

R2K Proposals and Structural Recommendations to BGAN

*Compiled for Coordinating Committee
September 14, 2000*

R writes:

Here's another proposal to mull over for the BGAN organizational effort. Again, the proposal begins with the identification of core needs, but does not go so far as to institutionalize BGAN as a whole under non-profit status. This may or may not allay the fears of some, who would see non-profit status as perhaps stifling BGAN's innovative collaborative structure and plunging the organization down the path often trodden by non-profits before.

However, it does recognize the needs of the activist community to sustain the level of mobilization that has profoundly altered the struggle in the last year. We have reached a turning point, and we must take measures to consolidate, strengthen, and expand the movement, or possibly let the new spirit dissipate for want of organization and institutional memory. This does not mean countering what has been achieved so far or evaporating our consensus-based, coalition politics, but it does mean, increasing our level of sophistication and maturity to meet the upcoming battles, which are bound to be far more difficult.

Tripartite Structure for BGAN

1. Global Justice Mobilization Committee

- Coordinate networking between member organizations
- Maintain communications w/ Mobilization for Survival, Boston Campus Action Network, and other umbrella coalitions
- Offer a non-sectarian, non-partisan organizational base for unaffiliated activists

2. Global Justice Resource Center

- Provide office resources for activists
- Furnish a space for meetings
- Provide access to expertise and experience for mobilization efforts
- Serve as an information hub for the community
- Publish newsletters and activist alerts

3. Global Justice Fund

- Provide the accounting and banking expertise to safely store and invest raised funds
- Channel funds to organizational efforts
- Continue fundraising efforts on ongoing basis
- Write grant proposals, keep contact w/ other progressive foundations
- Amass a war chest to bring down the system!

J writes:

CONVERTING THE R2K TASK FORCE INTO A BGAN MOBILIZATION TASK FORCE:

There are a core of people that have come together around planning the trips to, actions in, and support for activists in DC and Philadelphia. Many of us (though by no means all) are otherwise unaffiliated to Boston area groups. We seem to get a kick out of working together on BGAN events! I propose we formalize this.

Whereas other member groups have a lot of other things on their plates, the primary focus of our group could be mobilization for BGAN events, helping mobilize for member organizations when they would like that, and community outreach around the core "BGAN issues."

When there are no big events around which we are mobilizing (PHEW, all this talk about mobilizing is making me tired), a priority should be education on global economic and social justice issues (the WTO, IMF, WB, multinational corporations, global economics, international labor solidarity).

HOUSEKEEPING: A first step would be consolidating the info we've picked up in organizing for DC and Philadelphia (names, phone #'s, e-mail, media contacts). A second could be transforming the r2k website into a more general BGAN Mobilization web-site, with info on BGAN and member organizations and links to sites that cover global economic and social justice issues.

NEXT STEPS:

- a. We need to fulfill our commitments to do continuing support for activists who face legal charges arising out of the Philadelphia actions. In particular, we should do some fundraising ASAP before the issue fades from consciousness and other events arise.
- b. There are going to be many workshops, teach-ins, and actions scheduled around the presidential debates. We should pick our priorities among them and see what organizing help we can provide. For instance on the educational front, we should talk to UFE to see how we could provide assistance in preparation for their globalization workshop at Roxbury Community College.

S writes:

Aloha from Hawaii,

First, I liked the summary of your last meetings. I agree with all the thoughts in them. However, I disagree with the extent of the formality. BGAN was born out of a desire to facilitate the movement. We have been doing an excellent job--with more than 40 members and solidarity actions with labor unions, global economic justice activists, and social justice activists. Even my friends in Hawaii and Korea have heard about the protestors.

I think we need to continue to focus on growing the movement. Here in Hawaii, I have seen that initially collaborations (like BGAN) are more successful than more formal non-profits. Collaborations (like BGAN) can keep people coming to the table as long as they feel like they contribute to and gain from the group. More formal non-profits get bogged down in law, bureaucracy, and competition (they are a threat to other non-profits).

FOR RIGHT NOW, I suggest that the next BGAN meeting

- a. redefines an inclusive structure that will welcome new group involvement,
- b. redeclares a purpose that everyone wants and can contribute to, and
- c. addresses all the issues that you have listed (ex: fundraising, networking, communications, etc.).

Second, I believe that Bankbusters and the R2K Task Force can recruit participants for a reinvigorated BGAN. What if the organizations we first contacted worked together? MASSPIRG and the unions could mobilize people to pressure our politicians. NAACP and Next Movement could raise the voices of people of color and may be able to apply pressure to the courts. DAN could provide a radical counterpoint to the activities, which would encourage people to adapt some change. Food Not Bombs could raise the voices of the homeless and provide the food that gathers and sustains the activists. And the list goes on.

But to bring in groups, the R2K Task Force would have to talk one-on-one with the group contacts to raise awareness of the movement and to see how we can move from an email list to maximizing our efforts for social change.

Thanks for reading. See you in a few weeks.

K and R write:

The following notes arose from a discussion of the members of the R2K Task Force, carried forward since the end of the Philadelphia protests, and the beginning of jail solidarity. Much of the recommendations below could apply to any non-profit organization, but as a network, BGAN has the potential to fuel and galvanize the activist energies of the new movement in a united and non-partisan direction. Much of the needs expressed are logistical, but a vision also peaks through.

Please send your revisions and thoughts directly to us. We would like distribute such a list at the coordinating committee meeting next week so all your thoughts are welcome.

WAYS & MEANS

Core Needs of the Activist Community

1. Information Sharing
2. Library of Resources / Database Building
3. Volunteer Recruitment
4. Community Outreach
5. Fundraising
 - i. reserve funds
 - ii. petty cash for actions
 - iii. block grants to member organizations
6. Profile Raising
7. Expertise and Experience Sharing
8. Network Maintenance / Internal Communication
9. Cohesion and Coherence of Global Justice Message

Addressing those Needs

1. Office Resources (Computer, Internet Link, Phone, Fax, Desk, Supplies)
2. Full-Time/Part-Time Staff for organizing, fundraising, networking
3. Global Action Fund and non-profit status
4. Printed Newsletter, Web Site

Existing Resources

1. Organization membership dues
2. Revenue from fundraising efforts
3. Member organization supplies
4. Personal contributions

ROLES

Role of BGAN Coordinator

1. Communicate goals to the public
2. Facilitate networking between member groups
3. Procure additional resources for virtual/corporeal office
4. Keep members abreast of latest developments w/ both member organizations and network backbone itself
5. Administer funds, maintain budget
6. Report progress to coordinating committee
7. Research donors, apply for grants and additional funding
8. Recruit volunteers and fellows

Possible Roles of BGAN

1. Serve as an information hub and non-partisan clearinghouse for Boston activists
2. Network unaffiliated activists to member organizations and ongoing actions
3. Raise the profile of member organizations
4. Provide and maintain the institutional memory for future activists
5. Document history of social movements and social activists

B writes:

1. What *exactly* is the relation between BGAN and it's member groups? Does BGAN exist merely to run a series of its own campaigns with the approval of the member groups, or do the member groups take on a more active role? My concern here is, the member groups just seem to show up at CC meetings, and the work in between is done by the same small number of people. How about a more active role of, say, UFE - not just Mike, Joanie and Annette but UFE as a whole - in day-to-day BGAN affairs? Or what about the group I supposedly represent on the CC - Forum of Progressive Artists (FOPA)? They seem to be a BGAN member only in name - FOPA participation in BGAN is confined to yours truly. There probably are good reasons why this isn't already happening, but we need to figure out why, and how to overcome these constraints. The key is to be able to utilize the vast people power that the member groups have. Currently, BGAN is less than the sum of its parts - how do we make it greater than the sum of its parts?

2. What species of animal are BankBusters and R2D2? And how do they relate to BGAN? A brief history of BankBusters is in order. It started as the "IMF/World Bank Working Group of BGAN". Quite a mouthful. After A16, we collectively decided:

- We need to keep the energy going, we must not disband.
- We need flexibility. As a BGAN working group, we are strictly confined to doing only what the CC wants. As a member group, though, we have the flexibility to make our own decisions when we feel like we want to go beyond the mandate from the CC. That's why we paid our \$25 and became a BGAN member group back in May. (There were two other unspoken aspects of flexibility: as a member group, we can have individuals join us, we're not restricted to only "representatives of member groups"; and, we can raise our own funds.)
- We need a catchy new name! OK, BankBastard has merged with Fleece, but we can still make fun of their name. So, after all this, where do we stand in relation to BGAN? We are - but we aren't - a member group just like, say, Democratic Socialists of America or Lucy Parsons Center, because we have paid our \$25 dues, BUT we shoulder a lot more BGAN responsibility, to the extent that before A16, at least, a lot of people thought we *were* BGAN. And I believe a lot of what I said about BB also applies to R2D2.

3. How do we ensure that communication does happen, so we're not reinventing the wheel? Take S25 and S26. How do we ensure that GAIC volunteers and S26 volunteers don't call the same people? Joint phonebanking? That's just one example. The whole point of a network is that we share responsibilities and resources, but so far we've done it in an ad hoc way, without there being a concrete mechanism to ensure that it happens. How do we set up such a mechanism/structure?

4. Structure is great - up to a point. How do we balance structure with democratic process and accountability?

M summarizes:

Below is a proposal for a strategic plan for the organization of BGAN. Over the past year, initially with the A16 mobilization and subsequently with organizing protests around the conventions, the A16 and R2K working groups of BGAN struggled with various organizational, logistical, and funding issues. As such, the R2K Task Force of BGAN has attempted to collect various proposals and recommendations (including but not limited to input from BankBusters and the R2K Family) to put forward to the larger network on how to better serve the needs of activists and member organizations. From providing resources to fundraising to managing the flow of news and information, various ideas emerged from the group and are set forward in a distilled format here.

The following proposal is meant to provide a loose outline for a strategic plan: #1 being possible first steps to making BGAN more effective and #2-#4 being the goals to consider.

A PROPOSED STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE STRUCTURE OF BGAN

1. Create a "home base." This could include the following:
 - Consolidate the information gathered in the organizing for DC and Philadelphia (names, phone, email, media).
 - Enrich and maintain the BGAN website
 - Contact member organizations and find out what they would like from BGAN
 - Continue to mobilize activists and other organizations around important global actions.
2. Global Justice Mobilization Committee
 - Coordinate networking between member organizations
 - Maintain communications with Mobilization for Survival, Boston Campus Action Network, and other umbrella coalitions
 - Offer an organizational space for unaffiliated activists
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