

For Six Month Period Ending MAY 31 2005
(Insert date)

I - REGISTRANT

1. (a) Name of Registrant (b) Registration No. 5655
The Ambazonia Liberation Party [ALIP]

(c) Business Address(es) of Registrant
18th North 4th Street, Suite 704
Minneapolis, MN 55401

2. Has there been a change in the information previously furnished in connection with the following:

- (a) If an individual:
 - (1) Residence address Yes No
 - (2) Citizenship Yes No
 - (3) Occupation Yes No
- (b) If an organization:
 - (1) Name Yes No
 - (2) Ownership or control Yes No
 - (3) Branch offices Yes No

(c) Explain fully all changes, if any, indicated in items (a) and (b) above.

N/A

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IF THE REGISTRANT IS AN INDIVIDUAL, OMIT RESPONSE TO ITEMS 3, 4, AND 5(a).

3. If you have previously filed Exhibit C¹, state whether any changes therein have occurred during this 6 month reporting period.
Yes No

If yes, have you filed an amendment to the Exhibit C? Yes No

If no, please attach the required amendment.

See attached copy of ALIP Manifesto

1 The Exhibit C, for which no printed form is provided, consists of a true copy of the charter, articles of incorporation, association, and by laws of a registrant that is an organization. (a waiver of the requirement to file an Exhibit C may be obtained for good cause upon written application to the Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, Internal Security Section, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 20530.)

4. (a) Have any persons ceased acting as partners, officers, directors or similar officials of the registrant during this 6 month reporting period? Yes No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name Position Date Connection Ended

N/A

(b) Have any persons become partners, officers, directors or similar officials during this 6 month reporting period? Yes No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Residence Address	Citizenship	Position	Date Assumed
Valentine Eben Egbe-Mbah	Eberhard str - 46 70736 Fellbach Germany	AMBAZONIAN with imposed Cameroonian Citizenship	ALIP Rowing Coordinator	February 11 2005

5. (a) Has any person named in item 4(b) rendered services directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal? Yes No

If yes, identify each such person and describe his service.

Valentine Eben Egbe-Mbah: 1. Webtech www.HHP:// Liberation-party. 1. AM
2. Coordinated The collabion and Printing of ALIP Manifesto

(b) Have any employee or individuals, who have filed a short form registration statement, terminated their employment or connection with the registrant during this 6 month reporting? Yes No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name Position or connection Date terminated

N/A

(c) During this six month reporting period, has the registrant hired as employees or in any other capacity, any persons who rendered or will render services to the registrant directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal(s) in other than a clerical or secretarial, or in a related or similar capacity? Yes No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name Residence Address Citizenship Position Date Assumed

N/A

6. Have short form registration statements been filed by all of the persons named in Items 5(a) and 5(c) of the supplemental statement? Yes No

If no, list names of persons who have not filed the required statement.

Valentine Eben Egbe-Mbah

II - FOREIGN PRINCIPAL

7. Has your connection with any foreign principal ended during this 6 month reporting period?
Yes No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name of foreign principal

Date of termination

N/A

8. Have you acquired any new foreign principal² during this 6 month reporting period?
Yes No

If yes, furnish following information:

Name and address of foreign principal

Date acquired

N/A

9. In addition to those named in Items 7 and 8, if any, list foreign principals² whom you continued to represent during the 6 month reporting period.

Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP) same FP

10. EXHIBITS A AND B

(a) Have you filed for each of the newly acquired foreign principals in Item 8 the following:

Exhibit A³ Yes No
Exhibit B⁴ Yes No

N/A

If no, please attach the required exhibit.

(b) Have there been any changes in the Exhibits A and B previously filed for any foreign principal whom you represented during this six month period? Yes No

If yes, have you filed an amendment to these exhibits? Yes No

N/A

If no, please attach the required amendment.

² The term "foreign principal" includes, in addition to those defined in section 1(b) of the Act, an individual organization any of whose activities are directly or indirectly supervised, directed, controlled, financed, or subsidized in whole or in major part by a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign organization or foreign individual. (See Rule 100(a) (9)). A registrant who represents more than one foreign principal is required to list in the statements he files under the Act only those principals for whom he is not entitled to claim exemption under Section 3 of the Act. (See Rule 208.)

³ The Exhibit A, which is filed on form CRM-157 (Formerly OBD-67) sets forth the information required to be disclosed concerning each foreign principal.

⁴ The Exhibit B, which is filed on Form CRM-155 (Formerly OBD-65) sets forth the information concerning the agreement or understanding between the registrant and the foreign principal.

III - ACTIVITIES

11. During this 6 month reporting period, have you engaged in any activities for or rendered any services to any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement? Yes No

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail your activities and services:

Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP): As ALIP spokesperson in North America published Press Releases, meeting dates announcements, contacted by email and by phone local and federal officials, all these focusing on ALIP's quest for preventive diplomacy in the question of self-determination of AMBAZONIA in the mid-West Central African Sub-Region

12. During this 6 month reporting period, have you on behalf of any foreign principal engaged in political activity⁵ as defined below? Yes No

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail all such political activity, indicating, among other things, the relations, interests and policies sought to be influenced and the means employed to achieve this purpose. If the registrant arranged, sponsored or delivered speeches, lectures or radio and TV broadcasts, give details as to dates, places, of delivery, names of speakers and subject matter.

Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP) In our quest for preventive diplomacy on the question of self-determination of Ambazonia, ALIP seeks to educate all about Ambazonians rights to their nationality using meetings, emailings in Internet forums and direct acts of lobbying both private and public officials. As for instance, ALIP contacting The Cameroonian Desk at the state Department to explain the plight of the "anglophone" students during the strike of April 27 - May 25 2005. ALIP urged The US to intervene so that the brutality which has caused 4 deaths can stop. Also ALIP used this as another indicator that the policies to think Cameroon must include Ambazonia is wrong and only courting disaster.

13. In addition to the above described activities, if any, have you engaged in activity on your own behalf which benefits any or all of your foreign principals? Yes No

If yes, describe fully.

N/A

⁵ The term "political activities" means any activity that the person engaging in believes will, or that the person intends to, in any way influence any agency or official of the Government of the United States or any section of the public within the United States with reference to formulating, adopting or changing the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or with reference to political or public interests, policies, or relations of a government of a foreign country or a foreign political party.

IV - FINANCIAL INFORMATION

14. (a) RECEIPTS-MONIES

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal, any contributions, income or money either as compensation or otherwise? Yes No

If no, explain why. ALIP-USA is self-financed and has not sought contribution from its "assumed" membership since ALIP has not set up the secure internet mechanism yet

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies⁶

Date	From Whom	Purpose	Amount
------	-----------	---------	--------

N/A

Total

(b) RECEIPTS - FUND RASING CAMPAIGN

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received, as part of a fund raising campaign⁷, any money on behalf of any foreign principal named in items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement? Yes No

If yes, have you filed an Exhibit D to your registration? Yes No

N/A

If yes, indicate the date the Exhibit D was filed. Date _____

N/A

(c) RECEIPTS-THINGS OF VALUE

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received any thing of value⁹ other than money from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal?

Yes No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name of foreign principal	Date received	Description of thing of value	Purpose
---------------------------	---------------	-------------------------------	---------

N/A

6, 7 A registrant is required to file an Exhibit D if he collects or receives contributions, loans, money, or other things of value for a foreign principal, as part of a fund raising campaign. (See Rule 201(e).) 8 An Exhibit D, for which no printed form is provided, sets forth an account of money collected or received as a result of a fund raising campaign and transmitted for a foreign principal. 9 Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks," and the like.

15. (a) **DISBURSEMENTS-MONIES**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you

(1) disbursed or expended monies in connection with activity on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement? Yes No

(2) transmitted monies to any such foreign principal? Yes No

If no, explain in full detail why there were no disbursements made on behalf of any foreign principal.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies, including monies transmitted, if any, to each foreign principal.

Date	To Whom	Purpose	Amount
December 2004	ALIP / c/o Valentine E. Egbe-Mbah	Purchase of office Equipment: Computer Laptop, Video Camera	\$1,500.00
January 2005	ALIP c/o Valentine E. Egbe-Mbah	Traveling Expense, to: London : USA : Nigeria	\$ 2500.00
November 2004 May 2005	ALIP / c/o Edwin Ngang Edith Ngang	Global Telephoning Expense, to Europe to Africa Inside The USA	\$ 1,100.00

\$ 5,100.00
Total

(b) **DISBURSEMENTS-THINGS OF VALUE**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you disposed of anything of value¹⁰ other than money in furtherance of or in connection with activities on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement?

Yes

No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date disposed	Name of person to whom given	On behalf of what foreign principal	Description of thing of value	Purpose
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N/A

(c) **DISBURSEMENTS-POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you from your own funds and on your own behalf either directly or through any other person, made any contributions of money or other things of value¹¹ in connection with an election to any political office, or in connection with any primary election, convention, or caucus held to select candidates for political office?

Yes

No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date	Amount or thing of value	Name of political organization	Name of candidate
------	--------------------------	--------------------------------	-------------------

N/A

10, 11 Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks" and the like.

V - INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

16. During this 6 month reporting period, did you prepare, disseminate or cause to be disseminated any informational materials¹²?
Yes No

IF YES, RESPOND TO THE REMAINING ITEMS IN SECTION V.

17. Identify each such foreign principal.

AMBAZONIA LIBERATION PARTY (ALIP)

18. During this 6 month reporting period, has any foreign principal established a budget or allocated a specified sum of money to finance your activities in preparing or disseminating informational materials? Yes No

If yes, identify each such foreign principal, specify amount, and indicate for what period of time.

N/A

19. During this 6 month reporting period, did your activities in preparing, disseminating or causing the dissemination of informational materials include the use of any of the following:

Radio or TV broadcasts

Magazine or newspaper articles

Motion pictures

Letters or telegrams

Advertising campaigns

Press releases

Pamphlets or other publications

Lectures or speeches

Internet

Other (specify) _____

20. During this 6 month reporting period, did you disseminate or cause to be disseminated informational materials among any of the following groups:

Public Officials

Newspapers

Libraries

Legislators

Editors

Educational institutions

Government agencies

Civic groups or associations

Nationality groups

Other (specify) _____

21. What language was used in the informational materials?

English

Other (specify) _____

22. Did you file with the Registration Unit, U.S. Department of Justice a copy of each item of such informational materials disseminated or caused to be disseminated during this 6 month reporting period? Yes No

23. Did you label each item of such informational materials with the statement required by Section 4(b) of the Act? Yes No

12 The term informational materials includes any oral, visual, graphic, written, or pictorial information or matter of any kind, including that published by means of advertising, books, periodicals, newspapers, lectures, broadcasts, motion pictures, or any means or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce or otherwise. Informational materials disseminated by an agent of a foreign principal as part of an activity in itself exempt from registration, or an activity which by itself would not require registration, need not be filed pursuant to Section 4(b) of the Act.

VI--EXECUTION

In accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1746, the undersigned swear(s) or affirm(s) under penalty of perjury that he/she has (they have) read the information set forth in this registration statement and the attached exhibits and that he/she is (they are) familiar with the contents thereof and that such contents are in their entirety true and accurate to the best of his/her (their) knowledge and belief, except that the undersigned make(s) no representation as to truth or accuracy of the information contained in the attached Short Form Registration Statement(s), if any, insofar as such information is not within his/her (their) personal knowledge.

(Date of signature)

(Type or print name under each signature¹³)

June 19 2005

Edwin N Ngang

June 19 2005

[Signature]

[Signature]

Edith Ngang

13 This statement shall be signed by the individual agent, if the registrant is an individual, or by a majority of those partners, officers, directors or persons performing similar functions, if the registrant is an organization, except that the organization can, by power of attorney, authorize one or more individuals to execute this statement on its behalf.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FARA REGISTRATION UNIT
CRIMINAL DIVISION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20530

NOTICE

Please answer the following questions and return this sheet in triplicate with your Supplemental Statement:

1. Is your answer to Item 16 of Section V (Informational Materials - page 8 of Form CRM-154, formerly Form OBD-64-Supplemental Statement):

YES X or NO _____

(If your answer to question 1 is "yes" do not answer question 2 of this form.)

2. Do you disseminate any material in connection with your registration:

YES X or NO _____

(If your answer to question 2 is "yes" please forward for our review copies of all material including: films, film catalogs, posters, brochures, press releases, etc. which you have disseminated during the past six months.)

Edwin Ngang
Signature

06-19-2005
Date

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EDWIN NGANG

Please type or print name of signatory on the line above

AUP - spokesperson
Title

THIS FORM IS TO BE AN OFFICIAL ATTACHMENT TO YOUR CURRENT
SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT - PLEASE EXECUTE IN TRIPLICATE

SHORT-FORM REGISTRATION INFORMATION SHEET

SECTION A

The Department records list active short-form registration statements for the following persons of your organization filed on the date indicated by each name. If a person is not still functioning in the same capacity directly on behalf of the foreign principal, please show the date of termination.

Short Form List For Registrant: Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP)

Last Name	First Name and Other Names	Registration Date	Termination Date	Role
Ngang	Edith M.	11/4/04	N/A	N/A
Ngang	Edwin N.	11/4/04	N/A	N/A

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SECTION B

In addition to those persons listed in Section A, list below all current employees rendering services directly on behalf of the foreign principal(s) who have not as yet filed short-form registration statements. (Do not list clerks, secretaries, typists or employees in a similar or related capacity. If there is some question as to whether an employee has an obligation to file a short-form, please address a letter to us describing the activities and connection with the foreign principal.)

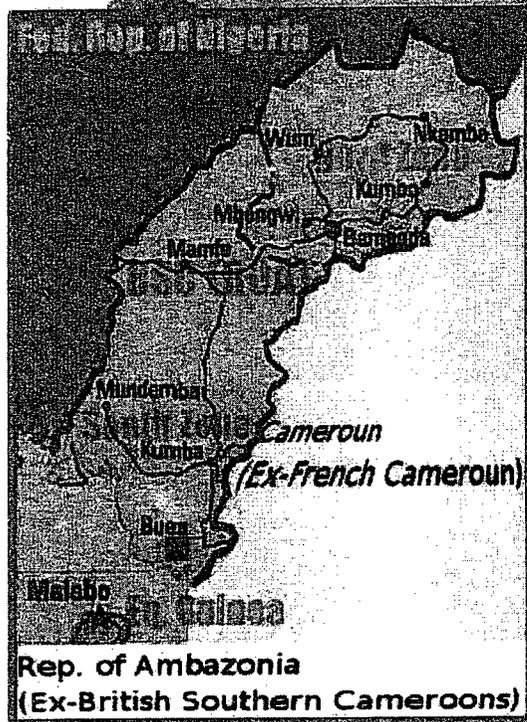
Name	Function	Date Hired
Valentine Eben Egbe-Mbah	AIP Raising Coordinator	Feb-11-2005

Signature: Edwin Nye
Title: AIP - spokes person

Date: 06-19-05

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CRM/ISS/REGISTRATION UNIT

TO THE PEOPLE OF AMBAZONIA
AMBAZONIA LIBERATION



- MANIFESTO
- MISSION STATEMENT
- OCTOBER DECLARATION
- FUNCTIONING OF INTERNAL PROCESS

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CRM/ISS/REGISTRATION UNIT

INVITATION FOR TO THE FIRST PUBLIC MEETING OF AMBAZONIA LIBERATION PARTY (ALIP) IN GERMANY.

After more than two years of intensive discussions and consultation the Ambazonia Liberation Party(**ALIP**) got on the scene in July 2004; with an ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN structure and GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY as it's basic concept. ALIP hopes to give a new dimension to the struggle of the annexed people of Ambazonia by imparting a culture of participative democracy which it sees as the most durable approach to this struggle Since July 2003 There have been mobilization and preparation for launching of Party Cells and solidarity groups in a host of other countries across the globe as well. ALIP will be having it's first public meeting in Germany on :

Saturday 21 August 2004

Time :15:00

At : ASTA-TU Berlin

Marchstr.6

10587 Berlin

Email Contact : ambazonia@riseup.net

Chu eben . chueben2@lycos.com, 01776561718

nso collivan collivane@yahoo.fr 01798473965

ndikum peter. ndikumtibui@yahoo.com 01621869506

Best Regards

ALIP Coordination Germany

**Directives From ZOO U2 rictung Ruhleben Stop Erntst Reuter Platz ASTA-TU Berlin
telephon 03031425683 fax:0303121398 Ask for ASTA villa Behind Mathe-gebäude**

**PUBLISHED FROM BERLIN GERMANY BY
ALIP CORDINATION GERMANY AND BY PUBLISHER "ON THE MOVE"**

1. **Preamble**

TO THE PEOPLE OF AMBAZONIA

AMBAZONIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS;

After the ravage of 500 years of transatlantic slave trade that uprooted our society from its foundation and defaced our person, and 74 years of colonialism that left our society upside-down as far as the psyche of our person is concerned, we are now the object of an other very cruel form of subjugation by a fellow Africa country(Cameroon) for the last 43 years.

As former enslaved and colonized peoples around the world tried to pick themselves up from the pain, humiliation and memory of the past, to patch-up a new future in the rugged task of rebuilding their societies, our chance to do so was ripped by the fraudulent events of 1961 called the Fouban Accord.

The Fouban Accord violated everything the law had for our people. In the TWO ALTERNATIVE DOCUMENT [THE PLEBSICITE PACT], passed by the Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia) Plebiscite Order in Council of January 27, 1961, the following was stated as the constitutional arrangement for the implementation of the decision at the plebiscite

--quote
" A vote for attaining independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon would mean that by an early date to be decided by the United Nations after consultation with the Governments of the Southern Cameroons and the Cameroon Republic and the United Kingdom as Administering Authority, the Southern Cameroons(Ambazonia-my addition) and the Cameroon Republic would unite in a Federal United Cameroon Republic. The arrangement would be worked out after the plebiscite by a conference consisting of representative delegations of equal status from the Republic and the Southern Cameroons. The United Nations and the United Kingdom would also be associated with this conference

--unquote
The Fouban Event which was explained to our people as an effort to build a confederation of two countries, to walk the road of reconstruction in the post slavery/colonial era turn out to be a fiasco.

A total fiasco with respects to how the laws which applied to our case were all violated: From that of the UN Trusteeship Council Resolution 2013 [XXVI] of May 31, 1960 which sanctioned the pre-plebiscite discussions that produced the TWO ALTERNATIVES Resolutions, to the UN General Assembly Resolutions 1608 [XV] of April 21, 1961 which approved the results of the February 11, 1961 plebiscite, the so-called FOUMBAN ACCORD turned out a ruse to disguise the annexation of Ambazonia.

Once Ambazonians elected their own governments in 1958 with a Prime Minister as Head of Government supported by two houses of legislature and an independent judiciary, Ambazonia then in 1958 had completed its requirement vis a vis the United Nations Articles 76[b]--the Article that clearly mandated that UN Trusteeships were to be ruled to ensure a progressive development of the people from the relative state of dependency into the state of independence which occurs once the Trusteeship was terminated. The British terminated Trusteeship over the British Southern Cameroon(Ambazonia) in September 30 1960.

Foumban for Ambazonia has now come to mean brutal subjugation, the loss of our sovereignty and the shedding of the blood of our Brothers and Sister who are shot every now and then by Cameroon troops for demanding respect of their rights as human beings. Foumban has meant the hardening of our people's hands from their hard work to raise reserves for cooperation like the National Produce Marketing Board, Santa Tea & Coffee Estate, the CDC, etc. Which reserves Cameroonian colonizing Elites plundered and declared these once prosperous economic entities bankrupt.

On the whole it has been 43 years of the scourge policies of the neocolonial Cameroonian elite. In these 43 years every element that could have served as a building block for the reclamation of our person from the ruins of slavery and colonialism has been wrenched with the use of the brute force of soldiers and gendarmes. Since the day the troops of Cameroon crossed the borders to our country, a policy to systematically annihilate all the building blocks in Ambazonian society has been implemented. For the powerful of Cameroon and the government of Cameroon, to come from Ambazonia or to look Ambazonian is reason for discrimination, scorn, shame, suspicion and hatred.

Cameroon has been assisted in these crimes by one of the most shameless clique of traitors and sell-outs. These traitors moved by greed, naiveté and opportunism have joined the Cameroonian Elite in that desperate rush to enrich themselves from the blood and misery of our people. These are the same kind of people who in 1965 betrayed Prime Minister Ngom Jua and exposed him for execution by the Cameroon regime. These are the same traitors whom 43 years ago opposed S.A. George, Chief Nyenti of Bachuo, Paul Kale and Fon Achiribi II of Bafut as they struggled to fight for the interest of our people on the eve of the Founban Conference. These are the same sell-outs whom with their Cameroonian cronies recently participated in the illegal sales of the Bakweri Lands to themselves. They are the same who have never ceased to sacrifice us on the altar of their gluttony. They are the same who are trying their best today to animate trouble between our peoples from the North and South zones. They are the same ones who continue to pretend that there was no oppression of Ambazonians inside Cameroon, as they adjust from one marginalization argument to the next. Some of them have resorted to flying from one foreign capital to the other with money from the regime that oppresses our people to proclaim that everything is fine and going smoothly with Ambazonians inside Cameroon, even as we plead for help.

We are the victims of MISCHIEF, TYRANNY and STUPIDITY, all disguised under the ideology of pan-cameroonism

To prevent the continuation of this ravages to our society, we the Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP) have decided to invoke our INALIENABLE RIGHTS as spelt out, but not limited to the following statutes:

-The UN General Assembly Resolution 224 ; 111 of November 18th 1948 Protecting our country from annexation, As well as United Nations General Assembly Declaration 1514 [XV] GAOR, DECLARATION GRANTING INDEPENDENCE TO ALL COLONIAL AND DEPENDENT PEOPLE, (A/AC 240/1995/CR. 11R.1) recognizing the RIGHTS OF A PEOPLE UNDER FOREIGN DOMINATION TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM SUCH DOMINATION.

-We as well recognize the fact that:

a- The Cameroon President Biya officially terminated the Confederation from the Founban Conference which was the excuse for their occupation of our country; by Presidential Degree number 83-11 of July 27 1983.

Thus the only constitutional linkage between Cameroon and Ambazonia, albeit since Founban Accord an illegal one, had by this decree been irreversibly severed. Biya by Presidential decree number 84-001 of February 4 abolished the United Republic of Cameroon; whose President he was and replaced it with the Republic of Cameroon. But whether by design or by error this law did not include a clause retaining the institution of the revived Republic of Cameroon, and so abolished all the institutions of the Federal United Republic of Cameroon with it.

b- In 1992 in a law suit called HCB28/92 at Bamenda High Court, Cameroon was forced by it's own court to recognize Ambazonia as a sovereign state and to acknowledge that Ambazonia is illegally and forcibly being occupied by Cameroon.

We, the Ambazonia Liberation Party(ALIP) will:

1. Fight and end this bitter episode as a conquered people and restore our sovereignty and independence.
2. Develop participatory democratic structures to end the old practice of some individuals making decisions in the name of the people without the people participating in the discussions or process.
3. Work to develop a Party that involves and respects the grass roots, which empowers individuals and groups to develop their own voice and participate in deciding the destiny of the society.

Accordingly, the Manifesto Working Group, working through participatory decision making process of discussions and improvement of proposals to arrive at this document; recommend to the party that we adopt the Manifesto of the Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP) in order to establish a grassroots participatory democratic party to be known as the Ambazonia Liberation Party(ALIP).

Contact:
ambazonia@riseup.net

Mission Statement and Principles of Unity

ARTICLE -1

Mission statement

We the Ambazonian Liberation Party (ALIP) have decided to end the scourge of the occupation regime of Cameroon, We will serve as a catalyst that will spur our people in the struggle to restore our sovereignty and independence, with it our emancipation. We will serve as the antithesis to the power structure of the neocolonialism Cameroon regime as we struggle to liberate ourselves. We will develop and encourage new ways of conducting the business of our people's emancipation that submits to the principles of democratic transparency and grass roots' participation in decision making processes. Thus getting rid of the static hierarchies that has served but the few whom through treachery managed to get themselves at the top of these hierarchies.

We want to put to rest the curse of personality worshipping that has created the mentality of first stressing "who-should-be-the-leader", rather than what is to be done. For who can argue that over 20 years after the first real moves were made in the direction of changing the oppressive status quo we are right here today jammed-tight in the muddy waters of "who-should-be-the-leader".

Thus the ALIP have asked for a revolutionary process of participatory democracy by which we will go about our liberation certain that no one can trade us some day again for personal interest. This entails putting up structures and progressive processes that allow us all to work together, discuss together, decide together and move on together and leaves no one the chance to sell us out or to be bought over by the Cameroon regime or any other regime.

ARTICLE -2

A: Principles of Unity

1. The ALIP is based on the principles of equality and consensus organizing, recognizing the importance of grass roots participation in deciding the destiny of peoples.

2. The ALIP considers the participation of the ordinary citizens in the decision making processes of the society a prerequisite to the building of a durable, free and just society.

3. The ALIP recognize the importance of establishing set processes towards eliciting social change: from interpersonal relationships to group dynamics ALIP shall strive therefore that members organize themselves collectively and be committed to the principle of consensus decision making and the development of a direct participatory democratic process that is transparent to its membership. Where each person's commitment and contribution is about the ideal of developing a better society and not a reason Lord it on the others. Where each person's role is a duty and not a position of authority to exact obedience.

4. The ALIP recognize that a prerequisite for participation in the decision making process of each local party cell is the contribution of an individual's effort and resources to the group.

5. The ALIP shall be committed to the development of non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships: to develop a pattern and practice consistent with the mission and purpose of the Party, and to care for each other person's needs.

6. The ALIP shall be committed to the principle of human equality, and shall not discriminate neither based upon tribe, place of Birth, place of origin of parents, sex, religion or any other. Concomitantly, all shall work together collectively to decide policy in regards to dealing with those who spread hate based on tribe or any of the above. Everybody shall be judged by the content of their character.

7. That while taking the security factor into consideration, the ALIP shall be opened to everybody in the community (neighbourhood) to participate in its work if they so wish to.

8. That, the ALIP while recognizing the vast cultural traditions within our society shall be committed to building diversity along all socio-cultural lines within our society.

B: Membership Criteria

ARTICLE -3

Membership in the Party will require the individual to AGREE in conscience and in practice to the Party Mission Statement and Principles of Unity.

ARTICLE -4

1. Membership to a Party Cell shall be determined by the members of the particular cell as they know their locality and those residing there better. New Cells to the Party shall be confirmed by the Spokes-Council.

ARTICLE -5

We understands that the struggle to restore our independence, to regain our dignity, respect, and rights of self-determination have set many people advocating under different groups with different approaches. Thus we claims no special privileges in advocating for our peoples rights but rather see ourselves as an ally to group and individuals who seriously mean business in ending the nightmares of the current Cameroon occupation of Ambazonia. It is in this spirit that the ALIP mourns the martyrs of our struggle. It is with the same spirit that ALIP recognizes that it is intimately linked with the thousands of families who have lost members of their families to this cause under the banner of one or another of these groups, known and unknown, they must be recognized as freedom fighters whose legacy ALIP will seek to continue in a more structured and methodical fashion.

C: The Party Structure

ARTICLE -6

The ALIP is composed mainly of the: Cells, Committees, Working Groups, Spokes-Council and the Congress.

-The ALIP recognizes the following definitions as valuable to its organizational structure:

6(I): **A Cell**

The Cell is the most basic part of the Party.

-a. Each cell shall make every effort to have a minimum of twelve (12) members,

-b. Each Cell shall have a decision-making policy that is in alignment with the consensus decision-making principles in line with the frame in internal-functioning-document.

-c. Each new cell shall be launched by the Spokes-Council to become a full part of the Party.

-d. Each Cell shall delegates a spokesperson to serve as a bridge between the Cell and the spokes-council on a two year rotatory bases. The Spokespersons also makes decisions for their Cell at the Spokes-Council since they are better informed about their Cell positions on issues and local reality.

-e. New party members can either join an existing cell or initiative a new cell if there is no cell close to them. Normally cells are encouraged to work together with cells closer to their locale.

-f. Cells in a geographic region shall network themselves into a chapter, to make their mobilization efforts more effective.

-g. The Cell shall make decision on issues that have to do mainly with their locality seeing they have a better capacity to implement Party policy at the locality best known to them.

6(II): **Party Committees**

Party Committees are groups formed and approved by the Spokes-Council to engaged in work directly related to the development and sustainability of the party, to include, but not limited to; Committee for Internal Relations, Financial Committee, Committee for Support of Victims of the struggle, Committee for Communication, Committee for Public Relations etc.

-a. The Party Committees shall make decisions on behalf of the Spokes-council(party) on the issues placed under their competence.

-b. Party Committees are generally made up of four persons; delegated by the Spokes-council to handle the work of the Committee in question. The four members of the Party Committee can further buffer their work by inviting other individuals to support their work. The four persons must not necessarily be members of the spokes-council as it is most important that the task of the Committee is done, but they must be members of the party thus bound by the values of the party as spell in the Manifesto.

The work of the Party Committees is facilitated by **an Ambassador (messenger) who is responsible for coordinating the work of the Committee as a RESPONSIBILITY in the task sharing effort in the Committee but NOT as a POWER position.** The Ambassador (messenger) position is rotatory within the Committee on a 6months base, thus enhancing skill sharing. Decision-making policy of a committee must be in alignment with consensus decision-making principles in line with the frame in internal-functioning-document.

-c. Party Committees have a life Span of 2years after which the Spokes-council will delegate four new persons for the Party Committee in question.

6(III) **Ambassador(messenger) of a Party Committee**

-Is a facilitator of the work in the Party Committee.

-Coordinating the compiling into a document the work of the Committee, which the Ambassador then presents to the Spokes-council.

-Compiling meeting Agenda of Committee meetings including report of pending task and input to the Agenda by other 3 Committee members.

-Ambassador also facilitates discussions in the Committee using as a frame internal-functioning-document.

-Presents the next Ambassador delegated by their Committee to the Spokes-council at the end of his/her 6months as Ambassador for the Committee in question.

6(IV) **Party Working groups**

Party Working groups are setup to handle very specific task within a GIVEN TIME FRAME that is decided at their formation, by either the Congress or Spokes-Council. At formation a Coordinator is delegates to facilitate the work of the working group. The number of persons in a working group is decided at formation based on the task.

-The Party working group shall make decisions on behalf of the Spokes-council on the subject delegated to them by the Spokes-council.

6(V) The Spokes-Council

-a. The Spokes-council is THE MAIN DECISION MAKING BODY of the Party: It is composed of spokespersons delegated by each cell.

-b. The SPOKESPERSONS mainly take local proposals to the Spokes-Council as well as take discussions from the council to their local CELL for discussion.

-c. The spokespersons together in a consensus manner make decisions on the running of the party (in the Spokes-council). In the Spokes-council decisions shall be made on consensus while emphasizing that all Spokespersons confirm the fact that they as well as their Cell do UNDERSTAND what is being decided.

-d. Decision-making policy at the Council is to be in alignment with consensus decision-making principles USING AS A FRAME internal-functioning-document.

-e. All the main decisions on the day to day running of the party are made either directly by the spokes-council or by Party Committees or Party Working groups set up by the Spokes-council.

-f. The Spokes-Council is also responsible for the main preparation for the party congress together with the hosting Cell(s).

-g. The Spokes-council shall adapt, or initiate, the creation of Committees or Working Groups in order to make decisions and implement specific tasks and projects for the party.

-h. The Spokes-Council shall also confirm the official launching of new cells.

-i. Proposals are brought from the cells, working groups and committees by their spokespersons and or Ambassadors respectively to the Spokes-council. These proposals if adopted by the SPOKESCOUNCIL, then the adopted proposals are submitted to the cells and committees by the spokes-council for implementation.

-j. The Spokes-Council will meet once every six months, or as necessary, at a time that is reasonable for all regional cells. Meetings shall be with the use of all possible communication tools, If there is no possibility for the meeting to be face to face. Every effort shall be made to notify everyone within at least two week in advance.

-k. If a cell or any individual decides to be disruptive of the Work of the party, the Spokes-council will put together a Working Group to investigate the incident and make proposals to the Spokes-council what kind of sanction can be applied via warning, serious warning or expulsion from the Party.

-l. The Spokes-council shall alone be responsible for decisions on strategy and tactics to attain the liberation of our territory; Everything that has to do with the respect of human dignity which is at the core of the values we uphold, of anti-tribalism or discrimination of any sort. The Spokes-council is also alone responsible for the sustenance of participative democracy which is at the foundation of our wish to revolutionize attitudes and relations to duty and power.

For that is the main way to guarantee that our destiny as a people do not get hijacked again by a few for the purpose of personal benefit.

6(VI) There shall be a Party Congress Every four years.

But in the Case of an Emergency the Spokes-Council could call an Emergency Congress or postpone the holding of a congress. In the Congress evaluation of the work of the past years is done and the tasks for the coming years to the next congress is curved out.

The spokes-council shall create a working group to prepare every congress. And the working group shall be made of delegates from the hosting cell and the spokes-council. The task of the working group will include organising; location, resources, facilitation of Congress. The task shall also include deciding; the number of Plenary sessions that will take place and workshops, who will facilitate (moderate) which plenary, when the honorary delegates will address the Congress, security/lodging of delegates etc. And sorting out the strategic important of all the activities at the Congress to the overall liberation.

D: Decision Making

ARTICLE -7

1.-The ALIP adopts the model of Consensus for all decisions at all levels in the Party. Our frame is Formal Consensus as spell-out in internal-functioning-document. Yet it is up to each Cell, Committee, working group, and the Spokes-Council to determine how consensus will be implemented by them.

2.-The ALIP as with reference to information flow within the party is supposed to be adaptive to an "All-channel-network-approach" whereby coordination and communications take place between as many groups as possible in order to enhance flexibility, prevent lethargy and redundancy, and develop mutual aid within the Party. In other words, maximum communication and resource flow is to be encouraged between cells, Committees and the Spokes-council and not centralized or restricted from one particular group to another.

ARTICLE -8

1. The ALIP recognizes that in order to function as a Party that empowers and receives power from the people, it will need to develop a flexible, fluid and effective decision-making structure that will harness the energy of individuals and groups at the local levels.

2. The ALIP recognizes the following groups empowered to make decisions that directly affect the party at the different levels: Cell, Party Committee, Party Working Groups, the Spokes-Council and of course the Party Congress.

3. The ALIP recognizes that there is an important need for a Spokes-Council where spokespersons from each Cell are represented to make decisions that affect the whole party. It is also recognized that careful discussion and deliberation are necessary in order to decide what constitutes a decision that affects the whole party.

ARTICLE -9

Committees are:

- Committee for Support of Victims of the struggle

This Committee has the following task:

1-Gathering information of victims of the struggle. That includes their names or names/contacts of their families; especially for those in jail, those who died and those who have been maimed as a results of this struggle of ours.

2-Take contact with this victims or their families on the one hand to publicize their case and to mobilize support for them.

-Finance Committee

1-This Committee is responsible for the funds of the Party.

2-It keeps a record of all the financial expenditures of the Party as well as where other resources of the Party like Computers and other equipments are located.

3-This Committee thinks up policy for fund raising and mobilization of other resources.

4-This Committee handle request by cells, Committees or Working groups for funds from the main accounts of the Party. Which request are considered in the back-drop of what other request exist, what funds are available as well as the possibility of mobilizing new funds.

5-All Cells, Working groups or Committees who decide to make any direct appeal to any individual or institution for funds in the NAME OF THE PARTY MUST first discuss that with this Committee.

6-This Committee keeps a report of how much was requested and how much was made available for the particular request. This information is further reported to the Spokes-council.

-Committee for Public Relations

1-This Committee have the task to handle the image of the Party. It drafts and issues press releases, press statements on behave of the party and prepares party members for interviews and similar process. Thus ensuring that the message from the party is coherent and does not contradict.

2-It has to investigate new ways of doing PR for the party. It takes responsibility for keeping a news reader on the party.

3-This Committee is also responsible for putting together our history in an distorted manner.

-Communications Committee

1-The main task of this Committee is to Coordinate Communication within the Party; especially Within the Spokespersons who normally bring the information to their Cells.

2-It collects all proposals/request sent to the Spokes-council. It puts a dateline for cells to send in amendments to the proposal and sends the proposals to the various Cells through their Spokespersons. The dateline is 21days after the proposals is sent out to the various cells through their spokespersons. After the dateline if there is no veto the proposal rewritten to include proposed amendments from other cells is then adopted. For technical reasons and in the case of very complicated issues, the dateline can be postponed.

3-For proposals where there already exist a solution within the confines of the Party the Communication Committee will respond to such request by pointing to the viable response-information and copy all Cells, seeing the misunderstanding could be the case elsewhere.

-Committee for Internal Relations

1-Helps support in launching new party cells by providing the individuals or groups wishing to launch a New Party cell with information as to how the party functions and also try to organize contact between the new Cell and other existing Cell(s) close to them geographically.

2-When those interested in launching the new Cell in the process of communication with this Committee indicate that they have understood how the Party functions, they'll then fill in a copy of the Cell membership form and send it to this Committee. This Committee will then present the New cell for confirmation to the Spokes-council with the name of their first Spokesperson. Confirmation will be done within 21days of the presentation. During time this Committee will have to communicate any concerns from the Spokes-council to the new cell for clarification and answers.

How Internal process can function with formal consensus

The Advantages of Formal Consensus

There are many ways to make decisions. Sometimes, the most efficient way to make decisions would be to just let the manager (or CEO, or dictator) make them. However, efficiency is not the only criteria. When choosing a decision making method, one needs to ask two questions. Is it a fair process? Does it produce good solutions?

To judge the process, consider the following: Does the meeting flow smoothly? Is the discussion kept to the point? Does it take too long to make each decision? Does the leadership determine the outcome of the discussion? Are some people overlooked?

To judge the quality of the end result, the decision, consider:

Are the people making the decision, and all those affected, satisfied with the result? To what degree is the intent of the original proposal accomplished? Are the underlying issues addressed? Is there an appropriate use of resources? Would the group make the same decision again?

Autocracy can work, but the idea of a benevolent dictator is just a dream. We believe that it is inherently better to involve every person who is affected by the decision in the decision making process. This is true for several reasons.

The decision would reflect the will of the entire group, not just the leadership. The people who carry out the plans will be more satisfied with their work. And, as the old adage goes, two heads are better than one.

This chapter presents a particular model for decision making we call Formal Consensus. Formal Consensus has a clearly defined structure. It requires a commitment to active cooperation, disciplined speaking and listening, and respect for the contributions of every member.

Likewise, every person has the responsibility to actively participate as a creative individual within the structure. Avoidance, denial, and repression of conflict is common during meetings. Therefore, using Formal Consensus might not be easy at first.

Unresolved conflict from previous experiences could come rushing forth and make the process difficult, if not impossible.

Practice and discipline, however, will smooth the process.

The benefit of everyone's participation and cooperation is worth the struggle it may initially take to ensure that all voices are heard.

It is often said that consensus is time-consuming and difficult.

Making complex, difficult decisions is time-consuming, no matter what the process. Many different methods can be efficient, if every participant shares a common understanding of the rules of the game. Like any process, Formal Consensus can be inefficient if a group does not first assent to follow a particular structure. This codifies a formal structure for decision making.

Methods of decision making can be seen on a continuum with one person having total authority on one end to everyone sharing power and responsibility on the other.

The level of participation increases along this

decision making continuum. Oligarchies and autocracies

offer no participation to many of those who are directly affected. Representative, majority rule, and consensus democracies involve everybody, to different degrees.

Group Dynamics

A group, by definition, is a number of individuals having some unifying relationship. The group dynamic created by consensus process is completely different from that of Parliamentary Procedure, from start to finish. It is based on different values and uses a different language, a different structure, and many different techniques, although some techniques are similar. It might be helpful to explain some broad concepts about group dynamics and consensus.

Conflict

While decisionmaking is as much about conflict as it is about agreement, Formal Consensus works best in an atmosphere in which conflict is encouraged, supported, and resolved cooperatively with respect, nonviolence, and creativity. Conflict is desirable. It is not something to be avoided, dismissed, diminished, or denied.

Majority Rule and Competition

Generally speaking, when a group votes using majority rule or Parliamentary Procedure, a competitive dynamic is created within the group because it is being asked to choose between two (or more) possibilities.

It is just as acceptable to attack and diminish another's point of view as it is to promote and endorse your own ideas. Often, voting occurs before one side reveals anything about itself, but spends

time solely attacking the opponent! In this adversarial environment, one's ideas are owned and often defended in the face of improvements.

Consensus and Cooperation

Consensus process, on the other hand, creates a cooperative dynamic. Only one proposal is considered at a time. Everyone works together to make it the best possible decision for the group. Any concerns are raised and resolved, sometimes one by one, until all voices are heard. Since proposals are no longer the property of the presenter, a solution can be created more cooperatively.

Proposals

In the consensus process, only proposals which intend to accomplish the common purpose are considered. During discussion of a proposal, everyone works to improve the proposal to make it the best decision for the group. All proposals are adopted unless the group decides it is contrary to the best interests of the group.

Characteristics of Formal Consensus

Before a group decides to use Formal Consensus, it must honestly assess its ability to honor the principles described in Chapter Three. If the principles described in this book are not already present or if the group is not willing to work to create them, then Formal Consensus will not be possible. Any group which wants to adopt Formal Consensus needs to give considerable attention to the underlying principles which support consensus and help the process operate smoothly. This is not to say each and every one of the principles described herein must be adopted by every group, or that each group cannot add its own principles specific to its goals, but rather, each group must be very clear about the foundation of principles or common purposes they choose before they attempt the Formal Consensus decision-making process.

Formal Consensus is the least violent decision making process.

Traditional nonviolence theory holds that the use of power to dominate is violent and undesirable. Nonviolence expects people to use their power to persuade without deception, coercion, or malice, using truth, creativity, logic, respect, and love. Majority rule voting process and Parliamentary Procedure both accept, and even encourage, the use of power to dominate others. The goal is the winning of the vote, often regardless of another choice which might be in the best interest of the whole group. The will of the majority supersedes the concerns and desires of the minority. This is inherently violent. Consensus strives to take into account everyone's concerns and resolve them before any decision is made.

Most importantly, this process encourages an environment in which everyone is respected and all contributions are valued.

Formal Consensus is the most democratic decision making process.

Groups which desire to involve as many people as possible need to use an inclusive process. To attract and involve large numbers, it is important that the process encourages participation, allows equal access to power, develops cooperation, promotes empowerment, and creates a sense of individual responsibility for the group's actions. All of these are cornerstones of Formal Consensus. The goal of consensus is not the selection of several options, but the development of one decision which is the best for the whole group. It is synthesis and evolution, not competition and attrition.

Formal Consensus is based on the principles of the group.

Although every individual must consent to a decision before it is adopted, if there are any objections, it is not the choice of the individual alone to determine if an objection prevents the proposal from being adopted. Every objection or concern must first be presented before the group and either resolved or validated. A valid objection is one in keeping with all previous decisions of the group and based upon the commonly-held principles or foundation adopted by the group. The objection must not only address the concerns of the individual, but it must also be in the best interest of the group as a whole. If the objection is not based upon the foundation, or is in contradiction with a prior decision, it is not valid for the group, and therefore, out of order.

Formal Consensus is desirable in larger groups.

If the structure is vague, decisions can be difficult to achieve. They will become increasingly more difficult in larger groups. Formal Consensus is designed for large groups. It is a highly structured model. It has guidelines and formats for managing meetings, facilitating discussions, resolving conflict, and reaching decisions. Smaller groups may need less structure, so they may choose from the many techniques and roles suggested in this book.

Formal Consensus works better when more people participate.

Consensus is more than the sum total of ideas of the individuals in the group. During discussion, ideas build one upon the next, generating new ideas, until the best decision emerges. This dynamic is called the creative interplay of ideas. Creativity plays a major part as everyone strives to discover what is best for the group. The more people involved in this cooperative process, the more ideas and possibilities are generated. Consensus works best with everyone participating. (This assumes, of course, that everyone in the group is trained in Formal Consensus and is actively using it.)

Formal Consensus is not inherently time-consuming.

Decisions are not an end in themselves. Decision making is a process which starts with an idea and ends with the actual implementation of the decision. While it may be true in an autocratic process that decisions can be made quickly, the actual implementation will take time. When one person or a small group of people makes a decision for a larger group, the decision not only has to be communicated to the others, but it also has to be acceptable to them or its implementation will need to be forced upon them. This will certainly take time, perhaps a considerable amount of time. On the other hand, if everyone participates in the decision making, the decision does not need to be communicated and its implementation does not need to be forced upon the participants. The decision may take longer to make, but once it is made, implementation can happen in a timely manner. The amount of time a decision takes to make from start to finish is not a factor of the process used; rather, it is a factor of the complexity of the proposal itself. An easy decision takes less time than a difficult, complex decision, regardless of the process used or the number of people involved. Of course, Formal Consensus works better if one practices patience, but any process is improved with a generous amount of patience.

Formal Consensus cannot be secretly disrupted.

This may not be an issue for some groups, but many people know that the state actively surveilles, infiltrates, and disrupts nonviolent domestic political and religious groups. To counteract anti-democratic tactics by the state, a group would need to develop and encourage a decision making process which could not be covertly controlled or manipulated. Formal Consensus, if practiced as described in this book, is just such a process. Since the assumption is one of cooperation and good will, it is always appropriate to ask for an explanation of how and why someone's actions are in the best interest of the group. Disruptive behavior must not be tolerated. While it is true this process cannot prevent openly disruptive behavior, the point is to prevent covert disruption, hidden agenda, and malicious manipulation of the process. Any group for which infiltration is a threat ought to consider the process outlined in this book if it wishes to remain open, democratic, and productive.

2 On Decision-making

Decisions are adopted when all participants consent to the result of discussion about the original proposal. People who do not agree with a proposal are responsible for expressing their concerns. No decision is adopted until there is resolution of every concern. When concerns remain after discussion, individuals can agree to disagree by acknowledging that they have unresolved concerns, but consent to the proposal anyway and allow it to be adopted. Therefore, reaching consensus does not assume that everyone must be in complete agreement, a highly unlikely situation in a group of intelligent, creative individuals. Consensus is becoming popular as a democratic form of decision making. It is a process which requires an environment in which all contributions are valued and participation is encouraged. There are, however, few organizations which use a model of consensus which is specific, consistent, and efficient. Often, the consensus process is informal, vague, and very inconsistent. This happens when the consensus process is not based upon a solid foundation and the structure is unknown or nonexistent. To develop a more formal type of consensus process, any organization must define the commonly held principles which form the foundation of the group's work and intentionally choose the type of structure within which the process is built.

The Structure of Formal Consensus

Many groups regularly use diverse discussion techniques learned from practitioners in the field of conflict resolution. Although this book does include several techniques, the book is about a structure called Formal Consensus. This structure creates a separation between the identification and the resolution of concerns. Perhaps, if everybody in the group has no trouble saying what they think, they won't need this structure. This predictable structure provides opportunities to those who don't feel empowered to participate. Formal Consensus is presented in levels or cycles. In the first level, the idea is to allow everyone to express their perspective, including concerns, but group time is not spent on resolving problems.

In the second level the group focuses its attention on identifying concerns, still not resolving them. This requires discipline. Reactive comments, even funny ones, and resolutions, even good ones, can suppress the creative ideas of others. Not until the third level does the structure allow for exploring resolutions. Each level has a different scope and focus. At the first level, the scope is broad, allowing the discussion to consider the philosophical and political implications as well as the general merits and drawbacks and other relevant information. The only focus is on the proposal as a whole. Some decisions can be reached after discussion at the first level. At the second level, the scope of the discussion is limited to the concerns. They are identified and publicly listed, which enables everyone to get an overall picture of the concerns. The focus of attention is on identifying the body of concerns and grouping similar ones. At the third level, the scope is very narrow. The focus of discussion is limited to a single unresolved concern until it is resolved. The Flow of the Formal Consensus Process In an ideal situation, every proposal would be submitted in writing and briefly introduced the first time it appears on the agenda. At the next meeting, after everyone has had enough time to read it and carefully consider any concerns, the discussion would begin in earnest. Often, it would not be until the third meeting that a decision is made. Of course, this depends upon how many proposals are on the table and the urgency of the decision.

Clarify the Process

The facilitator introduces the person presenting the proposal and gives a short update on any previous action on it. It is very important for the facilitator to explain the process which brought this proposal to the meeting, and to describe the process that will be followed to move the group through the proposal to consensus. It is the facilitator's job to make sure that every participant clearly understands the structure and the discussion techniques being employed while the meeting is in progress.

Present Proposal or Issue

When possible and appropriate, proposals ought to be prepared in writing and distributed well in advance of the meeting in which a decision is required. This encourages prior discussion and consideration, helps the presenter anticipate concerns, minimizes surprises, and involves everyone in creating the proposal. (If the necessary groundwork has not been done, the wisest choice might be to send the proposal to committee. Proposal writing is difficult to accomplish in a large group. The committee would develop the proposal for consideration at a later time.) The presenter reads the written proposal aloud, provides background information, and states clearly its benefits and reasons for adoption, including addressing any existing concerns.

Questions Which Clarify the Presentation

Questions are strictly limited by the facilitator to those which seek greater comprehension of the proposal as presented. Everyone deserves the opportunity to fully understand what is being asked of the group before discussion begins. This is not a time for comments or concerns. If there are only a few questions, they can be answered one at a time by the person presenting the proposal. If there are many, a useful technique is hearing all the questions first, then answering them together. After answering all clarifying questions, the group begins discussion.

Level One: Broad Open Discussion

General Discussion

Discussion at this level ought to be the broadest in scope. Try to encourage comments which take the whole proposal into account; i.e., why it is a good idea, or general problems which need to be addressed. Discussion at this level often has a philosophical or principled tone, purposely addressing how this proposal might affect the group in the long run or what kind of precedent it might create, etc. It helps every proposal to be discussed in this way, before the group engages in resolving particular concerns. Do not allow one concern to become the focus of the discussion. When particular concerns are raised, make note of them but encourage the discussion to move back to the proposal as a whole. Encourage the creative interplay of comments and ideas. Allow for the addition of any relevant factual information. For those who might at first feel opposed to the proposal, this discussion is consideration of why it might be good for the group in the broadest sense. Their initial concerns might, in fact, be of general concern to the whole group. And, for those who initially support the proposal, this is a time to think about the proposal broadly and some of the general problems. If there seems to be general approval of the proposal, the facilitator, or someone recognized to speak, can request a call for consensus.

Call for Consensus

The facilitator asks, "Are there any unresolved concerns?" or "Are there any concerns remaining?" After a period of silence, if no additional concerns are raised, the facilitator declares that consensus is reached and the proposal

is read for the record. The length of silence ought to be directly related to the degree of difficulty in reaching consensus; an easy decision requires a short silence, a difficult decision requires a longer silence. This encourages everyone to be at peace in accepting the consensus before moving on to other business. At this point, the facilitator assigns task responsibilities or sends the decision to a committee for implementation. It is important to note that the question is not "Is there consensus?" or "Does everyone agree?". These questions do not encourage an environment in which all concerns can be expressed. If some people have a concern, but are shy or intimidated by a strong showing of support for a proposal, the question "Are there any unresolved concerns?" speaks directly to them and provides an opportunity for them to speak: Any concerns for which someone stands aside are listed with the proposal and become a part of it.

Level Two: Identify Concerns

List All Concerns

At the beginning of the next level, a discussion technique called brainstorming is used so that concerns can be identified and written down publicly by the scribe and for the record by the note taker. Be sure the scribe is as accurate as possible by checking with the person who voiced the concern before moving on. This is not a time to attempt to resolve concerns or determine their validity. That would stifle free expression of concerns. At this point, only concerns are to be expressed, reasonable or unreasonable, well thought out or vague feelings. The facilitator wants to interrupt any comments which attempt to defend the proposal, resolve the concerns, judge the value of the concerns, or in any way deny or dismiss another's feelings of doubt or concern. Sometimes simply allowing a concern to be expressed and written down helps resolve it. After all concerns have been listed, allow the group a moment to reflect on them as a whole.

Group Related Concerns

At this point, the focus is on identifying patterns and relationships between concerns. This short exercise must not be allowed to focus upon or resolve any particular concern.

Level Three: Resolve Concerns

Resolve Groups of Related Concerns Often, related concerns can be resolved as a group.

Call for Consensus

If most of the concerns seem to have been resolved, call for consensus in the manner described earlier. If some concerns have not been resolved at this time, then a more focused discussion is needed.

Restate Remaining Concerns (One at a Time)

Return to the list. The facilitator checks each one with the group and removes ones which have been resolved or are, for any reason, no longer of concern. Each remaining concern is restated clearly and concisely and addressed one at a time. Sometimes new concerns are raised which need to be added to the list. However, every individual is responsible for honestly expressing concerns as they think of them. It is not appropriate to hold back a concern and spring it upon the group late in the process. This undermines trust and limits the group's ability to adequately discuss the concern in its relation to other concerns.

Questions Which Clarify the Concern

The facilitator asks for any questions or comments which would further clarify the concern so everyone clearly understands it before discussion starts.

Discussion Limited to Resolving One Concern

Use as many creative group discussion techniques as needed to facilitate a resolution for each concern. Keep the discussion focused upon the particular concern until every suggestion has been offered. If no new ideas are coming forward and the concern cannot be resolved, or if the time allotted for this item has been entirely used, move to one of the closing options described below.

Call for Consensus

Repeat this process until all concerns have been resolved. At this point, the group should be at consensus, but it would be appropriate to call for consensus anyway just to be sure no concern has been overlooked.

Closing Options: Send to Committee

If a decision on the proposal can wait until the whole group meets again, then send the proposal to a committee which can clarify the concerns and bring new, creative resolutions for consideration by the group. It is a good idea to include on the committee representatives of all the major concerns, as well as those most supportive of the proposal so they can work out solutions in a less formal setting. Sometimes, if

the decision is needed before the next meeting, a smaller group can be empowered to make the decision for the larger group, but again, this committee should include all points of view. Choose this option only if it is absolutely necessary and the whole group consents.

Stand Aside (Decision Adopted with Unresolved Concerns Listed)

When a concern has been fully discussed and cannot be resolved, it is appropriate for the facilitator to ask those persons with this concern if they are willing to stand aside; that is, acknowledge that the concern still exists, but allow the proposal to be adopted. It is very important for the whole group to understand that this unresolved concern is then written down with the proposal in the record and, in essence, becomes a part of the decision. This concern can be raised again and deserves more discussion time as it has not yet been resolved. In contrast, a concern which has been resolved in past discussion does not deserve additional discussion, unless something new has developed. Filibustering is not appropriate in Formal Consensus.

Declare Block

After having spent the allotted agenda time moving through the three levels of discussion trying to achieve consensus and concerns remain which are unresolved, the facilitator is obligated to declare that consensus cannot be reached at this meeting, that the proposal is blocked, and move on to the next agenda item.

The Rules of Formal Consensus

These guidelines and techniques are flexible and meant to be modified. Some of the guidelines, however, seem almost always to be true. These are the Rules of Formal Consensus:

1. Once a decision has been adopted by consensus, it cannot be changed without reaching a new consensus. If a new consensus cannot be reached, the old decision stands.
2. In general, only one person has permission to speak at any moment. The person with permission to speak is determined by the group discussion technique in use and/or the facilitator. (The role of Peacekeeper is exempt from this rule.)
3. All structural decisions (i.e., which roles to use, who fills each role, and which facilitation technique and/or group discussion technique to use) are adopted by consensus without debate. Any objection automatically causes a new selection to be made. If a role cannot be filled without objection, the group proceeds without that role being filled. If much time is spent trying to fill roles or find acceptable techniques, then the group needs a discussion about the unity of purpose of this group and why it is having this problem, a discussion which must be put on the agenda for the next meeting, if not held immediately.
4. All content decisions (i.e., the agenda contract, committee reports, proposals, etc.) are adopted by consensus after discussion. Every content decision must be openly discussed before it can be tested for consensus.
5. A concern must be based upon the principles of the group to justify a block to consensus.
6. Every meeting which uses Formal Consensus must have an evaluation.

3 On Conflict and Consensus

Conflict is usually viewed as an impediment to reaching agreements and disruptive to peaceful relationships. However, it is the underlying thesis of Formal Consensus that nonviolent conflict is necessary and desirable. It provides the motivations for improvement. The challenge is the creation of an understanding in all who participate that conflict, or differing opinions about proposals, is to be expected and acceptable. Do not avoid or repress conflict. Create an environment in which disagreement can be expressed without fear.

Objections and criticisms can be heard not as attacks, not as attempts to defeat a proposal, but as a concern which, when resolved, will make the proposal stronger.

This understanding of conflict may not be easily accepted by the members of a group. Our training by society undermines this concept.

Therefore, it will not be easy to create the kind of environment where differences can be expressed without fear or resentment.

But it can be done. It will require tolerance and a willingness to experiment. Additionally, the values and principles which form the basis of commitment to work together to resolve conflict need to be clearly defined, and accepted by all involved.

If a group desires to adopt Formal Consensus as its decisionmaking process, the first step is the creation of a Statement of Purpose or Constitution. This document would describe not only the common purpose, but would also include the definition of the group's principles and values. If the group discusses and writes down its foundation of principles at the start, it is much easier to determine group versus individual concerns later on.

The following are principles which form the foundation of Formal Consensus. A commitment to these principles and/or a willingness to develop them is necessary. In addition to the ones listed herein, the group might add principles and values which are specific to its purpose.

Foundation Upon Which Consensus Is Built

For consensus to work well, the process must be conducted in an environment which promotes trust, respect, and skill sharing.

The following are principles which, when valued and respected, encourage and build consensus.

Trust

Foremost is the need for trust. Without some amount of trust, there will be no cooperation or nonviolent resolution to conflict. For trust to flourish, it is desirable for individuals to be willing to examine their attitudes and be open to new ideas.

Acknowledgement and appreciation of personal and cultural differences promote trust. Neither approval nor friendship are necessary for a good working relationship. By developing trust, the process of consensus encourages the intellectual and emotional development of the individuals within a group.

Respect

It is everyone's responsibility to show respect to one another.

People feel respected when everyone listens, when they are not interrupted, when their ideas are taken seriously. Respect for emotional as well as logical concerns promotes the kind of environment necessary for developing consensus. To promote respect, it is important to distinguish between an action which causes a problem and the person who did the action, between the deed and the doer.

We must criticize the act, not the person. Even if you think the person is the problem, responding that way never resolves anything.

Unity of Purpose

Unity of purpose is a basic understanding about the goals and purpose of the group. Of course, there will be varying opinions on the best way to accomplish these goals. However, there must be a unifying base, a common starting point, which is recognized and accepted by all.

Nonviolence

Nonviolent decision-makers use their power to achieve goals while respecting differences and cooperating with others. In this environment, it is considered violent to use power to dominate or control the group process. It is understood that the power of revealing your truth is the maximum force allowed to persuade others to your point of view.

Self Empowerment

It is easy for people to unquestioningly rely on authorities and experts to do their thinking and decision-making for them. If members of a group delegate their authority, intentionally or not, they fail to accept responsibility for the group's decisions. Consensus promotes and depends upon self empowerment. Anyone can express concerns. Everyone seeks creative solutions and is responsible for every decision. When all are encouraged to participate, the democratic nature of the process increases.

Cooperation

Unfortunately, Western society is saturated in competition. When winning arguments becomes more important than achieving the group's goals, cooperation is difficult, if not impossible. Adversarial attitudes toward proposals or people focus attention on weakness rather than strength. An attitude of helpfulness and support builds cooperation. Cooperation is a shared responsibility in finding solutions to all concerns. Ideas offered in the spirit of cooperation help resolve conflict. The best decisions arise through an open and creative interplay of ideas.

Conflict Resolution

The free flow of ideas, even among friends, inevitably leads to conflict. In this context, conflict is simply the expression of disagreement. Disagreement itself is neither good nor bad. Diverse viewpoints bring into focus and explore the strengths and weaknesses of attitudes, assumptions, and plans. Without conflict, one is less likely to think about and evaluate one's views and prejudices. There is no right decision, only the best one for the whole group. The task is to work together to discover which choice is most acceptable to all members. Avoid blaming anyone for conflict.

Blame is inherently violent. It attacks dignity and empowerment. It encourages people to feel guilty, defensive, and alienated. The group will lose its ability to resolve conflict. People will hide their true feelings to avoid being blamed for the conflict. Avoidance of conflicting ideas impedes resolution for failure to explore and develop the feelings that gave rise to the conflict. The presence of conflict can create an occasion for growth. Learn to use it as a catalyst for discovering creative resolutions and for

developing a better understanding of each other. With patience, anyone can learn to resolve conflict creatively, without defensiveness or guilt. Groups can learn to nurture and support their members in this effort by allowing creativity and experimentation. This process necessitates that the group continually evaluate and improve these skills.

Commitment to the Group

In joining a group, one accepts a personal responsibility to behave with respect, good will, and honesty. Each one is expected to recognize that the group's needs have a certain priority over the desires of the individual. Many people participate in group work in a very egocentric way. It is important to accept the shared responsibility for helping to find solutions to other's concerns.

Active Participation

We all have an inalienable right to express our own best thoughts. We decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. Since consensus is a process of synthesis, not competition, all sincere comments are important and valuable. If ideas are put forth as the speaker's property and individuals are strongly attached to their opinions, consensus will be extremely difficult. Stubbornness, closedmindedness, and possessiveness lead to defensive and argumentative behavior that disrupts the process. For active participation to occur, it is necessary to promote trust by creating an atmosphere in which every contribution is considered valuable. With encouragement, each person can develop knowledge and experience, a sense of responsibility and competency, and the ability to participate.

Equal Access to Power

Because of personal differences (experience, assertiveness, social conditioning, access to information, etc.) and political disparities, some people inevitably have more effective power than others. To balance this inequity, everyone needs to consciously attempt to creatively share power, skills, and information. Avoid hierarchical structures that allow some individuals to assume undemocratic power over others. Egalitarian and accountable structures promote universal access to power.

Patience

Consensus cannot be rushed. Often, it functions smoothly, producing effective, stable results. Sometimes, when difficult situations arise, consensus requires more time to allow for the creative interplay of ideas. During these times, patience is more advantageous than tense, urgent, or aggressive behavior. Consensus is possible as long as each individual acts patiently and respectfully.

Impediments To Consensus Lack of Training

It is necessary to train people in the theory and practice of consensus. Until consensus is a common form of decisionmaking in our society, new members will need some way of learning about the process. It is important to offer regular opportunities for training. If learning about Formal Consensus is not made easily accessible, it will limit full participation and create inequities which undermine this process. Also, training provides opportunities for people to improve their skills, particularly facilitation skills, in a setting where experimentation and role-plays can occur.

External Hierarchical Structures

It can be difficult for a group to reach consensus internally when it is part of a larger group which does not recognize or participate in the consensus process. It can be extremely frustrating if those external to the group can disrupt the decisionmaking by interfering with the process by pulling rank. Therefore, it is desirable for individuals and groups to recognize that they can be autonomous in relation to external power if they are willing to take responsibility for their actions.

Social Prejudice

Everyone has been exposed to biases, assumptions, and prejudices which interfere with the spirit of cooperation and equal participation. All people are influenced by these attitudes, even though they may deplore them. People are not generally encouraged to confront these prejudices in themselves or others. Members of a group often reflect social biases without realizing or attempting to confront and change them. If the group views a prejudicial attitude as just one individual's problem, then the group will not address the underlying social attitudes which create such problems. It is appropriate to expose, confront, acknowledge, and attempt to resolve socially prejudicial attitudes, but only in the spirit of mutual respect and trust. Members are responsible for acknowledging when their attitudes are influenced by disruptive social training and for changing them. When a supportive atmosphere for recognizing and changing undesirable attitudes exists, the group as a whole benefits.

On Degrees of Conflict

Consensus is a process of nonviolent conflict resolution. The expression of concerns and conflicting ideas is considered desirable and important. When a group creates an atmosphere which nurtures and supports disagreement without hostility and fear, it builds a foundation for stronger, more creative decisions. Each individual is responsible for expressing one's own concerns. It is best if each concern is expressed as if it will be resolved. The group then responds by trying to resolve the concern through group discussion. If the concern remains unresolved after a full and open discussion, then the facilitator asks how the concern is based upon the foundation of the group. If it is, then the group accepts that the proposal is blocked. From this perspective, it is not decided by the individual alone if a particular concern is blocking consensus; it is determined in cooperation with the whole group. The group determines a concern's legitimacy. A concern is legitimate if it is based upon the principles of the group and therefore relevant to the group as a whole. If the concern is determined to be unprincipled or not of consequence, the group can decide the concern is inappropriate and drop it from discussion. If a reasonable solution offered is not accepted by the individual, the group may decide the concern has been resolved and the individual is out of order for failure to recognize it. Herein lies a subtle pitfall. For consensus to work well, it is helpful for individuals to recognize the group's involvement in determining which concerns are able to be resolved, which need more attention, and, ultimately, which are blocking consensus. The pitfall is failure to accept the limit on an individual's power to determine which concerns are principled or based upon the foundation of the group and which ones are resolved. After discussion, if the concern is valid and unresolved, it again falls upon the individual to choose whether to stand aside or block consensus. The individual is responsible for expressing concerns; the group is responsible for resolving them. The group decides whether a concern is legitimate; the individual decides whether to block or stand aside. All concerns are important and need to be resolved. It is not appropriate for a person to come to a meeting planning to block a proposal or, during discussion, to express their concerns as major objections or blocking concerns. Often, during discussion, the person learns additional information which resolves the concern. Sometimes, after expressing the concern, someone is able to creatively resolve it by thinking of something new. It often happens that a concern which seems to be extremely problematic when it is first mentioned turns out to be easily resolved. Sometimes the reverse happens and a seemingly minor concern brings forth much larger concerns.

The following is a description of different types of concerns and how they affect individuals and the group.

Concerns which can be addressed and resolved by making small changes in the proposal can be called minor concerns. The person supports the proposal, but has an idea for improvement.

When a person disagrees with the proposal in part, but consents to the overall idea, the person has a reservation.

The person is not completely satisfied with the proposal, but is generally supportive. This kind of concern can usually be resolved through discussion. Sometimes, it is enough for the person to express the concern and feel that it was heard, without any actual resolution.

When a person does not agree with the proposal, the group allows that person to try and persuade it to see the wisdom of the disagreement. If the group is not persuaded or the disagreement cannot be resolved, the person might choose to stand aside and allow the group to go forward.

The person and the group are agreeing to disagree, regarding each point of view with mutual respect. Occasionally, it is a concern which has no resolution; the person does not feel the need to block the decision, but wants to express the concern and lack of support for the proposal.

A blocking concern must be based on a generally recognized principle, not personal preference, or it must be essential to the entire group's well-being. Before a concern is considered to be blocking, the group must have already accepted the validity of the concern and a reasonable attempt must have been made to resolve it. If legitimate concerns remain unresolved and the person has not agreed to stand aside, consensus is blocked.

4 The Art of Evaluation

Meetings can often be a time when some people experience feelings of frustration or confusion.

There is always room for improvement in the structure of the process and/or in the dynamics of the group. Often, there is no time to talk directly about group interaction during the meeting. Reserve time at the end of the meeting to allow some of these issues and feelings to be expressed. Evaluation is very useful when using consensus. It is worth the time. Evaluations need not take long, five to ten minutes is often enough. It is not a discussion, nor is it an opportunity to comment on each

other's statements. Do not reopen discussion on an agenda item. Evaluation is a special time to listen to each other and learn about each other. Think about how the group interacts and how to improve the process. Be sure to include the evaluation comments in the notes of the meeting. This is important for two reasons. Over time, if the same evaluation comments are made again and again, this is an indication that the issue behind the comments needs to be addressed. This can be accomplished by placing this issue on the agenda for the next meeting. Also, when looking back at notes from meetings long ago, evaluation comments can often reveal a great deal about what actually happened, beyond what decisions were made and reports given. They give a glimpse into complex interpersonal dynamics.

Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation provides a forum to address procedural flaws, inappropriate behavior, facilitation problems, logistical difficulties, overall tone, etc. Evaluation is not a time to reopen discussion, make decisions or attempt to resolve problems, but rather, to make statements, express feelings, highlight problems, and suggest solutions in a spirit of cooperation and trust. To help foster communication, it is better if each criticism is coupled with a specific suggestion for improvement. Also, always speak for oneself. Do not attempt to represent anyone else.

Encourage everyone who participated in the meeting to take part in the evaluation. Make comments on what worked and what did not. Expect differing opinions. It is generally not useful to repeat other's comments.

Evaluations prepare the group for better future meetings. When the process works well, the group responds supportively in a difficult situation, or the facilitator does an especially good job, note it, and appreciate work well done. Do not attempt to force evaluation. This will cause superficial or irrelevant comments.

On the other hand, do not allow evaluations to run on. Be sure to take each comment seriously and make an attempt, at a later time, to resolve or implement them. Individuals who feel their suggestions are ignored or disrespected will lose trust and interest in the group. For gatherings, conferences, conventions or large meetings, the group might consider having short evaluations after each section, in addition to the one at the end of the event. Distinct aspects on which the group might focus include: the process itself, a specific role, a particular technique, fears and feelings, group dynamics, etc.

At large meetings, written evaluations provide a means for everyone to respond and record comments and suggestions which might otherwise be lost. Some people feel more comfortable writing their evaluations rather than saying them. Plan the questions well, stressing what was learned, what was valuable, and what could have been better and how. An evaluation committee allows an opportunity for the presenters, facilitators, and/or coordinators to get together after the meeting to review evaluation comments, consider suggestions for improvement, and possibly prepare an evaluation report. Review and evaluation bring a sense of completion to the meeting. A good evaluation will pull the experience together, remind everyone of the group's unity of purpose, and provide an opportunity for closing comments.

Uses of Evaluation

There are at least ten ways in which evaluation helps improve meetings.

Evaluations:

- \ Improve the process by analysis of what happened, why it happened, and how it might be improved
- \ Examine how certain attitudes and statements might have caused various problems and encourage special care to prevent them from recurring
- \ Foster a greater understanding of group dynamics and encourage a method of group learning or learning from each other
- \ Allow the free expression of feelings
- \ Expose unconscious behavior or attitudes which interfere with the process
- \ Encourage the sharing of observations and acknowledge associations with society
- \ Check the usefulness and effectiveness of techniques and procedures
- \ Acknowledge good work and give appreciation to each other
- \ Reflect on the goals set for the meeting and whether they were attained
- \ Examine various roles, suggest ways to improve

them, and create new ones as needed
\
Provide an overall sense of completion and closure to the meeting

Types of Evaluation Questions

It is necessary to be aware of the way in which questions are asked during evaluation. The specific wording can control the scope and focus of consideration and affect the level of participation. It can cause responses which focus on what was good and bad, or right and wrong, rather than on what worked and what needed improvement. Focus on learning and growing. void blaming. Encourage diverse opinions.

Some sample questions for an evaluation:

- \
Were members uninterested or bored with the agenda, reports, or discussion?
- \
Did members withdraw or feel isolated?
- \
Is attendance low? If so, why?
- \
Are people arriving late or leaving early? If so, why?
- \
How was the overall tone or atmosphere?
- \
Was there an appropriate use of resources?
- \
Were the logistics (such as date, time, or location) acceptable?
- \
What was the most important experience of the event?
- \
What was the least important experience of the event?
- \
What was the high point? What was the low point?
- \
What did you learn?
- \
What expectations did you have at the beginning and to what degree were they met? How did they change?
- \
What goals did you have and to what degree were they accomplished?
- \
What worked well? Why?
- \
What did not work so well? How could it have been improved?
- \
What else would you suggest be changed or improved, and how?
- \
What was overlooked or left out?

5 Roles

A role is a function of process, not content. Roles are used during a meeting according to the needs of the situation. Not all roles are useful at every meeting, nor does each role have to be filled by a separate person. Formal Consensus functions more smoothly if the person filling a role has some experience, therefore is desirable to rotate roles. Furthermore, one who has experienced a role is more likely to be supportive of whomever currently has that role. Experience in each role also encourages confidence and participation. It is best, therefore, for the group to encourage everyone to experience each role.

Agenda Planners

A well planned agenda is an important tool for a smooth meeting, although it does not guarantee it. Experience has shown that there is a definite improvement in the flow and pace of a meeting if several people get together prior to the start of the meeting and propose an agenda. In smaller groups, the facilitator often proposes an agenda.

The agenda planning committee has six tasks:

- \
collect agenda items

- \ arrange them
- \ assign presenters
- \ brainstorm discussion techniques
- \ assign time limits
- \ write up the proposed agenda

There are at least four sources of agenda items:

- \ suggestions from members
- \ reports or proposals from committees
- \ business from the last meeting
- \ standard agenda items, including:
 - \ introduction
 - \ agenda review
 - \ review notes
 - \ break
 - \ announcements
 - \ decision review
 - \ evaluation

Once all the agenda items have been collected, they are listed in an order which seems efficient and appropriate. Planners need to be cautious that items at the top of the agenda tend to use more than their share of time, thereby limiting the time available for the rest. Each group has different needs. Some groups work best taking care of business first, then addressing the difficult items. Other groups might find it useful to take on the most difficult work first and strictly limit the time or let it take all it needs. The following are recommendations for keeping the focus of attention on the agenda:

- \ alternate long and short, heavy and light items
- \ place reports before their related proposals
- \ take care of old business before addressing new items
- \ consider placing items which might generate a sense of accomplishment early in the meeting
- \ alternate presenters
- \ be flexible

Usually, each item already has a presenter. If not, assign one.

Generally, it is not wise for facilitators to present reports or proposals.

However, it is convenient for facilitators to present some of the standard agenda items.

For complex or especially controversial items, the agenda planners could suggest various options for group discussion techniques.

This may be helpful to the facilitator.

Next, assign time limits for each item. It is important to be realistic, being careful to give each item enough time to be fully addressed without being unfair to other items. Generally, it is not desirable to propose an agenda which exceeds the desired overall meeting time limit. The last task is the writing of the proposed agenda so all can see it and refer to it during the meeting. Each item is listed in order, along with its presenter and time limit.

The following agenda is an example of how an agenda is structured and what information is included in it.

It shows the standard agenda items, the presenters, the time limits and the order in which they will be considered.

It also shows one way in which reports and proposals can be presented, but each group can structure this part of the meeting in whatever way suits its needs. This model does not show the choices of techniques for group discussion which the agenda planners might have considered.

Standard Agenda

Agenda Item	Presenter	Time	
INTRODUCTION	Facilitator	5 min	
AGENDA REVIEW	Facilitator	5 min	
REVIEW NOTES	Notetaker	5 min	
REPORTS		20 min	Previous activities
Standing committees			

PROPOSALS	15 min
Old business	
BREAK	5 min
REPORTS	10 min
Informational	
PROPOSALS	30 min
New business	
ANNOUNCEMENTS	5 min
Pass hat	
Next meeting	
REVIEW DECISIONS	5 min
Notetaker	
EVALUATION	10 min
CLOSING	5 min
Facilitator	
TOTAL	2 hours

Facilitator

The word facilitate means to make easy. A facilitator conducts group business and guides the Formal Consensus process so that it flows smoothly. Rotating facilitation from meeting to meeting shares important skills among the members. If everyone has firsthand knowledge about facilitation, it will help the flow of all meetings. Co-facilitation, or having two (or more) people facilitate a meeting, is recommended.

Having a woman and a man share the responsibilities encourages a more balanced meeting. Also, an inexperienced facilitator may apprentice with a more experienced one. Try to use a variety of techniques throughout the meeting. And remember, a little bit of humor can go a long way in easing tension during a long, difficult meeting.

Good facilitation is based upon the following principles:

Non-Directive Leadership

Facilitators accept responsibility for moving through the agenda in the allotted time, guiding the process, and suggesting alternate or additional techniques. In this sense, they do lead the group. However, they do not give their personal opinions nor do they attempt to direct the content of the discussion. If they want to participate, they must clearly relinquish the role and speak as an individual. During a meeting, individuals are responsible for expressing their own concerns and thoughts. Facilitators, on the other hand, are responsible for addressing the needs of the group. They need to be aware of the group dynamics and constantly evaluate whether the discussion is flowing well. There may be a need for a change in the discussion technique. They need to be diligent about the fair distribution of attention, being sure to limit those who are speaking often and offering opportunities to those who are not speaking much or at all. It follows that one person cannot simultaneously give attention to the needs of the group and think about a personal response to a given situation. Also, it is not appropriate for the facilitator to give a particular point of view or dominate the discussion. This does not build trust, especially in those who do not agree with the facilitator.

Clarity of Process

The facilitator is responsible for leading the meeting openly so that everyone present is aware of the process and how to participate. This means it is important to constantly review what just happened, what is about to happen, and how it will happen. Every time a new discussion technique is introduced, explain how it will work and what is to be accomplished. This is both educational and helps new members participate more fully.

Agenda Contract

The facilitator is responsible for honoring the agenda contract.

The facilitator keeps the questions and discussion focused on the agenda item. Be gentle, but firm, because fairness dictates that each agenda item gets only the time allotted. The agenda contract is made when the agenda is reviewed and accepted.

This agreement includes the items on the agenda, the order in which they are considered, and the time allotted to each.

Unless the whole group agrees to change the agenda, the facilitator is obligated to keep the contract. The decision to change the agenda must be a consensus, with little or no discussion. At the beginning of the meeting, the agenda is presented to the whole group and reviewed, item by item. Any member can add an item if it has been omitted. While every agenda suggestion must be included in the agenda, it does not necessarily get as much time as the presenter wants. Time ought to be divided fairly, with individuals recognizing the fairness of old items generally getting more time than new items and urgent items getting more time than items which can wait until the next meeting, etc. Also, review the suggested presenters and time limits. If anything seems

inappropriate or unreasonable, adjustments may be made. Once the whole agenda has been reviewed and consented to, the agenda becomes a contract. The facilitator is obligated to follow the order and time limits. This encourages members to be on time to meetings.

Good Will

Always try to assume good will. Assume every statement and action is sincerely intended to benefit the group. Assume that each member understands the group's purpose and accepts the agenda as a contract. Often, when we project our feelings and expectations onto others, we influence their actions. If we treat others as though they are trying to get attention, disrupt meetings, or pick fights, they will often fulfill our expectations. A resolution to conflict is more likely to occur if we act as though there will be one. This is especially true if someone is intentionally trying to cause trouble or who is emotionally unhealthy. Do not attack the person, but rather, assume good will and ask the person to explain to the group how that person's statements or actions are in the best interest of the group. It is also helpful to remember to separate the actor from the action. While the behavior may be unacceptable, the person is not bad. Avoid accusing the person of being the way they behave. Remember, no one has the answer. The group's work is the search for the best and most creative process, one which fosters a mutually satisfying resolution to any concern which may arise.

Peacekeeper

The role of peacekeeper is most useful in large groups or when very touchy, controversial topics are being discussed.

A person who is willing to remain somewhat aloof and is not personally invested in the content of the discussion would be a good candidate for peacekeeper. This person is selected without discussion by all present at the beginning of the meeting. If no one wants this role, or if no one can be selected without objection, proceed without one, recognizing that the facilitator's job will most likely be more difficult. This task entails paying attention to the overall mood or tone of the meeting. When tensions increase dramatically and angers flare out of control, the peacekeeper interrupts briefly to remind the group of its common goals and commitment to cooperation. The most common way to accomplish this is a call for a few moments of silence. The peacekeeper is the only person with prior permission to interrupt a speaker or speak without first being recognized by the facilitator. Also, it is important to note that the peacekeeper's comments are always directed at the whole group, never at one individual or small group within the larger group. Keep comments short and to the point.

The peacekeeper may always, of course, point out when the group did something well. People always like to be acknowledged for positive behavior.

Advocate

Like the peacekeeper, advocates are selected without discussion at the beginning of the meeting. If, because of strong emotions, someone is unable to be understood, the advocate is called upon to help. The advocate would interrupt the meeting, and invite the individual to literally step outside the meeting for some one-on-one discussion. An upset person can talk to someone with whom they feel comfortable. This often helps them make clear what the concern is and how it relates to the best interest of the group. Assume the individual is acting in good faith. Assume the concern is in the best interest of the group. While they are doing this, everyone else might take a short break, or continue with other agenda items. When they return, the meeting (after completing the current agenda item) hears from the advocate. The intent here is the presentation of the concern by the advocate rather than the upset person so the other group members might hear it without the emotional charge. This procedure is a last resort, to be used only when emotions are out of control and the person feels unable to successfully express an idea.

Timekeeper

The role of timekeeper is very useful in almost all meetings. One is selected at the beginning of the meeting to assist the facilitator in keeping within the time limits set in the agenda contract. The skill in keeping time is the prevention of an unnecessary time pressure which might interfere with the process. This can be accomplished by keeping everyone aware of the status of time remaining during the discussion. Be sure to give ample warning towards the end of the time limit so the group can start to bring the discussion to a close or decide to rearrange the agenda to allow more time for the current topic. There is nothing inherently wrong with going over time as long as everyone consents.

Public Scribe

The role of public scribe is simply the writing, on paper or blackboard, of information for the whole group to see. This person primarily assists the facilitator by taking a task which might otherwise distract the facilitator and interfere with the overall flow of the meeting. This role is particularly useful during brainstorming, reportbacks from small groups, or whenever it would help the group for all to see written information.

Note taker

The importance of a written record of the meetings cannot be overstated. The written record, sometimes called notes or minutes, can help settle disputes of memory or verify past decisions. Accessible notes allow absent members to participate in ongoing work. Useful items to include in the notes are:

- \ date and attendance
- \ agenda
- \ brief notes (highlights, statistics...)
- \ reports
- \ discussion
- \ verbatim notes
- \ proposals (with revisions)
- \ decisions (with concerns listed)
- \ announcements
- \ next meeting time and place
- \ evaluation comments

After each decision is made, it is useful to have the note taker read the notes aloud to ensure accuracy. At the end of the meeting, it is also helpful to have the note taker present to the group a review of all decisions. In larger groups, it is often useful to have two note takers simultaneously, because everyone, no matter how skilled, hears information and expresses it differently. Note takers are responsible for making sure the notes are recorded accurately, and are reproduced and distributed according to the desires of the group (e.g. mailed to everyone, handed out at the next meeting, filed, etc.).

Doorkeeper

Doorkeepers are selected in advance of the meeting and need to arrive early enough to familiarize themselves with the physical layout of the space and to receive any last minute instructions from the facilitator. They need to be prepared to miss the first half hour of the meeting. Prior to the start of the meeting, the doorkeeper welcomes people, distributes any literature connected to the business of the meeting, and informs them of any pertinent information (the meeting will start fifteen minutes late, the bathrooms are not wheelchair accessible, etc.). A doorkeeper is useful, especially if people tend to be late. When the meeting begins, they continue to be available for latecomers. They might briefly explain what has happened so far and where the meeting is currently on the agenda.

The doorkeeper might suggest to the latecomers that they refrain from participating in the current agenda item and wait until the next item before participating. This avoids wasting time, repeating discussion, or addressing already resolved concerns. Of course, this is not a rigid rule. Use discretion and be respectful of the group's time. Experience has shown this role to be far more useful than it might at first appear, so experiment with it and discover if meetings can become more pleasant and productive because of the friendship and care which is expressed through the simple act of greeting people as they arrive at the meeting.

6 Techniques

Facilitation Techniques

There are a great many techniques to assist the facilitator in managing the agenda and group dynamics. The following are just a few of the more common and frequently used techniques available to the facilitator. Be creative and adaptive.

Different situations require different techniques. With experience will come an understanding of how they affect group dynamics and when is the best time to use them.

Equalizing Participation

The facilitator is responsible for the fair distribution of attention during meetings. Facilitators call the attention of the group to one speaker at a time. The grammar school method is the most common technique for choosing the next speaker. The facilitator recognizes each person in the order in which hands are raised. Often, inequities occur because the attention is dominated by an individual or class of individuals. This can occur because of socialized behavioral problems such as racism, sexism, or the like, or internal dynamics such as experience, seniority, fear, shyness, disrespect, ignorance of the process, etc. Inequities can be corrected in many creative ways. For example, if men are speaking more often than women, the facilitator can suggest a pause after each speaker, the women counting to five before speaking, the men counting to ten. In controversial situations, the facilitator can request that three speakers speak for the proposal, and three speak against it. If the group would like to avoid having the facilitator select who speaks next, the group can self-select by asking the last speaker to pass an object, a talking stick, to the next. Even more challenging, have each speaker stand before speaking, and

begin when there is only one person standing. These are only a handful of the many possible problems and solutions that exist. Be creative. Invent your own.

Listing

To help the discussion flow more smoothly, those who want to speak can silently signal the facilitator, who would add the person's name to a list of those wishing to speak, and call on them in that order.

Stacking

If many people want to speak at the same time, it is useful to ask all those who would like to speak to raise their hands. Have them count off, and then have them speak in that order. At the end of the stack, the facilitator might call for another stack or try another technique.

Pacing

The pace or flow of the meeting is the responsibility of the facilitator. If the atmosphere starts to become tense, choose techniques which encourage balance and cooperation. If the meeting is going slowly and people are becoming restless, suggest a stretch or rearrange the agenda.

Checking the Process

If the flow of the meeting is breaking down or if one person or small group seems to be dominating, anyone can call into question the technique being used and suggest an alternative.

Silence

If the pace is too fast, if energies and tensions are high, if people are speaking out of turn or interrupting one another, it is appropriate for anyone to suggest a moment of silence to calm and refocus energy.

Taking a Break

In the heat of discussion, people are usually resistant to interrupting the flow to take a break, but a wise facilitator knows, more often than not, that a five minute break will save a frustrating half hour or more of circular discussion and fruitless debate.

Call For Consensus

The facilitator, or any member recognized to speak by the facilitator, can call for a test for consensus. To do this, the facilitator asks if there are any unresolved concerns which remain unaddressed. (See page 13.)

Summarizing

The facilitator might choose to focus what has been said by summarizing. The summary might be made by the facilitator, the note taker, or anyone else appropriate. This pre empts a common problem, in which the discussion becomes circular, and one after another, speakers repeat each other.

Reformulating the Proposal

After a long discussion, it sometimes happens that the proposal becomes modified without any formal decision.

The facilitator needs to recognize this and take time to reformulate the proposal with the new information, modifications, or deletions. Then the proposal is presented to the group so that everyone can be clear about what is being considered. Again, this might be done by the facilitator, the notetaker, or anyone else.

Stepping out of Role

If the facilitator wants to become involved in the discussion or has strong feelings about a particular agenda item, the facilitator can step out of the role and participate in the discussion, allowing another member to facilitate during that time.

Passing the Clipboard

Sometimes information needs to be collected during the meeting. To save time, circulate a clipboard to collect this information. Once collected, it can be entered into the written record and/or presented to the group by the facilitator.

Polling (Straw Polls)

The usefulness of polling within consensus is primarily clarification of the relative importance of several issues. It is an especially useful technique when the facilitator is confused or uncertain about the status of a proposal and wants some clarity to be able to suggest what might be the next process technique. Polls are not decisions, they are non-binding referenda. All too often, straw polls are used when the issues are completely clear and the majority wants to intimidate the minority into submission by showing overwhelming support rather than to discuss the issues and resolve the concerns.

Clear and simple questions are best. Polls that involve three or more choices can be especially manipulative. Use with discretion.

Censoring

(This technique and the next are somewhat different from the others. They may not be appropriate for some groups.) If someone speaks out of turn consistently, the facilitator warns the individual at least twice that if the interruptions do not stop, the facilitator will declare that person censored. This means the person will not be permitted to speak for the rest of this agenda item. If the interrupting behavior has been exhibited over several agenda items, then the censoring could be for a longer period of time. This technique is meant to be used at the discretion of the facilitator. If the facilitator censors someone and others in the meeting voice disapproval, it is better for the facilitator to step down from the role and let someone else facilitate, rather than get into a discussion about the ability and judgement of the facilitator. The rationale is the disruptive behavior makes facilitation very difficult, is disrespectful and, since it is assumed that everyone observed the behavior, the voicing of disapproval about a censoring indicates lack of confidence in the facilitation rather than support for the disruptive behavior.

Expulsion

If an individual still acts very disruptively, the facilitator may confront the behavior. Ask the person to explain the reasons for this behavior, how it is in the best interest of the group, how it relates to the group's purpose, and how it is in keeping with the goals and principles. If the person is unable to answer these questions or if the answers indicate disagreement with the common purpose, then the facilitator can ask the individual to withdraw from the meeting.

Group Discussion Techniques

It is often assumed that the best form of group discussion is that which has one person at a time speak to the whole group. This is true for some discussions. But, sometimes, other techniques of group discussion can be more productive and efficient than whole group discussion. The following are some of the more common and frequently used techniques. These could be suggested by anyone at the meeting. Therefore, it is a good idea if everyone is familiar with these techniques. Again, be creative and adaptive. Different situations require different techniques. Only experience reveals how each one affects group dynamics or the best time to use it.

Identification

It is good to address each other by name. One way to learn names is to draw a seating plan, and as people go around and introduce themselves, write their names on it. Later, refer to the plan and address people by their names. In large groups, name tags can be helpful. Also, when people speak, it is useful for them to identify themselves so all can gradually learn each others' names.

Whole Group

The value of whole group discussion is the evolution of a group idea. A group idea is not simply the sum of individual ideas, but the result of the interaction of ideas during discussion. Whole group discussion can be unstructured and productive. It can also be very structured, using various facilitation techniques to focus it. Often, whole group discussion does not produce maximum participation or a diversity of ideas. During whole group discussion, fewer people get to speak, and, at times, the attitude of the group can be dominated by an idea, a mood, or a handful of people.

Small Group

Breaking into smaller groups can be very useful. These small groups can be dyads or triads or even larger. They can be selected randomly or self-selected. If used well, in a relatively short amount of time all participants have the opportunity to share their own point of view. Be sure to set clear time limits and select a note taker for each group. When the larger group reconvenes, the note takers relate the major points and concerns of their group. Sometimes, note takers can be requested to add only new ideas or concerns and not repeat something already covered in another report. It is also helpful for the scribe to write these reports so all can see the cumulative result and be sure every idea and concern gets on the list.

Brainstorming

This is a very useful technique when ideas need to be solicited from the whole group. The normal rule of waiting to speak until the facilitator recognizes you is suspended and everyone is encouraged to call out ideas to be written by the scribe for all to see. It is helpful if the atmosphere created is one in which all ideas, no matter how unusual or incomplete, are appropriate and welcomed. This is a situation in which suggestions can be used as catalysts, with ideas building one upon the next, generating very creative possibilities. Avoid evaluating each other's ideas during this time.

Go-rounds

This is a simple technique that encourages participation. The facilitator states a **question** and then goes around the room inviting everyone to answer briefly. This is not an open discussion. This is an opportunity to individually respond to specific questions, not to comment on each other's responses or make unrelated remarks.

Fishbowl

The fishbowl is a special form of small group discussion. Several members representing differing points of view meet in an inner circle to discuss the issue while everyone else forms an outer circle and listens. At the end of a predetermined time, the whole group reconvenes and evaluates the fishbowl discussion. An interesting variation: first, put all the men in the fishbowl, then all the women, and they discuss the same topics.

Active Listening

If the group is having a hard time understanding a point of view, someone might help by active listening. Listen to the speaker, then repeat back what was heard and ask the speaker if this accurately reflects what was meant.

Caucusing

A caucus might be useful to help a multifaceted conflict become clearer by unifying similar perspectives or defining specific points of departure without the focus of the whole group. It might be that only some people attend a caucus, or it might be that all are expected to participate in a caucus. The difference between caucuses and small groups is that caucuses are composed of people with similar viewpoints, whereas small group discussions are more useful if they are made up of people with diverse viewpoints or even a random selection of people.

Glossary

agenda contract

The agenda contract is made when the agenda is reviewed and accepted. This agreement includes the items on the agenda, the order in which they are considered, and the time allotted to each. Unless the whole group agrees to change the agenda, the facilitator is obligated to keep to the contract. The decision to change the agenda must be a consensus, with little or no discussion.

agreement

Complete agreement, with no unresolved concerns.

block

If the allotted agenda time has been spent trying to achieve consensus, and unresolved legitimate concerns remain, the proposal may be considered blocked, or not able to be adopted at this meeting.

concern

A point of departure or disagreement with a proposal.

conflict

The expression of disagreement, which brings into focus diverse viewpoints, and provides the opportunity to explore their strengths and weaknesses.

consensus

A decision making process whereby decisions are reached when all members present consent to a proposal. This process does not assume everyone must be in complete agreement. When differences remain after discussion, individuals can agree to disagree, that is, give their consent by standing aside, and allow the proposal to be accepted by the group.

consent

Acceptance of the proposal, not necessarily agreement. Individuals are responsible for expressing their ideas, concerns and objections. Silence, in response to a call for consensus, signifies consent. Silence is not complete agreement; it is acceptance of the proposal.

decision

The end product of an idea that started as a proposal and evolved to become a plan of action accepted by the whole group.

evaluation

A group analysis at the end of a meeting about interpersonal dynamics during decision making. This is a time to allow feelings to be expressed,

with the goal of improving the functioning of future meetings. It is not a discussion or debate, nor should anyone comment on another's evaluation.

meeting

An occasion in which people come together and, in an orderly way, make decisions.
methods of decision making:

autocracy:

one person makes the decisions for everyone

oligarchy:

a few people make the decisions for everyone

representative democracy:

a few people are elected to make the decisions for everyone

majority rule democracy :

the majority makes the decisions for everyone

consensus:

everyone makes the decisions for everyone

proposal

A written plan that some members of a group present to the whole group for discussion and acceptance.

stand aside

To agree to disagree, to be willing to let a proposal be adopted despite unresolved concerns.

This is a copy of On Conflict and Consensus

Food Not Bombs Publishing
home

October 2004 Declaration.

"We will fight for our RIGHTS. There is no turning back!" [BUEA, 01/61] October 1st, 2004.

Way forward! Mid West Central African Region.



French-Cameroon Armies shooting unarmed Ambazonian demonstrators



shooting victim

It is disaster as a people to be refused the right to exercise ones own sovereignty, yet an outrageous absurdity for the victims of such an oppression when some self proclaimed leaders of the human civilization do not only do business with such oppressive regimes, but go the extra length to try and do PR for the oppressive regime in question. For victims of such a repression screaming loud against this disgrace to the entire civilized humanity is also a way to fight the repression and an effective one for that matter, as the larger part of humanity refuses tyranny of any form no matter what justification is being given for that.

We understand that the ascendancy of the party (CNU/CPDM) political system that has

been in power for so long and ruled the Mid West Central African sub region (Ambazonia and French Cameroon) with absolute power cannot be allowed to continue.

We understand that this party, a party that has kept the fruits of the soil and labor of every citizen of the sub region for itself, cannot be allowed to continue.

We understand that the corruption of the presidential elections that sustains this party impedes our freedom also and should not be allowed to continue.

We understand that justice in this sub region only exists for the corrupt and powerful.

We understand that we who live in this sub region must construct a society in which those who lead do so with the will of the people (grassroots democracy).

There is no other path. This is understood by every honest citizen of this sub region in civil society. Only those who have based their success on the theft of the public trust, those who protect criminals and murderers by prostituting justice, those who resort to political murder and electoral fraud in order to impose their will, are opposed to our demands. These antiquated politicians plan to roll back history and erase the cry from the sub regional consciousness that was taken up across the sub region after May 26, 1990 (Launching of SDF).

We will not permit this. Today we do not call on those weak powers in the sub region that refuse to assume their duties parliament and Judiciary, and which permit themselves to be controlled recklessly by the Biya regime. We commend the Bamenda High Court though for their historic decision in the HCB/28/29 which makes clear; Cameroon is illegally occupying Ambazonia. If the parliament and the judges have no dignity, then others who do understand that they must serve the people, and not the individual, will step forward. Our call transcends the question of presidential terms or the upcoming election. Sovereignty everywhere resides in civil society and thus our call is to the civil society. Only the people can alter or modify their form of government.

It is to them that we address this October 2004 Declaration.

First:

We have respected the international recommended part to justice by trying all along to fight for justice in a peaceful manner in courts and appeals to the international community and the annexation regime. These has made us to be recognized by the international and sub regional forces as a peace loving people. We will continue with this approach albeit more aggressive in the process.

Second:

We call on all of our members and supports, both in and outside the sub region, to continue their activities in the frame of anti-authoritarian organizing which we consider to be the most progressive and modern approach to building a real participative democracy. We will continue to respect and apply this principles in that frame, we have to permit civil society in both countries in the sub region to organize in whatever forms they

consider pertinent towards the goal of achieving a transition to grassroots democracy in our societies.

Third:

We condemn the threats against civilian society brought about by the militarization of Ambazonia by the annexation regime, both in terms of personnel and modern repressive equipment, during this time leading up to the elections solely organized by the annexation regime. We condemn the unprovoked, unjustified, arrest the last weeks of dozens of Ambazonians all over Ambazonia by the French Cameroon annexation regime. Without a doubt, the Biya regime is trying to impose its will by fraud. We will stop this wanton violations of the rights of our Sisters and brothers; not forgetting those taken political hostages since March 1997 on the eve of the 1997 elections, of which a handful have been extra judiciary executed.

Fourth:

We propose to all political parties committed to bring in democracy in the sub region, that are suffering from intimidation and repression of their political rights, the same intimidation and repression that our people have suffered for the last 43 years that they declare their support for a sub regional Grassroots Democracy Convention in which we'll discuss the destiny of the sub region. For, the present structure of the power in the sub region CAN NOT allow for neither the establishment of grassroots democracy in French Cameroon, nor Freedom and Justice for Ambazonians.

What we have presently in the Mid West Central African sub region (Ambazonia and French Cameroon) is an absolute dictatorship were citizens having NO RIGHTS. It is the omnipotent administration that interprets laws voted by the lame duck parliament according to its whim: Laws voted by the parliament are so-called reexamined and corrected by Presidential decrees: The laws are normally suspended and cannot be applied until the president spells out the modalities for their application. The Ministers concerned by the text in question publishes ministerial orders and ministerial directives which interpret the presidential decree, the senior officers at the ministry produces in their turn ministerial decisions, circulars and instructions which indicate to Provincial and local administrators how to apply the prescriptions of the voted law. The regime is able to do everything it wishes even when there do not exist any law permitting it. With one ministerial order everything in a locality could be turned to stand on it's head. On the whole it is simple worth understanding that in this sub region there are no laws to protect any inalienable rights.

If the opposition political parties declare their support for a sub regional Grassroots Democracy Convention, we will be ready to discuss with such parties the modalities and agenda of the gathering and how to avoid the present situation spinning out of control and how to build better relationships between our both countries from a position of trust and respect and with that a better future for the generations to come.

Fifth:

We reject the manipulation and the attempts at presenting our just struggle for restoration and liberation from the annexation of Cameroon as secession. We were to be an

independent country in 1961 at the termination of the British UN trusteeship on the same bases of which French Cameroon became independent from France at the end of the French UN Trusteeship. Since 1961 when the troops of French Cameroon crossed the borders into our country we have been leaving the life of second class citizens in our own home country. We will not put aside our demands for French Cameroon to pull out its troops from our Land nor will we stop our struggle until we have Freedom and justice.

Sixth:

We reiterate our disposition toward finding a political solution to the problem of the annexation of our country as well as building genuine relationship based on respect with the people of French Cameroon to create a stable and prosperous sub region. We call upon the civil society in French Cameroon to take the role it deserves in the issues that have to do with our two countries before the situation gets out of control, for it will be a fatal mistake for the French Cameroonian civil society to imagine that we are going to accept our condition as a product of nature, for we'll not. We call upon the civil society of French Cameroon to organize itself so that we could put forth a coalition for peace, grassroots democracy and justice for the sub region; in which we'll struggle simultaneously for a peaceful transition to grassroots democracy in Cameroon, and Freedom and Justice to the people of Ambazonia; from the oppressive party political system of Mr. Paul Biya. Democratic change and Justice are going to be the only alternative to war in this part of the Globe; a condition that will affect our both countries.

Seventh:

We call on all honest sectors of civil society to attend a Dialogue for Grassroots Democracy, Freedom and Justice.

For this reason we say: Brothers and Sisters of Ambazonia:

After the start of our open rejection of this annexation in 1985, the government have responded to our just demands with insult and repression as we look for a civilized way to solve the problem; some sick French Cameroon intellectuals like their government has all along gone out of the way to pretend our problem is that of our colonial language English, even though one of the fundamental departure point of the policies of oppression of French Cameroon has been based on their being a francophone country. This manner of handling this issue has deliberate ignored the essential problem of our need for freedom, justice and grassroots democracy in this African sub region.

Strangely most French Cameroonians believe that Ambazonia must remain in union with French Cameroon, but Ambazonians must accept that they are NOT the equals of French Cameroonians thus French Cameroon must control the united country. We strongly REJECT to be classified and treated as second class humans especially in our Land. The solution that the French Cameroon government has for our problems is to break what is still considered Ambazonia provinces and add the pieces into French Cameroon provinces. A situation which will scrap the very last remains of what use to be the self-governing Ambazonia and bring the people to even more forced assimilation and exploitation, and that is considered by some elements of the French Cameroon neocolonial regime as the way to solve the Ambazonia question.

This neocolonial system has made possible for the continuation of certain organized ethnic syndicates in French Cameroon that have superseded the power of the Constitution, and whose roots have maintained the party in power. It is this system of complicity that has made possible the existence and belligerence of the caciques, the omnipotent power of the Essingam group and their business friends and the spread of corruption in every place of public life.

Just the fact that some delegates to the ill famed "tripartite talks" proposed that the document which Ahijo, Cameroon's former dictator put together and called the Foumban Constitution should be used as a bases for the discussions in the tripartite; it provoked tremendous agitation and open defiance by these sectors. The single party(CPDM) political system is trying to maneuver within this reduced horizon. It can't alienate these sectors without attacking itself, yet it can't leave things as they are without having to face the anger of the French Cameroonian civil society and the people of the annexed Republic of Ambazonia. In other words, to try to seriously approach the Ambazonia question will mean death to the state party system, as much of their French and Cameroonian supporters benefit directly from the occupation, and the system will not be able to exploits the difference between the two countries to weep up sentiments and deflect the frustration of French Cameroon workers and peasants from it's own failing policies anymore. By suicide or execution, the death of the current French Cameroonian political system is a necessary precondition, although it is not sufficient, for the transition to grassroots democracy in French Cameroon and Freedom and justice for Ambazonia. We understand we stand the chance for a more constructive and safe approach to the Ambazonian liberation if the situation in French Cameroon gets more democratic. Yet we'll only work with those French Cameroonians who understand that we are human enough to exercise our non-alienable rights to Freedom and justice.

The ALIP understands that the problem of poverty and backwardness in the Mid West Central African sub region (Ambazonia and French Cameroon) isn't due to a lack of resources. Our fundamental understanding and position is that whatever efforts are made will only postpone the problem if these efforts aren't made within the context of new local, regional, and national political relationships marked by grassroots democracy, freedom, and justice. The problem of power is not a question of who rules, but of who exercises power. If it is exercised by a majority of the people, the political parties will be obligated to put their proposals forward to the people instead of merely relating to each other.

Looking at the problem of power within the context of democracy, freedom, and justice in this sub region will create a new political culture within the parties. A new type of political leadership will be born, and without a doubt a new types of political parties will be born as well. What we are here in effect looking to is to network and show solidarity with French Cameroonians who have the same dream as we; that is the dream to leave in a world of grassroots democracy, Freedom and Justice both within French Cameroon and Ambazonia. which should lead to something preceding a new world in the sub region: an antechamber looking into the new West Central African Sub region.

In this sense, this revolution will not end in a new clan/ ethnic group in power. It will end in a free and democratic space for political struggle. This free and democratic space will be born on the fetid cadaver of the state party(CPDM) system and the tradition of fixed presidential succession. A new political relationship will be born, a relationship based not in the confrontation of political organizations among themselves, but in the confrontation of their political proposals with different social classes. Political leadership will depend on the support of these social classes, and not on the mere exercise of power. In this new political relationship, different political proposals (socialism, capitalism, social democracy, liberalism, christian democracy, etc.) will have to convince a majority of the citizens that their proposal is the best for their country. The groups in power will be watched by the people in such a way that they will be obligated to give a regular accounting of themselves, and the people will be able to decide whether they remain in power or not. The plebiscite is a regulated form of confrontation among the nation, political parties, and power, and it merits a place in the highest laws of this two countries.

Current law in the sub-region is built from two negative positions:

- On the intention to enhance the annexation and forced assimilation of Ambazonians: Here there is the use of massive repression and brute military force.
- To make sure that those who are in power can absolutely control French Cameroon and guarantee that their cronies from especially France and elsewhere exploit the resources for the benefit of these criminal syndicate.

Thus in the sub region we are looking for comrades with which to work on solidarity platform to create a new political relationships between the governed and the governors. A Mid West Central African Grassroots Democracy Convention is needed from which to detailedly look into the problems in the sub region on the principles of enhancing grassroots democracy and not to trick one another into getting text on paper to justify violations of the inalienable rights of people in the sub region.

This Mid West Central African Grassroots Democracy Convention should lead to the creation of new proposals for the civil society of both countries on how the news constitutions of the both countries should look like; and in that context how new elections in both countries should be held. The pain that this process will bring to this sub region will be less than the damage that would be caused by a civil war. We know that the prophecy of a liberation war breaking between Ambazonia and French Cameroon neocolonial regime is also applicable for parties within French Cameroon not ready to be taken for another ride by the Biya regime in the coming elections. We can learn from what has already occurred in different parts of the world so that there is less pain during the birth of the new Mid West Central African sub region.

The ALIP have it's ideas about how national structures could look like but we think as a politically mature organization we should be able to only propose and have all express the right to participate in deciding, freely and democratically, the course that the sub region must take. Not only will a better and more just sub region emerge from this historic synthesis, but a new sub region as well. This is why we are gambling our lives getting

involving in making such proposals (knowing the regime's only response will be to ask for our heads) so that the future generation can inherit a sub region in which it isn't shameful to live or originate from ...

The ALIP, is a party with a structure without precedence in Africa which puts together the principles of antiauthoritarian concepts and grassroots organizing structures, to do political work covering such a broad space, which came out of a two year exchange between activists. With grassroots democracy, freedom and justice as our main demand. In our struggle, the ALIP will reinvent the image of the African person whom for years has been described by some as unable to think and act inventively.

The cry of dignity of the 200 million black people humiliated and brutalized and close to 7 million murder in some of the most violent way in the process of the transatlantic slave trade shall have a redemption as we stand here against senseless brutality and exploitation from a handful of Africans (the regime of French Cameroon) against a large group of African in exchange for favors from a handful of Europeans (led by French neocolonial hawks). We cannot accept abuses for the simple reason that our oppressor have guns. In the present circumstance the regime of annexation is making it slowly impossible for us to continue our struggle peacefully for our elemental rights as human beings. The most valuable of these rights is the right to decide, freely and democratically, how we are governed. Now the possibility of a peaceful change to at least multiparty democracy confronts a new test: the electoral process that will take place this October 2004. There are those who are betting on the outcome of the elections and the post election period. There are those who are predicting apathy and disillusionment. They hope to profit from the blood of those who fall in the struggles, both violent and peaceful, in the cities and in the countryside. They found their political project in the conflict they hope will come after the elections.

They hope that the political demobilization will once again open the door to war. They say that they will save the sub region. Others hope that the armed conflict will restart before the elections so that they can take advantage of the chaotic situation to keep themselves in power. Just as they did before, when they usurped popular will with electoral fraud, these people hope to take advantage of a pre-electoral civil war in order to prolong the agony of a dictatorship that has already lasted decades. There are others, sterile naysayers, who reason that war is inevitable and who are waiting to watch their enemy's cadaver float by...or their friend's cadaver. The sectarians suppose, erroneously, that just the firing of a gun will bring about the dawn that people in the sub region have waited for since night fell upon Ambazonian soil with the occupation in the night of September 30th 1961 and in the French Cameroon soil with the murder of Um Nyobe and Felix Moumie.

In it all we have the strongest weapon ever, that is reason. And hope gives life to our reason. We won't let them steal our hope. Now is the time for hope to organize itself and to walk forward in the valleys and in the cities, as it did before in the Eastern house of Assembly in Nigeria. Fight with your own weapons you who are into political party politics in the present frame though we reject the two fold method of first fighting to get power in Cameroon then Freedom and justice for Ambazonia, for in our view the

occupation being illegal can not in any minute be justified. Don't worry about us, whether you are a parent, a teacher, a primary school student, a secondary school student, a high school student, a university student, a work in one office or an other. It is the time for you to open your eyes and try to understand what we are saying by acquainting yourself with our manifesto and opening a cell of the party in your field. We know how to resist to the end. We know how to wait... And we know what to do if the doors through which dignity walks remains close too long.

This is why we address our brothers and sisters in different nongovernmental organizations, political parties in the present annexation frame which is our present reality, workers in the cities and in the countryside, teachers and students, housewives and homeless and jobless, artists and intellectuals, members of independent political parties who wish to use the two fold tack tick of using tools within the present frame to fight for our rights, Ambazonians at home and in exile.

We are here calling all of you to a sub regional dialogue with the theme of grassroots democracy, justice and freedom. For this reason, we put forward the following invitation to a Mid West Central African Grassroots Democracy Convention:

We, the Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP), struggling to achieve grassroots democracy, freedom, and justice that our country deserves, and considering that:

- One: The annexation regime has usurped the legality that we inherited from the end of our self-government as a UN trust territory.
- Two: The Constitution that exists on the bases of which this regime pretend to take it's legitimacy doesn't reflect the popular will in the sub region (Ambazonia under annexation and French Cameroon).
- Three: The resignation of the governing executive usurper isn't enough and that a new law is necessary for the new countries that will be born from the struggles of all honest citizens of this part of the African continent.
- Four: Every form of struggle is necessary in order to achieve the transition to grassroots democracy, freedom and justice in this part of the world.

Considering these things, we call for a sub regional Grassroots Democracy Convention from which will come up with ideas of how to achieve grassroots democratic governments and national laws, and new constitutions that will guarantee the legal fulfillment of the people's will in the sub region. This Grassroots Democracy Convention will be international in that the two states of the region and the civil societies in both states will be represented as well as international social justice organizations. It will be plural in the sense that all patriotic sectors of both countries will be represented. It will be democratic in the way in which it will make decisions by consultations with the grassroots.

- The Convention will be presided over, freely and voluntarily, by civilians, prestigious public figures, regardless of their political affiliation, race, religion, sex, or age.
- The Convention will be launched by local, state, and regional committees in every

community, division, towns, schools, and villages. These committees of the Convention will be in charge of collecting the people's proposals for the new constitutions and the Gathering itself.

-The Convention should propose modalities to achieve free and democratic elections in the sub region and should fight for the people will to be respected.

-The ALIP will recognize the convention as the authentic representative of the interests of the people of the sub region in their transition to democracy.

-The ALIP has a good knowledge of the local realities, organizing techniques and a broad network of contacts to possible volunteers from around the world; to offer itself to the people of the sub region to help run self organized workshops to help the people make decisions well informed about the issues.

For the first meeting of the Mid West Central African Grassroots Democracy Convention. The ALIP offers a meeting place Bamenda and ALIP will take responsibility for lodging feeding and providing other infrastructure for the meeting. The date and place of the first session of the Mid West Central African Grassroots Democracy Convention will be announced when it is appropriate to do so.

Fellow Ambazonia Brothers and Sisters:

Our struggle continues. The Ambazonia flag still waves in the top of mount. Fako again: and today we say: "We will fight for our RIGHTS. There is no turning back"! Pouring water on the flow we speak to our dead so that their words will guide us along the path that we must walk. The drums sounds, and in the voices of our villages dancing and still leaving in misery like our fore fathers 800 years ago in the mist of slave trade, we hear our pain and our history.

"Freedom and justice for all," Without which our dead died in vain. "Find in your hearts the voices of those for whom we fight the future generations. Invite them to walk the dignified path of those who have no faces. Call them to resist. Let no one receive anything from those who rule. Ask them to reject the handouts from the powerful. Let all the good people in this land organize with dignity. Let them resist and not sell out.

"Don't surrender! Resist! Resist with dignity in the lands of the true men and women! Let the mountains from Fako up until Oku down to the river Manyu shelter the pain of the people of this land. Don't surrender! Resist! Don't sellout!
Resist!"

We think our dead must have had these appeals in their heart in that last moment before they gave up the ghost. We have understood that there is no other way, that there is truth in there words and dignity in this counsel. For this reason we call on our brother from French Cameroon to resist with us this insanity that could bring us all unimaginable pain. We call on the villagers, taxi drivers, park boys to resist with us. We call on the workers, homeless, housewives, students, teachers, intellectuals, writers, on all those with dignity,

to resist with us. The Biya regime doesn't want democracy in our sub region. We will accept nothing that comes from the rotting heart of this regime, not a single coin nor a single dose of medication, not a single stone nor a single grain of food. We will not accept the handouts that this regime offers in exchange for our dignity.

We will not take anything from the Biya regime. Although they increase our pain and sorrow, although death may accompany us, although we may see others selling themselves to the hand that oppresses them, although everything may hurt and sorrow may cry out from the rocks, we will not accept anything. We will resist. We will not take anything from this regime. We will resist until those who are in power exercise their power while obeying the people's will, freedom and justice.

Brothers and Sisters:

Don't sell out. Resist with us. Don't surrender. Resist with us. Repeat along with us, "We will not surrender! We will resist!"

-Let these words be heard not only in the mountains in Buea and Oku but all over the Mid West Central African sub region.

-Let it be heard on Ambazonian and French Cameroon coasts. Let it be heard in the center of both countries. Let it cry out in the valleys and in the mountains. Let it sound in the cities and in the countryside. Unite your voices, brothers. Cry out with us: "We will not surrender! We will resist!"

-Let dignity break the siege and lift off of us the filthy hands with which the regime is trying to strangle us. We are all under siege. They will not let democracy, freedom, and justice enter the sub region.

Brothers and Sisters, we are all under siege. We will not surrender! We will resist! We have dignity! We will not sellout! What good are the riches of the powerful if they aren't able to buy the most valuable thing in these lands? If the dignity of the people of the sub region has no price, then what good is the power of the powerful?

Grassroots democracy!
Freedom!
Justice!

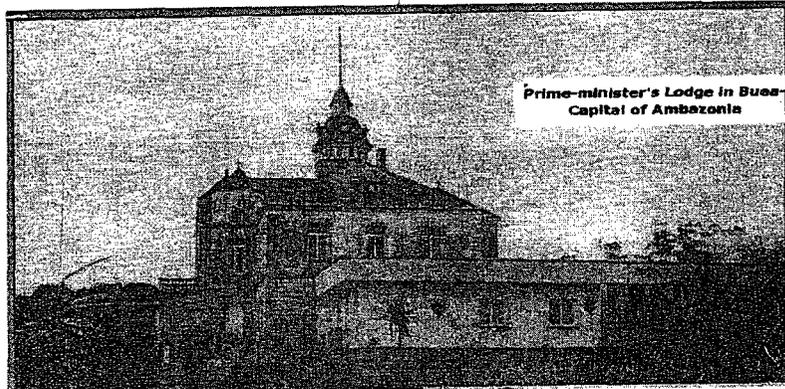
From Buea at the foot of Mount Fako,
Ambazonia Liberation Party(ALIP).
Internal Communications Committee.
Spokes council of the Ambazonia Liberation Party(ALIP).
Ambazonia October, 2004

AMIBAS

Mt.Fako  Mt. Oku

TRIBUNE

BI-MONTHLY PAPER FOR POLITICS, ECONOMICS & CULTURE



A Confederation?! a Chop-ah-chop Republique!

We have all the necessary conditions to be a country... we'll fight for restoring our independence, more so because we are a country hostages.

Ambazonia went from an English colony to a confederation with Cameroon for both to start rebuilding their societies after colonialism. But ended-up a colony of Cameroon, which is herself a colony of France; with a Flag and Anthem independence. Fon Achiribi II of Bafut described it as **jumping from the heat of the frying-pan into the fire**. We were better off before as a British colony with a Parliamentary system instead of the the autocracy we are now forced to live in.

An intellectually bankrupt Elite took control of Cameroon after French troops murdered the Cameroon UPC freedom fighters. Nepotism and tribalism became a key fact of Cameroon politics. **Cameroon Elite and their masters in Paris exploit the difference between both countries to create coercion hoping to displace Cameroon peasants' and workers' frustration onto the Ambazonians. And to cover their pillage of the resources of Ambazonia (e.g. petrol).**

"An anglophone can not be president of a French Country-Cameroon" Declared Charles Pasqua Interior Minister of France after an

Ambazonian (Fru Ndi) won presidential elections in 1992 and a Cameroonian (Paul Biya) imposed himself as president. -"The enemy in the house" is how Cameroon politician Emah Basile describe Ambazonians.

There is serious discrimination against Ambazonians in scholarship award, job training, employment, building schools, roads and others. The longest serving Minister Mr. Mbombo Njoya states " they can go elsewhere" in other words they can go to hell if they wish.

AMBAZONIANS like all oppressed PEOPLES AND CLASSES MOST RISE UP and free themselves.



INFORMATION TICKER

-Berlin: AS ALIP branches prepare to launch their activities; ALIP Germany will be launched on Saturday 21.08.04 at the Technical University in Berlin.

-Kumba: The Case of the brutal murder of Hon Martin Esemé is in the H-Court. The question is if the trial will be fair, as government tried to prevent it but for massive press intervention. Two top ranking officials Nnoko Mbele and Nfon Mukete are involved. (more: www.ambazonia.indymedia.org)

-Yaounde: Martin Cheonemu one of the remaining 17 Ambazonia political hostages in Cameroon High security prison awaiting court appeal since 1999 died on 2.8.04. from bad detention conditions. **We have to start a world-wide campaign for the unconditional release of the rest of them.**

-Bamenda: The activist Albert Mukong has died. He was buried on 31.07.04. He did outlived Ahijo who incarcerated him for 6years in High security prison.

Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP).

A new page on our liberation has begun....

That includes thinking of breaking the chains of annexation and building a grass roots participative democratic society. Thus ALIP structure.

Most important is organizing of Party Cells, where people give opinions on the process of the liberation and get the opinion of others. Opinions of one cell is further shared with the other cells and together Party decisions are made on all issues.

Read ALIP website with your friends and decide from now to form your own ALIP Cell-in your school, job, quarters, village, and town.

send us your opinion and commentaries : ambazonia@riseup.net

1. **Preamble**

**TO THE PEOPLE OF AMBAZONIA
AMBAZONIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS;**

After the ravage of 500 years of transatlantic slave trade that uprooted our society from its foundation and defaced our person, and 74 years of colonialism that left our society upside-down as far as the psyche of our person is concerned, we are now the object of an other very cruel form of subjugation by a fellow Africa country (Cameroon) for the last 43 years.

As former enslaved and colonized peoples around the world tried to pick themselves up from the pain, humiliation and memory of the past, to patch-up a new future in the rugged task of rebuilding their societies, our chance to do so was ripped by the fraudulent events of 1961 called the Foumban Accord.

The Foumban Accord violated everything the law had for our people. In the TWO ALTERNATIVE DOCUMENT [THE PLEBSICITE PACT], passed by the Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia) Plebiscite Order in Council of January 27, 1961, the following was stated as the constitutional arrangement for the implementation of the decision at the plebiscite

--quote
" A vote for attaining independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon would mean that by an early date to be decided by the United Nations after consultation with the Governments of the Southern Cameroons and the Cameroon Republic and the United Kingdom as Administering Authority, the Southern Cameroons (Ambazonia-my addition) and the Cameroon Republic would unite in a Federal United Cameroon Republic. The arrangement would be worked out after the plebiscite by a conference consisting of representative delegations of equal status from the Republic and the Southern Cameroons. The United Nations and the United Kingdom would also be associated with this conference
--unquote

The Foumban Event which was explained to our people as an effort to build a confederation of two countries, to walk the road of reconstruction in the post slavery/colonial era turn out to be a fiasco.

2005 JUN 20 PM 3: 27
CRM/ISS/REGISTRATION UNIT

A total fiasco with respects to how the laws which applied to our case were all violated: From that of the UN Trusteeship Council Resolution 2013 [XXVI] of May 31, 1960 which sanctioned the pre-plebiscite discussions that produced the TWO ALTERNATIVES Resolutions, to the UN General Assembly Resolutions 1608 [XV] of April 21, 1961 which approved the results of the February 11, 1961 plebiscite, the so-called FOUMBAN ACCORD turned out a ruse to disguise the annexation of Ambazonia.

Once Ambazonians elected their own governments in 1958 with a Prime Minister as Head of Government supported by two houses of legislature and an independent judiciary, Ambazonia then in 1958 had completed its requirement vis a vis the United Nations Articles 76 [b] --the Article that clearly mandated that UN Trusteeships were to be ruled to ensure a progressive development of the people from the relative state of dependency into the state of independence which occurs once the Trusteeship was terminated. The British terminated Trusteeship over the British Southern Cameroon(Ambazonia) in September 30 1960.

Foumban for Ambazonia has now come to mean brutal subjugation, the loss of our sovereignty and the shedding of the blood of our Brothers and Sister who are shot every now and then by Cameroon troops for demanding respect of their rights as human beings. Foumban has meant the hardening of our people's hands from their hard work to raise reserves for cooperation like the National Produce Marketing Board, Santa Tea & Coffee Estate, the CDC, etc. Which reserves Cameroonian colonizing Elites plundered and declared these once prosperous economic entities bankrupt.

On the whole it has been 43 years of the scourge policies of the neocolonial Cameroonian elite. In these 43 years every element that could have served as a building block for the reclamation of our person from the ruins of slavery and colonialism has been wrenched with the use of the brute force of soldiers and gendarmes. Since the day the troops of Cameroon crossed the borders to our country, a policy to systematically annihilate all the building blocks in Ambazonian society has been implemented. For the powerful of Cameroon and the government of Cameroon, to come from Ambazonia or to look Ambazonian is reason for discrimination, scorn, shame, suspicion and hatred.

Cameroon has been assisted in these crimes by one of the most shameless clique of traitors and sell-outs. These traitors moved by greed, naiveté and opportunism have joined the Cameroonian Elite in that desperate rush to enrich themselves from the blood and misery of our people. These are the same kind of people who in 1965 betrayed Prime Minister Ngom Jua and exposed him for execution by the Cameroon regime. These are the same traitors whom 43 years ago opposed S.A. George, Chief Nyenti of Bachuo, Paul Kale and Fon Achiribi II of Bafut as they struggled to fight for the interest of our people on the eve of the Founban Conference. These are the same sell-outs whom with their Cameroonian cronies recently participated in the illegal sales of the Bakweri Lands to themselves. They are the same who have never ceased to sacrifice us on the altar of their gluttony. They are the same who are trying their best today to animate trouble between our peoples from the North and South zones. They are the same ones who continue to pretend that there was no oppression of Ambazonians inside Cameroon, as they adjust from one marginalization argument to the next. Some of them have resorted to flying from one foreign capital to the other with money from the regime that oppress our people to proclaim that everything is fine and going smoothly with Ambazonians inside Cameroon, even as we plead for help.

We are the victims of MISCHIEF, TYRANNY and STUPIDITY, all disguised under the ideology of pan-cameroonism

To prevent the continuation of this ravages to our society, we the Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP) have decided to invoke our INALIENABLE RIGHTS as spelt out, but not limited to the following statutes:

-The UN General Assembly Resolution 224 ; 111 of November 18th 1948 Protecting our country from annexation, As well as United Nations General Assembly Declaration 1514 [XV] GAOR, DECLARATION GRANTING INDEPENENCE TO ALL COLONIAL AND DEPENDENT PEOPLE, (A/AC 240/1995/CR. 11R.1) recognizing the RIGHTS OF A PEOPLE UNDER FOREIGN DOMINATION TO FREE THEMSELVES FROM SUCH DOMINATION.

-We as well recognize the fact that:

a- The Cameroon President Biya officially terminated the Confederation from the Founban Conference which was the excuse for their occupation of our country; by Presidential Degree number 83-11 of July 27 1983.

Thus the only constitutional linkage between Cameroon and Ambazonia, albeit since Fouban Accord an illegal one, had by this decree been irreversibly severed. Biya by Presidential decree number 84-001 of February 4 abolished the United Republic of Cameroon; whose President he was and replaced it with the Republic of Cameroon. But whether by design or by error this law did not include a clause retaining the institution of the revived Republic of Cameroon, and so abolished all the institutions of the Federal United Republic of Cameroon with it.

b- In 1992 in a law suit called HCB28/92 at Bamenda High Court, Cameroon was forced by it's own court to recognize Ambazonia as a sovereign state and to acknowledge that Ambazonia is illegally and forcibly being occupied by Cameroon.

We, the Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP) will:

1. Fight and end this bitter episode as a conquered people and restore our sovereignty and independence.
2. Develop participatory democratic structures to end the old practice of some individuals making decisions in the name of the people without the people participating in the discussions or process.
3. Work to develop a Party that involves and respects the grass roots, which empowers individuals and groups to develop their own voice and participate in deciding the destiny of the society.

Accordingly, the Manifesto Working Group, working through participatory decision making process of discussions and improvement of proposals to arrive at this document; recommend to the party that we adopt the Manifesto of the Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP) in order to establish a grassroots participatory democratic party to be known as the Ambazonia Liberation Party (ALIP).

Contact:
ambazonia@riseup.net

Mission Statement and Principles of Unity

ARTICLE -1

Mission statement

We the Ambazonian Liberation Party (ALIP) have decided to end the scourge of the occupation regime of Cameroon, We will serve as a catalyst that will spur our people in the struggle to restore our sovereignty and independence, with it our emancipation. We will serve as the antithesis to the power structure of the neocolonialism Cameroon regime as we struggle to liberate ourselves. We will develop and encourage new ways of conducting the business of our people's emancipation that submits to the principles of democratic transparency and grass roots' participation in decision making processes. Thus getting rid of the static hierarchies that has served but the few whom through treachery managed to get themselves at the top of these hierarchies.

We want to put to rest the curse of personality worshipping that has created the mentality of first stressing "who-should-be-the-leader", rather than what is to be done. For who can argue that over 20 years after the first real moves were made in the direction of changing the oppressive status quo we are right here today jammed-tight in the muddy waters of "who-should-be-the-leader".

Thus the ALIP have asked for a revolutionary process of participatory democracy by which we will go about our liberation certain that no one can trade us some day again for personal interest. This entails putting up structures and progressive processes that allow us all to work together, discuss together, decide together and move on together and leaves no one the chance to sell us out or to be bought over by the Cameroon regime or any other regime.

ARTICLE -2

A: Principles of Unity

1. The ALIP is based on the principles of equality and consensus organizing, recognizing the importance of grass roots participation in deciding the destiny of peoples.

2. The ALIP considers the participation of the ordinary citizens in the decision making processes of the society a prerequisite to the building of a durable, free and just society.

3. The ALIP recognize the importance of establishing set processes towards eliciting social change: from interpersonal relationships to group dynamics ALIP shall strive therefore that members organize themselves collectively and be committed to the principle of consensus decision making and the development of a direct participatory democratic process that is transparent to its membership. Where each person's commitment and contribution is about the ideal of developing a better society and not a reason Lord it on the others. Where each person's role is a duty and not a position of authority to exact obedience.

4. The ALIP recognize that a prerequisite for participation in the decision making process of each local party cell is the contribution of an individual's effort and resources to the group.

5. The ALIP shall be committed to the development of non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian relationships: to develop a pattern and practice consistent with the mission and purpose of the Party, and to care for each other person's needs.

6. The ALIP shall be committed to the principle of human equality, and shall not discriminate neither based upon tribe, place of Birth, place of origin of parents, sex, religion or any other. Concomitantly, all shall work together collectively to decide policy in regards to dealing with those who spread hate based on tribe or any of the above. Everybody shall be judged by the content of their character.

7. That while taking the security factor into consideration, the ALIP shall be opened to everybody in the community (neighbourhood) to participate in its work if they so wish to.

8. That, the ALIP while recognizing the vast cultural traditions within our society shall be committed to building diversity along all socio-cultural lines within our society.

B: Membership Criteria

ARTICLE -3

Membership in the Party will require the individual to AGREE in conscience and in practice to the Party Mission Statement and Principles of Unity.

ARTICLE -4

1. Membership to a Party Cell shall be determined by the members of the particular cell as they know their locality and those residing there better. New Cells to the Party shall be confirmed by the Spokes-Council.

ARTICLE -5

We understands that the struggle to restore our independence, to regain our dignity, respect, and rights of self-determination have set many people advocating under different groups with different approaches. Thus we claims no special privileges in advocating for our peoples rights but rather see ourselves as an ally to group and individuals who seriously mean business in ending the nightmares of the current Cameroon occupation of Ambazonia. It is in this spirit that the ALIP mourns the martyrs of our struggle. It is with the same spirit that ALIP recognizes that it is intimately linked with the thousands of families who have lost members of their families to this cause under the banner of one or another of these groups, known and unknown, they must be recognized as freedom fighters whose legacy ALIP will seek to continue in a more structured and methodical fashion.

C: The Party Structure

ARTICLE -6

The ALIP is composed mainly of the: Cells, Committees, Working Groups, Spokes-Council and the Congress.

-The ALIP recognizes the following definitions as valuable to its organizational structure:

6(I): A Cell

The Cell is the most basic part of the Party.

- a. Each cell shall make every effort to have a minimum of twelve (12) members,
- b. Each Cell shall have a decision-making policy that is in alignment with the consensus decision-making principles in line with the frame in internal-functioning-document.
- c. Each new cell shall be launched by the Spokes-Council to become a full part of the Party.
- d. Each Cell shall delegates a spokesperson to serve as a bridge between the Cell and the spokes-council on a two year rotatory bases. The Spokespersons also makes decisions for their Cell at the Spokes-Council since they are better informed about their Cell positions on issues and local reality.
- e. New party members can either join an existing cell or initiative a new cell if there is no cell close to them. Normally cells are encouraged to work together with cells closer to their locale.
- f. Cells in a geographic region shall network themselves into a chapter, to make their mobilization efforts more effective.

-g. The Cell shall make decision on issues that have to do mainly with their locality seeing they have a better capacity to implement Party policy at the locality best known to them.

6(II): Party Committees

Party Committees are groups formed and approved by the Spokes-Council to engaged in work directly related to the development and sustainability of the party, to include, but not limited to; Committee for Internal Relations, Financial Committee, Committee for Support of Victims of the struggle, Committee for Communication, Committee for Public Relations etc.

-a. The Party Committees shall make decisions on behalf of the Spokes-council (party) on the issues placed under their competence.

-b. Party Committees are generally made up of four persons; delegated by the Spokes-council to handle the work of the Committee in question. The four members of the Party Committee can further buffer their work by inviting other individuals to support their work. The four persons must not necessarily be members of the spokes-council as it is most important that the task of the Committee is done, but they must be members of the party thus bound by the values of the party as spell in the Manifesto.

The work of the Party Committees is facilitated by an Ambassador (messenger) who is responsible for coordinating the work of the Committee as a RESPONSIBILITY in the task sharing effort in the Committee but NOT as a POWER position. The Ambassador (messenger) position is rotatory within the Committee on a 6months base, thus enhancing skill sharing. Decision-making policy of a committee must be in alignment with consensus decision-making principles in line with the frame in internal-functioning-document.

-c. Party Committees have a life Span of 2years after which the Spokes-council will delegate four new persons for the Party Committee in question.

6(III) Ambassador(messenger) of a Party Committee

-Is a facilitator of the work in the Party Committee.

-Coordinating the compiling into a document the work of the Committee, which the Ambassador then presents to the Spokes-council.

-Compiling meeting Agenda of Committee meetings including report of pending task and input to the Agenda by other 3 Committee members.

-Ambassador also facilitates discussions in the Committee using as a frame internal-functioning-document.

-Presents the next Ambassador delegated by their Committee to the Spokes-council at the end of his/her 6months as Ambassador for the Committee in question.

6(IV) Party Working groups

Party Working groups are setup to handle very specific task within a GIVEN TIME FRAME that is decided at their formation, by either the Congress or Spokes-Council. At formation a Coordinator is delegates to facilitate the work of the working group. The number of persons in a working group is decided at formation based on the task.

-The Party working group shall make decisions on behalf of the Spokes-council on the subject delegated to them by the Spokes-council.

6(V) The Spokes-Council

- a. The Spokes-council is THE MAIN DECISION MAKING BODY of the Party: It is composed of spokespersons delegated by each cell.
- b. The SPOKESPERSONS mainly take local proposals to the Spokes-Council as well as take discussions from the council to their local CELL for discussion.
- c. The spokespersons together in a consensus manner make decisions on the running of the party (in the Spokes-council). In the Spokes-council decisions shall be made on consensus while emphasizing that all Spokespersons confirm the fact that they as well as their Cell do UNDERSTAND what is being decided.
- d. Decision-making policy at the Council is to be in alignment with consensus decision-making principles USING AS A FRAME internal-functioning-document.
- e. All the main decisions on the day to day running of the party are made either directly by the spokes-council or by Party Committees or Party Working groups set up by the Spokes-council.
- f. The Spokes-Council is also responsible for the main preparation for the party congress together with the hosting Cell(s).
- g. The Spokes-council shall adapt, or initiate, the creation of Committees or Working Groups in order to make decisions and implement specific tasks and projects for the party.
- h. The Spokes-Council shall also confirm the official launching of new cells.
- i. Proposals are brought from the cells, working groups and committees by their spokespersons and or Ambassadors respectively to the Spokes-council. These proposals if adopted by the SPOKESCOUNCIL, then the adopted proposals are submitted to the cells and committees by the spokes-council for implementation.
- j. The Spokes-Council will meet once every six months, or as necessary, at a time that is reasonable for all regional cells. Meetings shall be with the use of all possible communication tools, If there is no possibility for the meeting to be face to face. Every effort shall be made to notify everyone within at least two week in advance.
- k. If a cell or any individual decides to be disruptive of the Work of the party, the Spokes-council will put together a Working Group to investigate the incident and make proposals to the Spokes-council what kind of sanction can be applied via warning, serious warning or expulsion from the Party.
- l. The Spokes-council shall alone be responsible for decisions on strategy and tactics to attain the liberation of our territory; Everything that has to do with the respect of human dignity which is at the core of the values we uphold, of anti-tribalism or discrimination of any sort. The Spokes-council is also alone responsible for the sustenance of participative democracy which is at the foundation of our wish to revolutionize attitudes and relations to duty and power.

For that is the main way to guarantee that our destiny as a people do not get hijacked again by a few for the purpose of personal benefit.

6 (VI) There shall be a Party Congress Every four years.

But in the Case of an Emergency the Spokes-Council could call an Emergency Congress or postpone the holding of a congress. In the Congress evaluation of the work of the past years is done and the tasks for the coming years to the next congress is curved out.

The spokes-council shall create a working group to prepare every congress. And the working group shall be made of delegates from the hosting cell and the spokes-council. The task of the working group will include organising; location, resources, facilitation of Congress. The task shall also include deciding; the number of Plenary sessions that will take place and workshops, who will facilitate (moderate) which plenary, when the honorary delegates will address the Congress, security/lodging of delegates etc. And sorting out the strategic important of all the activities at the Congress to the overall liberation.

D: Decision Making

ARTICLE -7

1.-The ALIP adopts the model of Consensus for all decisions at all levels in the Party. Our frame is Formal Consensus as spell-out in internal-functioning-document. Yet it is up to each Cell, Committee, working group, and the Spokes-Council to determine how consensus will be implemented by them.

2.-The ALIP as with reference to information flow within the party is supposed to be adaptive to an "All-channel-network-approach" whereby coordination and communications take place between as many groups as possible in order to enhance flexibility, prevent lethargy and redundancy, and develop mutual aid within the Party. In other words, maximum communication and resource flow is to be encouraged between cells, Committees and the Spokes-council and not centralized or restricted from one particular group to another.

ARTICLE -8

1. The ALIP recognizes that in order to function as a Party that empowers and receives power from the people, it will need to develop a flexible, fluid and effective decision-making structure that will harness the energy of individuals and groups at the local levels.

2. The ALIP recognizes the following groups empowered to make decisions that directly affect the party at the different levels: Cell, Party Committee, Party Working Groups, the Spokes-Council and of course the Party Congress.

3. The ALIP recognizes that there is an important need for a Spokes-Council where spokespersons from each Cell are represented to make decisions that affect the whole party. It is also recognized that careful discussion and deliberation are necessary in order to decide what constitutes a decision that affects the whole party.

ARTICLE -9

Committees are:

- Committee for Support of Victims of the struggle

This Committee has the following task:

- 1-Gathering information of victims of the struggle. That includes their names or names/contacts of their families; especially for those in jail, those who died and those who have been maimed as a results of this struggle of ours.
- 2-Take contact with this victims or their families on the one hand to publicize their case and to mobilize support for them.

-Finance Committee

- 1-This Committee is responsible for the funds of the Party.
- 2-It keeps a record of all the financial expenditures of the Party as well as where other resources of the Party like Computers and other equipments are located.
- 3-This Committee thinks up policy for fund raising and mobilization of other resources.
- 4-This Committee handle request by cells, Committees or Working groups for funds from the main accounts of the Party. Which request are considered in the back-drop of what other request exist, what funds are available as well as the possibility of mobilizing new funds.
- 5-All Cells, Working groups or Committees who decide to make any direct appeal to any individual or institution for funds in the NAME OF THE PARTY MUST first discuss that with this Committee.
- 6-This Committee keeps a report of how much was requested and how much was made available for the particular request. This information is further reported to the Spokes-council.

-Committee for Public Relations

- 1-This Committee have the task to handle the image of the Party. It drafts and issues press releases, press statements on behave of the party and prepares party members for interviews and similar process. Thus ensuring that the message from the party is coherent and does not contradict.
- 2-It has to investigate new ways of doing PR for the party. It takes responsibility for keeping a news reader on the party.
- 3-This Committee is also responsible for putting together our history in an distorted manner.

-Communications Committee

- 1-The main task of this Committee is to Coordinate Communication within the Party; especially Within the Spokespersons who normally bring the information to their Cells.

2-It collects all proposals/request sent to the Spokes-council. It puts a dateline for cells to send in amendments to the proposal and sends the proposals to the various Cells through their Spokespersons. The dateline is 21days after the proposals is sent out to the various cells through their spokespersons. After the dateline if there is no veto the proposal rewritten to include proposed amendments from other cells is then adopted. For technical reasons and in the case of very complicated issues, the dateline can be postponed.

3-For proposals where there already exist a solution within the confines of the Party the Communication Committee will respond to such request by pointing to the viable response-information and copy all Cells, seeing the misunderstanding could be the case elsewhere.

-Committee for Internal Relations

1-Helps support in launching new party cells by providing the individuals or groups wishing to launch a New Party cell with information as to how the party functions and also try to organize contact between the new Cell and other existing Cell(s) close to them geographically.

2-When those interested in launching the new Cell in the process of communication with this Committee indicate that they have understood how the Party functions, they'll then fill in a copy of the Cell membership form and send it to this Committee. This Committee will then present the New cell for confirmation to the Spokes-council with the name of their first Spokesperson. Confirmation will be done within 21days of the presentation. During time this Committee will have to communicate any concerns from the Spokes-council to the new cell for clarification and answers.

How Internal process can function with formal consensus

The Advantages of Formal Consensus

There are many ways to make decisions. Sometimes, the most efficient way to make decisions would be to just let the manager (or CEO, or dictator) make them. However, efficiency is not the only criteria. When choosing a decisionmaking method, one needs to ask two questions. Is it a fair process? Does it produce good solutions?

To judge the process, consider the following: Does the meeting flow smoothly? Is the discussion kept to the point? Does it take too long to make each decision? Does the leadership determine the outcome of the discussion? Are some people overlooked?

To judge the quality of the end result, the decision, consider: Are the people making the decision, and all those affected, satisfied with the result? To what degree is the intent of the original proposal accomplished? Are the underlying issues addressed? Is there an appropriate use of resources? Would the group make the same decision again?

Autocracy can work, but the idea of a benevolent dictator is just a dream. We believe that it is inherently better to involve every person who is affected by the decision in the decisionmaking process. This is true for several reasons. The decision would reflect the will of the entire group, not just the leadership. The people who carry out the plans will be more satisfied with their work. And, as the old adage goes, two heads are better than one.

This chapter presents a particular model for decisionmaking we call Formal Consensus. Formal Consensus has a clearly defined structure. It requires a commitment to active cooperation, disciplined speaking and listening, and respect for the contributions of every member. Likewise, every person has the responsibility to actively participate as a creative individual within the structure.

Avoidance, denial, and repression of conflict is common during meetings. Therefore, using Formal Consensus might not be easy at first. Unresolved conflict from previous experiences could come rushing forth and make the process difficult, if not impossible. Practice and discipline, however, will smooth the process. The benefit of everyone's participation and cooperation is worth the struggle it may initially take to ensure that all voices are heard.

It is often said that consensus is time-consuming and difficult. Making complex, difficult decisions is time-consuming, no matter what the process. Many different methods can be efficient, if every participant shares a common understanding of the rules of the game. Like any process, Formal Consensus can be inefficient if a group does not first assent to follow a particular structure. This codifies a formal structure for decisionmaking.

Methods of decisionmaking can be seen on a continuum with one person having total authority on one end to everyone sharing power and responsibility on the other.

The level of participation increases along this decisionmaking continuum. Oligarchies and autocracies offer no participation to many of those who are directly affected. Representative, majority rule, and consensus democracies involve everybody, to different degrees.

Group Dynamics

A group, by definition, is a number of individuals having some unifying relationship. The group dynamic created by consensus process is completely different from that of Parliamentary Procedure, from start to finish. It is based on different values and uses a different language, a different structure, and many different techniques, although some techniques are similar. It might be helpful to explain some broad concepts about group dynamics and consensus.

Conflict

While decisionmaking is as much about conflict as it is about agreement, Formal Consensus works best in an atmosphere in which conflict is encouraged, supported, and resolved cooperatively with respect, nonviolence, and creativity. Conflict is desirable. It is not something to be avoided, dismissed, diminished, or denied.

Majority Rule and Competition

Generally speaking, when a group votes using majority rule or Parliamentary Procedure, a competitive dynamic is created within the group because it is being asked to choose between two (or more) possibilities. It is just as acceptable to attack and diminish another's point of view as it is to promote and endorse your own ideas. Often, voting occurs before one side reveals anything about itself, but spends time solely attacking the opponent! In this adversarial environment, one's ideas are owned and often defended in the face of improvements.

Consensus and Cooperation

Consensus process, on the other hand, creates a cooperative dynamic. Only one proposal is considered at a time. Everyone works together to make it the best possible decision for the group. Any concerns are raised and resolved, sometimes one by one, until all voices are heard. Since proposals are no longer the property of the presenter, a solution can be created more cooperatively.

Proposals

In the consensus process, only proposals which intend to accomplish the common purpose are considered. During discussion of a proposal, everyone works to improve the proposal to make it the best decision for the group. All proposals are adopted unless the group decides it is contrary to the best interests of the group.

Characteristics of Formal Consensus

Before a group decides to use Formal Consensus, it must honestly assess its ability to honor the principles described in Chapter Three. If the principles described in this book are not already present or if the group is not willing to work to create them, then Formal Consensus will not be possible. Any group which wants to adopt Formal Consensus needs to give considerable attention to the underlying principles which support consensus and help the process operate smoothly. This is not to say each and every one of the principles described herein must be adopted by every group, or that each group cannot add its own principles specific to its goals, but rather, each group must be very clear about the foundation of principles or common purposes they choose before they attempt the Formal Consensus decisionmaking process.

Formal Consensus is the least violent decisionmaking process.

Traditional nonviolence theory holds that the use of power to dominate is violent and undesirable. Nonviolence expects people to use their power to persuade without deception, coercion, or malice, using truth, creativity, logic, respect, and love. Majority rule voting process and Parliamentary Procedure both accept, and even encourage, the use of power to dominate others. The goal is the winning of the vote, often regardless of another choice which might be in the best interest of the whole group. The will of the majority supersedes the concerns and desires of the minority. This is inherently violent. Consensus strives to take into account everyone's concerns and resolve them before any decision is made. Most importantly, this process encourages an environment in which everyone is respected and all contributions are valued.

Formal Consensus is the most democratic decisionmaking process.

Groups which desire to involve as many people as possible need to use an inclusive process. To attract and involve large numbers, it is important that the process encourages participation, allows equal access to power, develops cooperation, promotes empowerment, and creates a sense of individual responsibility for the group's actions. All of these are cornerstones of Formal Consensus. The goal of consensus is not the selection of several options, but the development of one decision which is the best for the whole group. It is synthesis and evolution, not competition and attrition.

Formal Consensus is based on the principles of the group.

Although every individual must consent to a decision before it is adopted, if there are any objections, it is not the choice of the individual alone to determine if an objection prevents the proposal from being adopted. Every objection or concern must first be presented before the group and either resolved or validated.

A valid objection is one in keeping with all previous decisions of the group and based upon the commonly-held principles or foundation adopted by the group. The objection must not only address the concerns of the individual, but it must also be in the best interest of the group as a whole. If the objection is not based upon the foundation, or is in contradiction with a prior decision, it is not valid for the group, and therefore, out of order.

Formal Consensus is desirable in larger groups.

If the structure is vague, decisions can be difficult to achieve. They will become increasingly more difficult in larger groups. Formal Consensus is designed for large groups. It is a highly structured model. It has guidelines and formats for managing meetings, facilitating discussions, resolving conflict, and reaching decisions. Smaller groups may need less structure, so they may choose from the many techniques and roles suggested in this book.

Formal Consensus works better when more people participate.

Consensus is more than the sum total of ideas of the individuals in the group. During discussion, ideas build one upon the next, generating new ideas, until the best decision emerges. This dynamic is called the creative interplay of ideas. Creativity plays a major part as everyone strives to discover what is best for the group. The more people involved in this cooperative process, the more ideas and possibilities are generated. Consensus works best with everyone participating. (This assumes, of course, that everyone in the group is trained in Formal Consensus and is actively using it.)

Formal Consensus is not inherently time-consuming.

Decisions are not an end in themselves. Decisionmaking is a process which starts with an idea and ends with the actual implementation of the decision. While it may be true in an autocratic process that decisions can be made quickly, the actual implementation will take time. When one person or a small group of people makes a decision for a larger group, the decision not only has to be communicated to the others, but it also has to be acceptable to them or its implementation will need to be forced upon them. This will certainly take time, perhaps a considerable amount of time. On the other hand, if everyone participates in the decisionmaking, the decision does not need to be communicated and its implementation does not need to be forced upon the participants. The decision may take longer to make, but once it is made, implementation can happen in a timely manner. The amount of time a decision takes to make from start to finish is not a factor of the process used; rather, it is a factor of the complexity of the proposal itself. An easy decision takes less time than a difficult, complex decision, regardless of the process used or the number of people involved. Of course, Formal Consensus works better if one practices patience, but any process is improved with a generous amount of patience.

Formal Consensus cannot be secretly disrupted.

This may not be an issue for some groups, but many people know that the state actively surveilles, infiltrates, and disrupts nonviolent domestic political and religious groups. To counteract anti-democratic tactics by the state, a group would need to develop and encourage a decisionmaking process which could not be covertly controlled or manipulated. Formal Consensus, if practiced as described in this book, is just such a process. Since the assumption is one of cooperation and good will, it is always appropriate to ask for an explanation of how and why someone's actions are in the best interest of the group. Disruptive behavior must not be tolerated. While it is true this process cannot prevent openly disruptive behavior, the point is to prevent covert disruption, hidden agenda, and malicious manipulation of the process. Any group for which infiltration is a threat ought to consider the process outlined in this book if it wishes to remain open, democratic, and productive.

2 On Decision-making

Decisions are adopted when all participants consent to the result of discussion about the original proposal. People who do not agree with a proposal are responsible for expressing their concerns.

No decision is adopted until there is resolution of every concern. When concerns remain after discussion, individuals can agree to disagree by acknowledging that they have unresolved concerns, but consent to the proposal anyway and allow it to be adopted. Therefore, reaching consensus does not assume that everyone must be in complete agreement, a highly unlikely situation in a group of intelligent, creative individuals.

Consensus is becoming popular as a democratic form of decisionmaking. It is a process which requires an environment in which all contributions are valued and participation is encouraged. There are, however, few organizations which use a model of consensus which is specific, consistent, and efficient. Often, the consensus process is informal, vague, and very inconsistent. This happens when the consensus process is not based upon a solid foundation and the structure is unknown or nonexistent. To develop a more formal type of consensus process, any organization must define the commonly held principles which form the foundation of the group's work and intentionally choose the type of structure within which the process is built.

The Structure of Formal Consensus

Many groups regularly use diverse discussion techniques learned from practitioners in the field of conflict resolution. Although this book does include several techniques, the book is about a structure called Formal Consensus. This structure creates a separation between the identification and the resolution of concerns. Perhaps, if everybody in the group has no trouble saying what they think, they won't need this structure. This predictable structure provides opportunities to those who don't feel empowered to participate.

Formal Consensus is presented in levels or cycles. In the first level, the idea is to allow everyone to express their perspective, including concerns, but group time is not spent on resolving problems. In the second level the group focuses its attention on identifying concerns, still not resolving them. This requires discipline. Reactive comments, even funny ones, and resolutions, even good ones, can suppress the creative ideas of others. Not until the third level does the structure allow for exploring resolutions.

Each level has a different scope and focus. At the first level, the scope is broad, allowing the discussion to consider the philosophical and political implications as well as the general merits and drawbacks and other relevant information. The only focus is on the proposal as a whole. Some decisions can be reached after discussion at the first level. At the second level, the scope of the discussion is limited to the concerns. They are identified and publicly listed, which enables everyone to get an overall picture of the concerns. The focus of attention is on identifying the body of concerns and grouping similar ones. At the third level, the scope is very narrow. The focus of discussion is limited to a single unresolved concern until it is resolved.

The Flow of the Formal Consensus Process

In an ideal situation, every proposal would be submitted in writing and briefly introduced the first time it appears on the agenda. At the next meeting, after everyone has had enough time to read it and carefully consider any concerns, the discussion would begin in earnest. Often, it would not be until the third meeting that a decision is made. Of course, this depends upon how many proposals are on the table and the urgency of the decision.

Clarify the Process

The facilitator introduces the person presenting the proposal and gives a short update on any previous action on it. It is very important for the facilitator to explain the process which brought this proposal to the meeting, and to describe the process that will be followed to move the group through the proposal to consensus. It is the facilitator's job to make sure that every participant clearly understands the structure and the discussion techniques being employed while the meeting is in progress.

Present Proposal or Issue

When possible and appropriate, proposals ought to be prepared in writing and distributed well in advance of the meeting in which a decision is required. This encourages prior discussion and consideration, helps the presenter anticipate concerns, minimizes surprises, and involves everyone in creating the proposal. (If the necessary groundwork has not been done, the wisest choice might be to send the proposal to committee.)

Proposal writing is difficult to accomplish in a large group. The committee would develop the proposal for consideration at a later time.) The presenter reads the written proposal aloud, provides background information, and states clearly its benefits and reasons for adoption, including addressing any existing concerns.

Questions Which Clarify the Presentation

Questions are strictly limited by the facilitator to those which seek greater comprehension of the proposal as presented. Everyone deserves the opportunity to fully understand what is being asked of the group before discussion begins. This is not a time for comments or concerns. If there are only a few questions, they can be answered one at a time by the person presenting the proposal. If there are many, a useful technique is hearing all the questions first, then answering them together. After answering all clarifying questions, the group begins discussion.

Level One: Broad Open Discussion

General Discussion

Discussion at this level ought to be the broadest in scope. Try to encourage comments which take the whole proposal into account; i.e., why it is a good idea, or general problems which need to be addressed. Discussion at this level often has a philosophical or principled tone, purposely addressing how this proposal might affect the group in the long run or what kind of precedent it might create, etc. It helps every proposal to be discussed in this way, before the group engages in resolving particular concerns. Do not allow one concern to become the focus of the discussion. When particular concerns are raised, make note of them but encourage the discussion to move back to the proposal as a whole. Encourage the creative interplay of comments and ideas. Allow for the addition of any relevant factual information. For those who might at first feel opposed to the proposal, this discussion is consideration of why it might be good for the group in the broadest sense. Their initial concerns might, in fact, be of general concern to the whole group. And, for those who initially support the proposal, this is a time to think about the proposal broadly and some of the general problems. If there seems to be general approval of the proposal, the facilitator, or someone recognized to speak, can request a call for consensus.

Call for Consensus

The facilitator asks, "Are there any unresolved concerns?" or "Are there any concerns remaining?" After a period of silence, if no additional concerns are raised, the facilitator declares that consensus is reached and the proposal is read for the record. The length of silence ought to be directly related to the degree of difficulty in reaching consensus; an easy decision requires a short silence, a difficult decision requires a longer silence. This encourages everyone to be at peace in accepting the consensus before moving on to other business. At this point, the facilitator assigns task responsibilities or sends the decision to a committee for implementation. It is important to note that the question is not "Is there consensus?" or "Does everyone agree?". These questions do not encourage an environment in which all concerns can be expressed. If some people have a concern, but are shy or intimidated by a strong showing of support for a proposal, the question "Are there any unresolved concerns?" speaks directly to them and provides an opportunity for them to speak. Any concerns for which someone stands aside are listed with the proposal and become a part of it.

Level Two: Identify Concerns

List All Concerns

At the beginning of the next level, a discussion technique called brainstorming is used so that concerns can be identified and written down publicly by the scribe and for the record by the notetaker. Be sure the scribe is as accurate as possible by checking with the person who voiced the concern before moving on. This is not a time to attempt to resolve concerns or determine their validity. That would stifle free expression of concerns.

At this point, only concerns are to be expressed, reasonable or unreasonable, well thought out or vague feelings. The facilitator wants to interrupt any comments which attempt to defend the proposal, resolve the concerns, judge the value of the concerns, or in any way deny or dismiss another's feelings of doubt or concern. Sometimes simply allowing a concern to be expressed and written down helps resolve it. After all concerns have been listed, allow the group a moment to reflect on them as a whole.

Group Related Concerns

At this point, the focus is on identifying patterns and relationships between concerns. This short exercise must not be allowed to focus upon or resolve any particular concern.

Level Three: Resolve Concerns

Resolve Groups of Related Concerns
Often, related concerns can be resolved as a group.

Call for Consensus

If most of the concerns seem to have been resolved, call for consensus in the manner described earlier. If some concerns have not been resolved at this time, then a more focused discussion is needed.

Restate Remaining Concerns (One at a Time)

Return to the list. The facilitator checks each one with the group and removes ones which have been resolved or are, for any reason, no longer of concern. Each remaining concern is restated clearly and concisely and addressed one at a time. Sometimes new concerns are raised which need to be added to the list. However, every individual is responsible for honestly expressing concerns as they think of them. It is not appropriate to hold back a concern and spring it upon the group late in the process. This undermines trust and limits the group's ability to adequately discuss the concern in its relation to other concerns.

Questions Which Clarify the Concern

The facilitator asks for any questions or comments which would further clarify the concern so everyone clearly understands it before discussion starts.

Discussion Limited to Resolving One Concern

Use as many creative group discussion techniques as needed to facilitate a resolution for each concern. Keep the discussion focused upon the particular concern until every suggestion has been offered. If no new ideas are coming forward and the concern cannot be resolved, or if the time allotted for this item has been entirely used, move to one of the closing options described below.

Call for Consensus

Repeat this process until all concerns have been resolved. At this point, the group should be at consensus, but it would be appropriate to call for consensus anyway just to be sure no concern has been overlooked.

Closing Options: Send to Committee

If a decision on the proposal can wait until the whole group meets again, then send the proposal to a committee which can clarify the concerns and bring new, creative resolutions for consideration by the group. It is a good idea to include on the committee representatives of all the major concerns, as well as those most supportive of the proposal so they can work out solutions in a less formal setting. Sometimes, if the decision is needed before the next meeting, a smaller group can be empowered to make the decision for the larger group, but again, this committee should include all points of view. Choose this option only if it is absolutely necessary and the whole group consents.

Stand Aside (Decision Adopted with Unresolved Concerns Listed)

When a concern has been fully discussed and cannot be resolved, it is appropriate for the facilitator to ask those persons with this concern if they are willing to stand aside; that is, acknowledge that the concern still exists, but allow the proposal to be adopted. It is very important for the whole group to understand that this unresolved concern is then written down with the proposal in the record and, in essence, becomes a part of the decision.

This concern can be raised again and deserves more discussion time as it has not yet been resolved. In contrast, a concern which has been resolved in past discussion does not deserve additional discussion, unless something new has developed. Filibustering is not appropriate in Formal Consensus.

Declare Block

After having spent the allotted agenda time moving through the three levels of discussion trying to achieve consensus and concerns remain which are unresolved, the facilitator is obligated to declare that consensus cannot be reached at this meeting, that the proposal is blocked, and move on to the next agenda item.

The Rules of Formal Consensus

These guidelines and techniques are flexible and meant to be modified. Some of the guidelines, however, seem almost always to be true.

These are the Rules of Formal Consensus:

1. Once a decision has been adopted by consensus, it cannot be changed without reaching a new consensus.
If a new consensus cannot be reached, the old decision stands.
2. In general, only one person has permission to speak at any moment. The person with permission to speak is determined by the group discussion technique in use and/or the facilitator. (The role of Peacekeeper is exempt from this rule.)
3. All structural decisions (i.e., which roles to use, who fills each role, and which facilitation technique and/or group discussion technique to use) are adopted by consensus without debate. Any objection automatically causes a new selection to be made. If a role cannot be filled without objection, the group proceeds without that role being filled. If much time is spent trying to fill roles or find acceptable techniques, then the group needs a discussion about the unity of purpose of this group and why it is having this problem, a discussion which must be put on the agenda for the next meeting, if not held immediately.
4. All content decisions (i.e., the agenda contract, committee reports, proposals, etc.) are adopted by consensus after discussion. Every content decision must be openly discussed before it can be tested for consensus.
5. A concern must be based upon the principles of the group to justify a block to consensus.
6. Every meeting which uses Formal Consensus must have an evaluation.

3 On Conflict and Consensus

Conflict is usually viewed as an impediment to reaching agreements and disruptive to peaceful relationships. However, it is the underlying thesis of Formal Consensus that nonviolent conflict is necessary and desirable. It provides the motivations for improvement. The challenge is the creation of an understanding in all who participate that conflict, or differing opinions about proposals, is to be expected and acceptable. Do not avoid or repress conflict. Create an environment in which disagreement can be expressed without fear. Objections and criticisms can be heard not as attacks, not as attempts to defeat a proposal, but as a concern which, when resolved, will make the proposal stronger.

This understanding of conflict may not be easily accepted by the members of a group. Our training by society undermines this concept. Therefore, it will not be easy to create the kind of environment where differences can be expressed without fear or resentment. But it can be done. It will require tolerance and a willingness to experiment. Additionally, the values and principles which form the basis of commitment to work together to resolve conflict need to be clearly defined, and accepted by all involved.

If a group desires to adopt Formal Consensus as its decisionmaking process, the first step is the creation of a Statement of Purpose or Constitution. This document would describe not only the common purpose, but would also include the definition of the group's principles and values. If the group discusses and writes down its foundation of principles at the start, it is much easier to determine group versus individual concerns later on.

The following are principles which form the foundation of Formal Consensus. A commitment to these principles and/or a willingness to develop them is necessary. In addition to the ones listed herein, the group might add principles and values which are specific to its purpose.

Foundation Upon Which Consensus Is Built

For consensus to work well, the process must be conducted in an environment which promotes trust, respect, and skill sharing. The following are principles which, when valued and respected, encourage and build consensus.

Trust

Foremost is the need for trust. Without some amount of trust, there will be no cooperation or nonviolent resolution to conflict. For trust to flourish, it is desirable for individuals to be willing to examine their attitudes and be open to new ideas. Acknowledgement and appreciation of personal and cultural differences promote trust. Neither approval nor friendship are necessary for a good working relationship. By developing trust, the process of consensus encourages the intellectual and emotional development of the individuals within a group.

Respect

It is everyone's responsibility to show respect to one another. People feel respected when everyone listens, when they are not interrupted, when their ideas are taken seriously. Respect for emotional as well as logical concerns promotes the kind of environment necessary for developing consensus. To promote respect, it is important to distinguish between an action which causes a problem and the person who did the action, between the deed and the doer. We must criticize the act, not the person. Even if you think the person is the problem, responding that way never resolves anything.

Unity of Purpose

Unity of purpose is a basic understanding about the goals and purpose of the group. Of course, there will be varying opinions on the best way to accomplish these goals. However, there must be a unifying base, a common starting point, which is recognized and accepted by all.

Nonviolence

Nonviolent decision-makers use their power to achieve goals while respecting differences and cooperating with others. In this environment, it is considered violent to use power to dominate or control the group process. It is understood that the power of revealing your truth is the maximum force allowed to persuade others to your point of view.

Self Empowerment

It is easy for people to unquestioningly rely on authorities and experts to do their thinking and decisionmaking for them. If members of a group delegate their authority, intentionally or not, they fail to accept responsibility for the group's decisions. Consensus promotes and depends upon self empowerment. Anyone can express concerns. Everyone seeks creative solutions and is responsible for every decision. When all are encouraged to participate, the democratic nature of the process increases.

Cooperation

Unfortunately, Western society is saturated in competition. When winning arguments becomes more important than achieving the group's goals, cooperation is difficult, if not impossible. Adversarial attitudes toward proposals or people focus attention on weakness rather than strength. An attitude of helpfulness and support builds cooperation. Cooperation is a shared responsibility in finding solutions to all concerns. Ideas offered in the spirit of cooperation help resolve conflict. The best decisions arise through an open and creative interplay of ideas.

Conflict Resolution

The free flow of ideas, even among friends, inevitably leads to conflict. In this context, conflict is simply the expression of disagreement. Disagreement itself is neither good nor bad. Diverse viewpoints bring into focus and explore the strengths and weaknesses of attitudes, assumptions, and plans. Without conflict, one is less likely to think about and evaluate one's views and prejudices. There is no right decision, only the best one for the whole group. The task is to work together to discover which choice is most acceptable to all members.

Avoid blaming anyone for conflict. Blame is inherently violent. It attacks dignity and empowerment. It encourages people to feel guilty, defensive, and alienated. The group will lose its ability to resolve conflict. People will hide their true feelings to avoid being blamed for the conflict.

Avoidance of conflicting ideas impedes resolution for failure to explore and develop the feelings that gave rise to the conflict. The presence of conflict can create an occasion for growth. Learn to use it as a catalyst for discovering creative resolutions and for developing a better understanding of each other. With patience, anyone can learn to resolve conflict creatively, without defensiveness or guilt. Groups can learn to nurture and support their members in this effort by allowing creativity and experimentation. This process necessitates that the group continually evaluate and improve these skills.

Commitment to the Group

In joining a group, one accepts a personal responsibility to behave with respect, good will, and honesty. Each one is expected to recognize that the group's needs have a certain priority over the desires of the individual. Many people participate in group work in a very egocentric way. It is important to accept the shared responsibility for helping to find solutions to other's concerns.

Active Participation

We all have an inalienable right to express our own best thoughts. We decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. Since consensus is a process of synthesis, not competition, all sincere comments are important and valuable. If ideas are put forth as the speaker's property and individuals are strongly attached to their opinions, consensus will be extremely difficult. Stubbornness, closedmindedness, and possessiveness lead to defensive and argumentative behavior that disrupts the process. For active participation to occur, it is necessary to promote trust by creating an atmosphere in which every contribution is considered valuable. With encouragement, each person can develop knowledge and experience, a sense of responsibility and competency, and the ability to participate.

Equal Access to Power

Because of personal differences (experience, assertiveness, social conditioning, access to information, etc.) and political disparities, some people inevitably have more effective power than others. To balance this inequity, everyone needs to consciously attempt to creatively share power, skills, and information. Avoid hierarchical structures that allow some individuals to assume undemocratic power over others. Egalitarian and accountable structures promote universal access to power.

Patience

Consensus cannot be rushed. Often, it functions smoothly, producing effective, stable results. Sometimes, when difficult situations arise, consensus requires more time to allow for the creative interplay of ideas. During these times, patience is more advantageous than tense, urgent, or aggressive behavior. Consensus is possible as long as each individual acts patiently and respectfully.

Impediments To Consensus Lack of Training

It is necessary to train people in the theory and practice of consensus. Until consensus is a common form of decisionmaking in our society, new members will need some way of learning about the process. It is important to offer regular opportunities for training. If learning about Formal Consensus is not made easily accessible, it will limit full participation and create inequities which undermine this process. Also, training provides opportunities for people to improve their skills, particularly facilitation skills, in a setting where experimentation and role-plays can occur.

External Hierarchical Structures

It can be difficult for a group to reach consensus internally when it is part of a larger group which does not recognize or participate in the consensus process. It can be extremely frustrating if those external to the group can disrupt the decisionmaking by interfering with the process by pulling rank. Therefore, it is desirable for individuals and groups to recognize that they can be autonomous in relation to external power if they are willing to take responsibility for their actions.

Social Prejudice

Everyone has been exposed to biases, assumptions, and prejudices which interfere with the spirit of cooperation and equal participation. All people are influenced by these attitudes, even though they may deplore them. People are not generally encouraged to confront these prejudices in themselves or others. Members of a group often reflect social biases without realizing or attempting to confront and change them. If the group views a prejudicial attitude as just one individual's problem, then the group will not address the underlying social attitudes which create such problems. It is appropriate to expose, confront, acknowledge, and attempt to resolve socially prejudicial attitudes, but only in the spirit of mutual respect and trust. Members are responsible for acknowledging when their attitudes are influenced by disruptive social training and for changing them. When a supportive atmosphere for recognizing and changing undesirable attitudes exists, the group as a whole benefits.

On Degrees of Conflict

Consensus is a process of nonviolent conflict resolution. The expression of concerns and conflicting ideas is considered desirable and important. When a group creates an atmosphere which nurtures and supports disagreement without hostility and fear, it builds a foundation for stronger, more creative decisions.

Each individual is responsible for expressing one's own concerns. It is best if each concern is expressed as if it will be resolved. The group then responds by trying to resolve the concern through group discussion. If the concern remains unresolved after a full and open discussion, then the facilitator asks how the concern is based upon the foundation of the group. If it is, then the group accepts that the proposal is blocked.

From this perspective, it is not decided by the individual alone if a particular concern is blocking consensus; it is determined in cooperation with the whole group. The group determines a concern's legitimacy. A concern is legitimate if it is based upon the principles of the group and therefore relevant to the group as a whole. If the concern is determined to be unprincipled or not of consequence, the group can decide the concern is inappropriate and drop it from discussion. If a reasonable solution offered is not accepted by the individual, the group may decide the concern has been resolved and the individual is out of order for failure to recognize it.

Herein lies a subtle pitfall. For consensus to work well, it is helpful for individuals to recognize the group's involvement in determining which concerns are able to be resolved, which need more attention, and, ultimately, which are blocking consensus. The pitfall is failure to accept the limit on an individual's power to determine which concerns are principled or based upon the foundation of the group and which ones are resolved. After discussion, if the concern is valid and unresolved, it again falls upon the individual to choose whether to stand aside or block consensus.

The individual is responsible for expressing concerns; the group is responsible for resolving them. The group decides whether a concern is legitimate; the individual decides whether to block or stand aside.

All concerns are important and need to be resolved. It is not appropriate for a person to come to a meeting planning to block a proposal or, during discussion, to express their concerns as major objections or blocking concerns. Often, during discussion, the person learns additional information which resolves the concern. Sometimes, after expressing the concern, someone is able to creatively resolve it by thinking of something new. It often happens that a concern which seems to be extremely problematic when it is first mentioned turns out to be easily resolved. Sometimes the reverse happens and a seemingly minor concern brings forth much larger concerns.

The following is a description of different types of concerns and how they affect individuals and the group.

Concerns which can be addressed and resolved by making small changes in the proposal can be called minor concerns. The person supports the proposal, but has an idea for improvement.

When a person disagrees with the proposal in part, but consents to the overall idea, the person has a reservation. The person is not completely satisfied with the proposal, but is generally supportive. This kind of concern can usually be resolved through discussion. Sometimes, it is enough for the person to express the concern and feel that it was heard, without any actual resolution.

When a person does not agree with the proposal, the group allows that person to try and persuade it to see the wisdom of the disagreement. If the group is not persuaded or the disagreement cannot be resolved, the person might choose to stand aside and allow the group to go forward. The person and the group are agreeing to disagree, regarding each point of view with mutual respect. Occasionally, it is a concern which has no resolution; the person does not feel the need to block the decision, but wants to express the concern and lack of support for the proposal.

A blocking concern must be based on a generally recognized principle, not personal preference, or it must be essential to the entire group's well-being. Before a concern is considered to be blocking, the group must have already accepted the validity of the concern and a reasonable attempt must have been made to resolve it. If legitimate concerns remain unresolved and the person has not agreed to stand aside, consensus is blocked.

4 The Art of Evaluation

Meetings can often be a time when some people experience feelings of frustration or confusion. There is always room for improvement in the structure of the process and/or in the dynamics of the group. Often, there is no time to talk directly about group interaction during the meeting. Reserve time at the end of the meeting to allow some of these issues and feelings to be expressed.

Evaluation is very useful when using consensus. It is worth the time. Evaluations need not take long, five to ten minutes is often enough. It is not a discussion, nor is it an opportunity to comment on each other's statements. Do not reopen discussion on an agenda item. Evaluation is a special time to listen to each other and learn about each other. Think about how the group interacts and how to improve the process.

Be sure to include the evaluation comments in the notes of the meeting. This is important for two reasons. Over time, if the same evaluation comments are made again and again, this is an indication that the issue behind the comments needs to be addressed. This can be accomplished by placing this issue on the agenda for the next meeting. Also, when looking back at notes from meetings long ago, evaluation comments can often reveal a great deal about what actually happened, beyond what decisions were made and reports given. They give a glimpse into complex interpersonal dynamics.

Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation provides a forum to address procedural flaws, inappropriate behavior, facilitation problems, logistical difficulties, overall tone, etc. Evaluation is not a time to reopen discussion, make decisions or attempt to resolve problems, but rather, to make statements, express feelings, highlight problems, and suggest solutions in a spirit of cooperation and trust. To help foster communication, it is better if each criticism is coupled with a specific suggestion for improvement. Also, always speak for oneself. Do not attempt to represent anyone else.

Encourage everyone who participated in the meeting to take part in the evaluation. Make comments on what worked and what did not. Expect differing opinions. It is generally not useful to repeat other's comments. Evaluations prepare the group for better future meetings. When the process works well, the group responds supportively in a difficult situation, or the facilitator does an especially good job, note it, and appreciate work well done.

Do not attempt to force evaluation. This will cause superficial or irrelevant comments. On the other hand, do not allow evaluations to run on. Be sure to take each comment seriously and make an attempt, at a later time, to resolve or implement them. Individuals who feel their suggestions are ignored or disrespected will lose trust and interest in the group.

For gatherings, conferences, conventions or large meetings, the group might consider having short evaluations after each section, in addition to the one at the end of the event.

Distinct aspects on which the group might focus include: the process itself, a specific role, a particular technique, fears and feelings, group dynamics, etc. At large meetings, written evaluations provide a means for everyone to respond and record comments and suggestions which might otherwise be lost. Some people feel more comfortable writing their evaluations rather than saying them. Plan the questions well, stressing what was learned, what was valuable, and what could have been better and how. An evaluation committee allows an opportunity for the presenters, facilitators, and/or coordinators to get together after the meeting to review evaluation comments, consider suggestions for improvement, and possibly prepare an evaluation report.

Review and evaluation bring a sense of completion to the meeting. A good evaluation will pull the experience together, remind everyone of the group's unity of purpose, and provide an opportunity for closing comments.

Uses of Evaluation

There are at least ten ways in which evaluation helps improve meetings.

Evaluations:

- \ Improve the process by analysis of what happened, why it happened, and how it might be improved
- \ Examine how certain attitudes and statements might have caused various problems and encourage special care to prevent them from recurring
- \ Foster a greater understanding of group dynamics and encourage a method of group learning or learning from each other
- \ Allow the free expression of feelings
- \ Expose unconscious behavior or attitudes which interfere with the process
- \ Encourage the sharing of observations and acknowledge associations with society
- \ Check the usefulness and effectiveness of techniques and procedures
- \ Acknowledge good work and give appreciation to each other
- \ Reflect on the goals set for the meeting and whether they were attained
- \ Examine various roles, suggest ways to improve them, and create new ones as needed
- \ Provide an overall sense of completion and closure to the meeting

Types of Evaluation Questions

It is necessary to be aware of the way in which questions are asked during evaluation. The specific wording can control the scope and focus of consideration and affect the level of participation. It can cause responses which focus on what was good and bad, or right and wrong, rather than on what worked and what needed improvement. Focus on learning and growing. Avoid blaming. Encourage diverse opinions.

Some sample questions for an evaluation:

- \ **Were members uninterested or bored with the agenda, reports, or discussion?**
- \ **Did members withdraw or feel isolated?**
- \ **Is attendance low? If so, why?**
- \ **Are people arriving late or leaving early? If so, why?**
- \ **How was the overall tone or atmosphere?**
- \ **Was there an appropriate use of resources?**
- \ **Were the logistics (such as date, time, or location) acceptable?**
- \ **What was the most important experience of the event?**
- \ **What was the least important experience of the event?**
- \ **What was the high point? What was the low point?**
- \ **What did you learn?**
- \ **What expectations did you have at the beginning and to what degree were they met? How did they change?**

- \ **What goals did you have and to what degree were they accomplished?**
- \ **What worked well? Why?**
- \ **What did not work so well? How could it have been improved?**
- \ **What else would you suggest be changed or improved, and how?**
- \ **What was overlooked or left out?**

5 Roles

A role is a function of process, not content. Roles are used during a meeting according to the needs of the situation. Not all roles are useful at every meeting, nor does each role have to be filled by a separate person. Formal Consensus functions more smoothly if the person filling a role has some experience, therefore is desirable to rotate roles. Furthermore, one who has experienced a role is more likely to be supportive of whomever currently has that role. Experience in each role also encourages confidence and participation. It is best, therefore, for the group to encourage everyone to experience each role.

Agenda Planners

A well planned agenda is an important tool for a smooth meeting, although it does not guarantee it. Experience has shown that there is a definite improvement in the flow and pace of a meeting if several people get together prior to the start of the meeting and propose an agenda. In smaller groups, the facilitator often proposes an agenda.

The agenda planning committee has six tasks:

- \ **collect agenda items**
- \ **arrange them**
- \ **assign presenters**
- \ **brainstorm discussion techniques**
- \ **assign time limits**
- \ **write up the proposed agenda**

There are at least four sources of agenda items:

- \ **suggestions from members**
- \ **reports or proposals from committees**
- \ **business from the last meeting**
- \ **standard agenda items, including:**
 - \ **introduction**
 - \ **agenda review**
 - \ **review notes**
 - \ **break**
 - \ **announcements**
 - \ **decision review**
 - \ **evaluation**

Once all the agenda items have been collected, they are listed in an order which seems efficient and appropriate. Planners need to be cautious that items at the top of the agenda tend to use more than their share of time, thereby limiting the time available for the rest. Each group has different needs. Some groups work best taking care of business first, then addressing the difficult items. Other groups might find it useful to take on the most difficult work first and strictly limit the time or let it take all it needs. The following are recommendations for keeping the focus of attention on the agenda:

- \ **alternate long and short, heavy and light items**
- \ **place reports before their related proposals**
- \ **take care of old business before addressing new items**
- \ **consider placing items which might generate a sense of accomplishment early in the meeting**
- \ **alternate presenters**
- \ **be flexible**

Usually, each item already has a presenter. If not, assign one. Generally, it is not wise for facilitators to present reports or proposals. However, it is convenient for facilitators to present some of the standard agenda items. For complex or especially controversial items, the agenda planners could suggest various options for group discussion techniques. This may be helpful to the facilitator.

Next, assign time limits for each item. It is important to be realistic, being careful to give each item enough time to be fully addressed without being unfair to other items. Generally, it is not desirable to propose an agenda which exceeds the desired overall meeting time limit.

The last task is the writing of the proposed agenda so all can see it and refer to it during the meeting. Each item is listed in order, along with its presenter and time limit.

The following agenda is an example of how an agenda is structured and what information is included in it. It shows the standard agenda items, the presenters, the time limits and the order in which they will be considered. It also shows one way in which reports and proposals can be presented, but each group can structure this part of the meeting in whatever way suits its needs. This model does not show the choices of techniques for group discussion which the agenda planners might have considered.

Standard Agenda	Presenter	Time	
Agenda Item			
INTRODUCTION	Facilitator	5 min	
AGENDA REVIEW	Facilitator	5 min	
REVIEW NOTES	Notetaker	5 min	
REPORTS		20 min	Previous activities
Standing committees			
PROPOSALS		15 min	
Old business			
BREAK		5 min	
REPORTS		10 min	
Informational			
PROPOSALS		30 min	
New business			
ANNOUNCEMENTS		5 min	
Pass hat			
Next meeting			
REVIEW DECISIONS	Notetaker	5 min	
EVALUATION		10 min	
CLOSING	Facilitator	5 min	
TOTAL		2 hours	

Facilitator

The word facilitate means to make easy. A facilitator conducts group business and guides the Formal Consensus process so that it flows smoothly. Rotating facilitation from meeting to meeting shares important skills among the members. If everyone has firsthand knowledge about facilitation, it will help the flow of all meetings. Co-facilitation, or having two (or more) people facilitate a meeting, is recommended. Having a woman and a man share the responsibilities encourages a more balanced meeting. Also, an inexperienced facilitator may apprentice with a more experienced one. Try to use a variety of techniques throughout the meeting. And remember, a little bit of humor can go a long way in easing tension during a long, difficult meeting.

Good facilitation is based upon the following principles:

Non-Directive Leadership

Facilitators accept responsibility for moving through the agenda in the allotted time, guiding the process, and suggesting alternate or additional techniques. In this sense, they do lead the group. However, they do not give their personal opinions nor do they attempt to direct the content of the discussion. If they want to participate, they must clearly relinquish the role and speak as an individual. During a meeting, individuals are responsible for expressing their own concerns and thoughts.

Facilitators, on the other hand, are responsible for addressing the needs of the group. They need to be aware of the group dynamics and constantly evaluate whether the discussion is flowing well. There may be a need for a change in the discussion technique. They need to be diligent about the fair distribution of attention, being sure to limit those who are speaking often and offering opportunities to those who are not speaking much or at all. It follows that one person cannot simultaneously give attention to the needs of the group and think about a personal response to a given situation. Also, it is not appropriate for the facilitator to give a particular point of view or dominate the discussion. This does not build trust, especially in those who do not agree with the facilitator.

Clarity of Process

The facilitator is responsible for leading the meeting openly so that everyone present is aware of the process and how to participate. This means it is important to constantly review what just happened, what is about to happen, and how it will happen. Every time a new discussion technique is introduced, explain how it will work and what is to be accomplished. This is both educational and helps new members participate more fully.

Agenda Contract

The facilitator is responsible for honoring the agenda contract. The facilitator keeps the questions and discussion focused on the agenda item. Be gentle, but firm, because fairness dictates that each agenda item gets only the time allotted. The agenda contract is made when the agenda is reviewed and accepted. This agreement includes the items on the agenda, the order in which they are considered, and the time allotted to each. Unless the whole group agrees to change the agenda, the facilitator is obligated to keep the contract. The decision to change the agenda must be a consensus, with little or no discussion. At the beginning of the meeting, the agenda is presented to the whole group and reviewed, item by item. Any member can add an item if it has been omitted. While every agenda suggestion must be included in the agenda, it does not necessarily get as much time as the presenter wants. Time ought to be divided fairly, with individuals recognizing the fairness of old items generally getting more time than new items and urgent items getting more time than items which can wait until the next meeting, etc. Also, review the suggested presenters and time limits. If anything seems inappropriate or unreasonable, adjustments may be made. Once the whole agenda has been reviewed and consented to, the agenda becomes a contract. The facilitator is obligated to follow the order and time limits. This encourages members to be on time to meetings.

Good Will

Always try to assume good will. Assume every statement and action is sincerely intended to benefit the group. Assume that each member understands the group's purpose and accepts the agenda as a contract. Often, when we project our feelings and expectations onto others, we influence their actions. If we treat others as though they are trying to get attention, disrupt meetings, or pick fights, they will often fulfill our expectations. A resolution to conflict is more likely to occur if we act as though there will be one. This is especially true if someone is intentionally trying to cause trouble or who is emotionally unhealthy. Do not attack the person, but rather, assume good will and ask the person to explain to the group how that person's statements or actions are in the best interest of the group. It is also helpful to remember to separate the actor from the action. While the behavior may be unacceptable, the person is not bad. Avoid accusing the person of being the way they behave. Remember, no one has the answer. The group's work is the search for the best and most creative process, one which fosters a mutually satisfying resolution to any concern which may arise.

Peacekeeper

The role of peacekeeper is most useful in large groups or when very touchy, controversial topics are being discussed. A person who is willing to remain somewhat aloof and is not personally invested in the content of the discussion would be a good candidate for peacekeeper. This person is selected without discussion by all present at the beginning of the meeting.

If no one wants this role, or if no one can be selected without objection, proceed without one, recognizing that the facilitator's job will most likely be more difficult.

This task entails paying attention to the overall mood or tone of the meeting. When tensions increase dramatically and angers flare out of control, the peacekeeper interrupts briefly to remind the group of its common goals and commitment to cooperation. The most common way to accomplish this is a call for a few moments of silence.

The peacekeeper is the only person with prior permission to interrupt a speaker or speak without first being recognized by the facilitator. Also, it is important to note that the peacekeeper's comments are always directed at the whole group, never at one individual or small group within the larger group. Keep comments short and to the point.

The peacekeeper may always, of course, point out when the group did something well. People always like to be acknowledged for positive behavior.

Advocate

Like the peacekeeper, advocates are selected without discussion at the beginning of the meeting. If, because of strong emotions, someone is unable to be understood, the advocate is called upon to help. The advocate would interrupt the meeting, and invite the individual to literally step outside the meeting for some one-on-one discussion. An upset person can talk to someone with whom they feel comfortable. This often helps them make clear what the concern is and how it relates to the best interest of the group. Assume the individual is acting in good faith. Assume the concern is in the best interest of the group. While they are doing this, everyone else might take a short break, or continue with other agenda items. When they return, the meeting (after completing the current agenda item) hears from the advocate. The intent here is the presentation of the concern by the advocate rather than the upset person so the other group members might hear it without the emotional charge. This procedure is a last resort, to be used only when emotions are out of control and the person feels unable to successfully express an idea.

Timekeeper

The role of timekeeper is very useful in almost all meetings. One is selected at the beginning of the meeting to assist the facilitator in keeping within the time limits set in the agenda contract. The skill in keeping time is the prevention of an unnecessary time pressure which might interfere with the process. This can be accomplished by keeping everyone aware of the status of time remaining during the discussion. Be sure to give ample warning towards the end of the time limit so the group can start to bring the discussion to a close or decide to rearrange the agenda to allow more time for the current topic. There is nothing inherently wrong with going over time as long as everyone consents.

Public Scribe

The role of public scribe is simply the writing, on paper or blackboard, of information for the whole group to see. This person primarily assists the facilitator by taking a task which might otherwise distract the facilitator and interfere with the overall flow of the meeting. This role is particularly useful during brainstorming, reportbacks from small groups, or whenever it would help the group for all to see written information.

Notetaker

The importance of a written record of the meetings cannot be overstated. The written record, sometimes called notes or minutes, can help settle disputes of memory or verify past decisions. Accessible notes allow absent members to participate in ongoing work. Useful items to include in the notes are:

- \ date and attendance
- \ agenda
- \ brief notes (highlights, statistics...)
- \ reports
- \ discussion
- \ verbatim notes

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- \ proposals (with revisions)
- \ decisions (with concerns listed)
- \ announcements
- \ next meeting time and place
- \ evaluation comments

After each decision is made, it is useful to have the notetaker read the notes aloud to ensure accuracy. At the end of the meeting, it is also helpful to have the notetaker present to the group a review of all decisions. In larger groups, it is often useful to have two notetakers simultaneously, because everyone, no matter how skilled, hears information and expresses it differently. Notetakers are responsible for making sure the notes are recorded accurately, and are reproduced and distributed according to the desires of the group (e.g. mailed to everyone, handed out at the next meeting, filed, etc.).

Doorkeeper

Doorkeepers are selected in advance of the meeting and need to arrive early enough to familiarize themselves with the physical layout of the space and to receive any last minute instructions from the facilitator. They need to be prepared to miss the first half hour of the meeting. Prior to the start of the meeting, the doorkeeper welcomes people, distributes any literature connected to the business of the meeting, and informs them of any pertinent information (the meeting will start fifteen minutes late, the bathrooms are not wheelchair accessible, etc.).

A doorkeeper is useful, especially if people tend to be late. When the meeting begins, they continue to be available for latecomers. They might briefly explain what has happened so far and where the meeting is currently on the agenda. The doorkeeper might suggest to the latecomers that they refrain from participating in the current agenda item and wait until the next item before participating. This avoids wasting time, repeating discussion, or addressing already resolved concerns. Of course, this is not a rigid rule. Use discretion and be respectful of the group's time.

Experience has shown this role to be far more useful than it might at first appear, so experiment with it and discover if meetings can become more pleasant and productive because of the friendship and care which is expressed through the simple act of greeting people as they arrive at the meeting.

6 Techniques

Facilitation Techniques

There are a great many techniques to assist the facilitator in managing the agenda and group dynamics. The following are just a few of the more common and frequently used techniques available to the facilitator. Be creative and adaptive. Different situations require different techniques. With experience will come an understanding of how they affect group dynamics and when is the best time to use them.

Equalizing Participation

The facilitator is responsible for the fair distribution of attention during meetings. Facilitators call the attention of the group to one speaker at a time. The grammar school method is the most common technique for choosing the next speaker. The facilitator recognizes each person in the order in which hands are raised. Often, inequities occur because the attention is dominated by an individual or class of individuals. This can occur because of socialized behavioral problems such as racism, sexism, or the like, or internal dynamics such as experience, seniority, fear, shyness, disrespect, ignorance of the process, etc. Inequities can be corrected in many creative ways. For example, if men are speaking more often than women, the facilitator can suggest a pause after each speaker, the women counting to five before speaking, the men counting to ten. In controversial situations, the facilitator can request that three speakers speak for the proposal, and three speak against it. If the group would like to avoid having the facilitator select who speaks next, the group can self-select by asking the last speaker to pass an object, a talking stick, to the next. Even more challenging, have each speaker stand before speaking, and begin when there is only one person standing. These are only a handful of the many possible problems and solutions that exist. Be creative. Invent your own.

Listing

To help the discussion flow more smoothly, those who want to speak can silently signal the facilitator, who would add the person's name to a list of those wishing to speak, and call on them in that order.

Stacking

If many people want to speak at the same time, it is useful to ask all those who would like to speak to raise their hands. Have them count off, and then have them speak in that order. At the end of the stack, the facilitator might call for another stack or try another technique.

Pacing

The pace or flow of the meeting is the responsibility of the facilitator. If the atmosphere starts to become tense, choose techniques which encourage balance and cooperation. If the meeting is going slowly and people are becoming restless, suggest a stretch or rearrange the agenda.

Checking the Process

If the flow of the meeting is breaking down or if one person or small group seems to be dominating, anyone can call into question the technique being used and suggest an alternative.

Silence

If the pace is too fast, if energies and tensions are high, if people are speaking out of turn or interrupting one another, it is appropriate for anyone to suggest a moment of silence to calm and refocus energy.

Taking a Break

In the heat of discussion, people are usually resistant to interrupting the flow to take a break, but a wise facilitator knows, more often than not, that a five minute break will save a frustrating half hour or more of circular discussion and fruitless debate.

Call For Consensus

The facilitator, or any member recognized to speak by the facilitator, can call for a test for consensus. To do this, the facilitator asks if there are any unresolved concerns which remain unaddressed. (See page 13.)

Summarizing

The facilitator might choose to focus what has been said by summarizing. The summary might be made by the facilitator, the notetaker, or anyone else appropriate. This preempts a common problem, in which the discussion becomes circular, and one after another, speakers repeat each other.

Reformulating the Proposal

After a long discussion, it sometimes happens that the proposal becomes modified without any formal decision. The facilitator needs to recognize this and take time to reformulate the proposal with the new information, modifications, or deletions. Then the proposal is presented to the group so that everyone can be clear about what is being considered. Again, this might be done by the facilitator, the notetaker, or anyone else.

Stepping out of Role

If the facilitator wants to become involved in the discussion or has strong feelings about a particular agenda item, the facilitator can step out of the role and participate in the discussion, allowing another member to facilitate during that time.

Passing the Clipboard

Sometimes information needs to be collected during the meeting. To save time, circulate a clipboard to collect this information. Once collected, it can be entered into the written record and/or presented to the group by the facilitator.

Polling (Straw Polls)

The usefulness of polling within consensus is primarily clarification of the relative importance of several issues.

It is an especially useful technique when the facilitator is confused or uncertain about the status of a proposal and wants some clarity to be able to suggest what might be the next process technique. Polls are not decisions, they are non-binding referenda. All too often, straw polls are used when the issues are completely clear and the majority wants to intimidate the minority into submission by showing overwhelming support rather than to discuss the issues and resolve the concerns. Clear and simple questions are best. Polls that involve three or more choices can be especially manipulative. Use with discretion.

Censoring

(This technique and the next are somewhat different from the others. They may not be appropriate for some groups.) If someone speaks out of turn consistently, the facilitator warns the individual at least twice that if the interruptions do not stop, the facilitator will declare that person censored. This means the person will not be permitted to speak for the rest of this agenda item. If the interrupting behavior has been exhibited over several agenda items, then the censoring could be for a longer period of time. This technique is meant to be used at the discretion of the facilitator. If the facilitator censors someone and others in the meeting voice disapproval, it is better for the facilitator to step down from the role and let someone else facilitate, rather than get into a discussion about the ability and judgement of the facilitator. The rationale is the disruptive behavior makes facilitation very difficult, is disrespectful and, since it is assumed that everyone observed the behavior, the voicing of disapproval about a censoring indicates lack of confidence in the facilitation rather than support for the disruptive behavior.

Expulsion

If an individual still acts very disruptively, the facilitator may confront the behavior. Ask the person to explain the reasons for this behavior, how it is in the best interest of the group, how it relates to the group's purpose, and how it is in keeping with the goals and principles. If the person is unable to answer these questions or if the answers indicate disagreement with the common purpose, then the facilitator can ask the individual to withdraw from the meeting.

Group Discussion Techniques

It is often assumed that the best form of group discussion is that which has one person at a time speak to the whole group. This is true for some discussions. But, sometimes, other techniques of group discussion can be more productive and efficient than whole group discussion. The following are some of the more common and frequently used techniques. These could be suggested by anyone at the meeting. Therefore, it is a good idea if everyone is familiar with these techniques. Again, be creative and adaptive. Different situations require different techniques. Only experience reveals how each one affects group dynamics or the best time to use it.

Identification

It is good to address each other by name. One way to learn names is to draw a seating plan, and as people go around and introduce themselves, write their names on it. Later, refer to the plan and address people by their names. In large groups, name tags can be helpful. Also, when people speak, it is useful for them to identify themselves so all can gradually learn each others' names.

Whole Group

The value of whole group discussion is the evolution of a group idea. A group idea is not simply the sum of individual ideas, but the result of the interaction of ideas during discussion. Whole group discussion can be unstructured and productive. It can also be very structured, using various facilitation techniques to focus it. Often, whole group discussion does not produce maximum participation or a diversity of ideas. During whole group discussion, fewer people get to speak, and, at times, the attitude of the group can be dominated by an idea, a mood, or a handful of people.

Small Group

Breaking into smaller groups can be very useful. These small groups can be diads or triads or even larger. They can be selected randomly or self-selected. If used well, in a relatively short amount of time all participants have the opportunity to share their own point of view.

Be sure to set clear time limits and select a notetaker for each group. When the larger group reconvenes, the notetakers relate the major points and concerns of their group. Sometimes, notetakers can be requested to add only new ideas or concerns and not repeat something already covered in another report. It is also helpful for the scribe to write these reports so all can see the cumulative result and be sure every idea and concern gets on the list.

Brainstorming

This is a very useful technique when ideas need to be solicited from the whole group. The normal rule of waiting to speak until the facilitator recognizes you is suspended and everyone is encouraged to call out ideas to be written by the scribe for all to see. It is helpful if the atmosphere created is one in which all ideas, no matter how unusual or incomplete, are appropriate and welcomed. This is a situation in which suggestions can be used as catalysts, with ideas building one upon the next, generating very creative possibilities. Avoid evaluating each other's ideas during this time.

Go-rounds

This is a simple technique that encourages participation. The facilitator states a question and then goes around the room inviting everyone to answer briefly. This is not an open discussion. This is an opportunity to individually respond to specific questions, not to comment on each other's responses or make unrelated remarks.

Fishbowl

The fishbowl is a special form of small group discussion. Several members representing differing points of view meet in an inner circle to discuss the issue while everyone else forms an outer circle and listens. At the end of a predetermined time, the whole group reconvenes and evaluates the fishbowl discussion. An interesting variation: first, put all the men in the fishbowl, then all the women, and they discuss the same topics.

Active Listening

If the group is having a hard time understanding a point of view, someone might help by active listening. Listen to the speaker, then repeat back what was heard and ask the speaker if this accurately reflects what was meant.

Caucusing

A caucus might be useful to help a multifaceted conflict become clearer by unifying similar perspectives or defining specific points of departure without the focus of the whole group. It might be that only some people attend a caucus, or it might be that all are expected to participate in a caucus. The difference between caucuses and small groups is that caucuses are composed of people with similar viewpoints, whereas small group discussions are more useful if they are made up of people with diverse viewpoints or even a random selection of people.

Glossary

agenda contract

The agenda contract is made when the agenda is reviewed and accepted. This agreement includes the items on the agenda, the order in which they are considered, and the time allotted to each. Unless the whole group agrees to change the agenda, the facilitator is obligated to keep to the contract. The decision to change the agenda must be a consensus, with little or no discussion.

agreement

Complete agreement, with no unresolved concerns.

block

If the allotted agenda time has been spent trying to achieve consensus, and unresolved legitimate concerns remain, the proposal may be considered blocked, or not able to be adopted at this meeting.

concern

A point of departure or disagreement with a proposal.

conflict

The expression of disagreement, which brings into focus diverse viewpoints, and provides the opportunity to explore their strengths and weaknesses.

consensus

A decisionmaking process whereby decisions are reached when all members present consent to a proposal. This process does not assume everyone must be in complete agreement. When differences remain after discussion, individuals can agree to disagree, that is, give their consent by standing aside, and allow the proposal to be accepted by the group.

consent

Acceptance of the proposal, not necessarily agreement. Individuals are responsible for expressing their ideas, concerns and objections. Silence, in response to a call for consensus, signifies consent. Silence is not complete agreement; it is acceptance of the proposal.

decision

The end product of an idea that started as a proposal and evolved to become a plan of action accepted by the whole group.

evaluation

A group analysis at the end of a meeting about interpersonal dynamics during decisionmaking. This is a time to allow feelings to be expressed, with the goal of improving the functioning of future meetings. It is not a discussion or debate, nor should anyone comment on another's evaluation.

meeting

An occasion in which people come together and, in an orderly way, make decisions.

methods of decisionmaking:**autocracy:**

one person makes the decisions for everyone

oligarchy:

a few people make the decisions for everyone

representative democracy:

a few people are elected to make the decisions for everyone

majority rule democracy :

the majority makes the decisions for everyone

consensus:

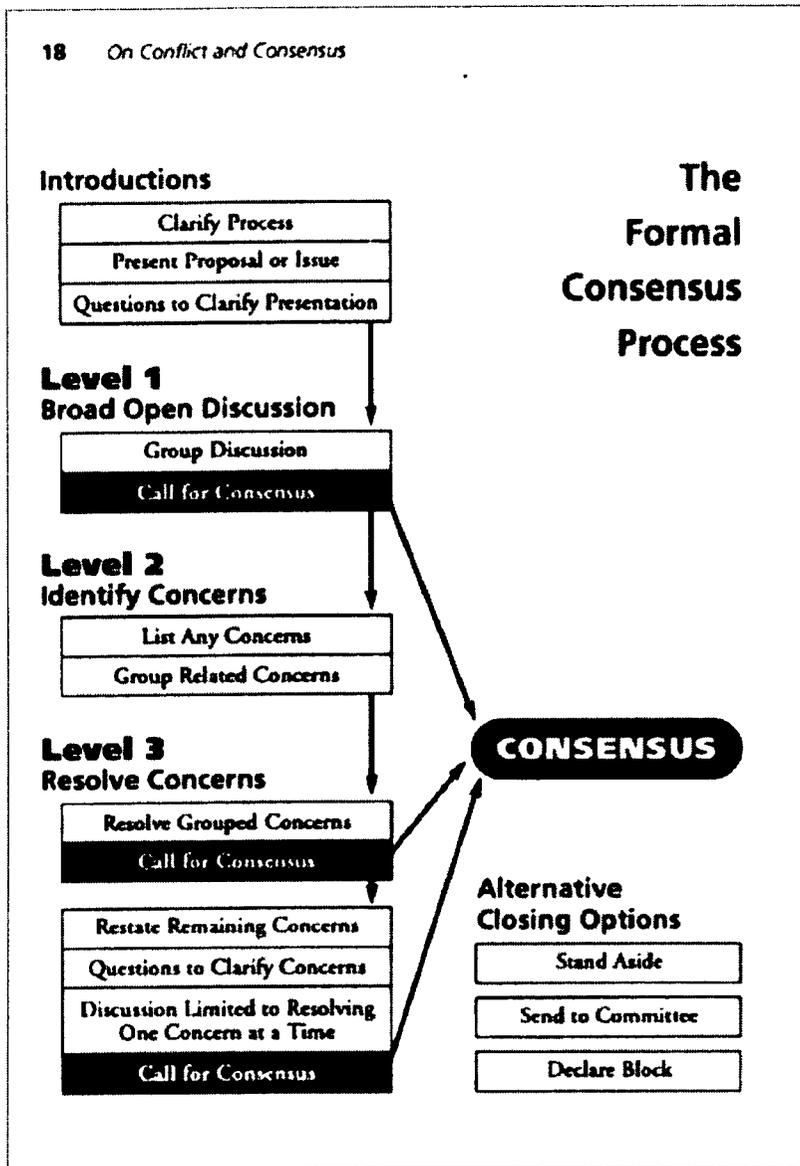
everyone makes the decisions for everyone

proposal

A written plan that some members of a group present to the whole group for discussion and acceptance.

stand aside

To agree to disagree, to be willing to let a proposal be adopted despite unresolved concerns.



This is a copy of **On Conflict and Consensus**
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