

WINNING THE BATTLE OF DEMOCRACY

At the Left Forum, Pace University, March 18-20, 2011

<http://www.leftforum.org/content/winning-battle-democracy>

Panel Session One: Saturday March 19, 10a. – 11:50, Room W619

1. Introduction and overview: Winning the Battle of Democracy-- Howard Engelskirchen
2. The Transformation of Work -- Paul Gomberg
3. Building a Cooperative Movement -- Shakoor Aljuwani
4. Sum Up: Building an anti-capitalist united front

In *The Communist Manifesto* "winning the battle of democracy" is described as the first step in the revolution of the working class. Howard Engelskirchen used the phrase for the concluding chapter to *Capital as a Social Kind* just published by Routledge and he will introduce what we can mean by the idea today. If capital is best defined by the double separation of workers from their conditions of production and of entities of production from one another, then winning the battle of democracy is best understood as the far reaching task of associated workers completely overcoming these separations by together taking full and participative control of their conditions and activity of work.

Drawing on his book *How to Make Opportunity Equal: Race and Contributive Justice*, Paul Gomberg will speak to the transformation of work required for this by developing the theme that every member of society must have an equal opportunity for meaningful work. In effect 'from each according to ability' is a stronger basis for evaluating the justice of our social arrangements than traditional notions. Marx's emphasis on transforming the division of labor as the key to transforming work, then, depends on replacing the performance of routine tasks under the command of others with the participative control of each together with others over work that is complex, self-chosen, and self-directed.

From his long years of experience as an activist in Buffalo, New Orleans and with Coop Power in Western Massachusetts, Shakoor Aljuwani will speak to the task of building producer cooperatives as key to building the movement for democracy in our communities.

In sum, the panel will discuss the concept of winning the battle of democracy as an organizing theme for anti-capitalist struggles. Marx argued that the separation of the worker from the means of labor must be overcome by "restor[ing] the original union in a new historical form." Because capital has made the means of production social this can only be achieved by finding forms of association that are democratic. That is, democracy must penetrate the activity of production at the point of production, and from this perspective the transition to socialism *just is* winning the battle of democracy. But Marx suggested a caveat: the movement for cooperative production in all its amplitude can succeed only by building a movement for political power capable of embracing *all* popular democratic struggles. Thus joining the movement for democracy at work with the movements for democracy, community and equal rights in every form is the key to building an anti-capitalist united front capable of transforming capital's separations. In turn, today's social movements for democracy can be completed only to the extent revolution succeeds in transforming capital's self-regarding separations.

Howard Engelskirchen is a lawyer and philosopher from upstate New York, Paul Gomberg a philosopher at Chicago State University, and Shakoor Aljuwani is Director of Special Projects for Coop Power in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

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