetings, and supervised the other government agencies. A key democratic feature of the Council was that it was filled randomly, so it was a representative sample of the whole population, not a special ruling clique.

Using these two models of democracy, Occupy and Athens, we can easily design a modern democracy. It would just be an expanded version. There would be Assemblies in every community, not just one Assembly. And there would be many executive councils: one for each community, one for each metropolitan area or county, one for each state, and one for the nation. Each council would contribute its part of the agenda to the general agenda of the community assemblies. So on the agenda at a community Assembly you would have community issues, city-wide issues, state issues, and national

issues.

REVOLUTION

What is revolution? The first thing we have to be clear about is that revolution is not just rebellion or any amount of protesting. A revolution is a certain type of rebellion. It's a rebellion with the aim of replacing the existing political system with a different one. Rebellions and protest movements are common in history. They can make important changes but they don't affect the existing political structures. The 60s is probably a good example.

Revolutions, on the other hand, are rare. The English Revolution was one of the greatest revolutions in history. The revolutionaries replaced the monarchy with parliamentary government. Instead of one man having all official power, now it was a large body representing the entire parliamentary class. England went from monarchy to oligarchy, which was a huge change for its time.

At the height of the English Revolution the revolutionaries beheaded King Charles and abolished the monarchy, making Parliament the supreme power in the land. Parliament declared that "the office of a king in this nation, and to have the power thereof in any single person, is unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to the liberty, safety, and public interest of the people of this nation; and therefore ought to be abolished." So the revolutionaries changed the entire system of government.

This is what we have to do. Right now we have oligarchy. A small number of so-called representatives--representing the ruling class--have all the power. We have to go from oligarchy to democracy. A revolution in this country would mean scrapping the Constitution, which gives power to Congress, the president, and the Supreme Court. This elitist model is replicated in the states and cities with governors, mayors, etc. We have to replace these institutions with democratic institutions like those described above.