

March 10, 2012

*Below are the remarks I made at the outset of the Founding Assembly – what turned out to be part 1 – on March 10, 2012. There was some interest expressed at both parts I and II of the Stand founding in having these remarks on the website as a note on the history preceding the actual founding of Stand. So, here they are ...*

Hello everyone. As there are unfamiliar faces in the crowd, I will introduce myself. My name is Asaf Rashid and I'm on the Stand Founding Assembly Organizing Committee. Can the others on the organizing committee please stand up? (other stand up!)

First of all, thank you everyone for being here. The Organizing Committee has worked hard to make this Founding Assembly happen and are happy to finally be ready to move Stand from an idea to practice. What brought the Organizing Committee together – and what I imagine is bringing together others here today – was and is a desire for revolutionary change. We want to destroy or alter the social relations of capitalism and replace them with communal relations based on mutual aid and solidarity. Lofty goals? Not necessarily. While we recognize that bringing down capitalism at a global level and replacing it with the kind of society we desire is both a necessary and extremely daunting task, we also recognize that it will only be possible through building revolutionary organizations at local levels and coordinating their activities. Many like to argue about whether or not we are in a revolutionary moment, which cannot truly be known. The process of change is what matters and the specific strategies on how to achieve the changes desired will vary depending on the circumstances. And in any case, the least we can do is change our relations with each other to be more consistent with our ideals. These new relations are the seeds for endless possibilities.

I gather that at least some people here are wondering where this Organizing Committee came from. On that note, I'd like to offer a brief history of our journey until now. It was over a year ago now, some time in November 2010 that a group of friends, including the present Organizing Committee, began a series of discussions about forming an organization in Halifax that was explicitly both opposed to capitalism and for a kind of egalitarian communism. We got together a few times over the proceeding weeks to try and put the pieces together, but there was a lot of confusion over how exactly such an organization would be structured and over particular politics. On these grounds, there were disagreements. That attempt at forming an organization did not pan out; however, three of those involved, myself included, decided to pick up the pieces and try and take our ideas forward. We began to organize for what we were calling a Founding Congress. The idea was to meet regularly as our group of three to form a skeletal organizational structure that we could present to others, and the result would be a membership based, revolutionary organization. Our group of three met regularly through the winter of 2011 and into the summer, along the way requesting

and receiving feedback on our ideas from political allies. This effort did not quite pan out either. For one, we fell into a trap of only talking to our immediate social circles and ended up with a very small group of about a dozen as a consequence. This was probably good in the end, as the skeletal structures we offered were not put together quite well enough to support the kind of organization that we wanted, which was made clear to us in our discussions that day with our friends. What we did get out of that session was a larger organizing group, which was instrumental for moving forward. And that is precisely what we did. We resolved to continue to meet together and better develop the skeleton of Stand to one day hold up a working political organization, forged through a more meaningful founding event. We asked and answered each others' political questions, clarified and wrote down our ideas, changed the name of Founding Congress to Founding Assembly – which just sounds more inviting – and here we are today.

So, why didn't we just launch the organization more quickly? Our own political experiences caused us to proceed with more caution. Basically, we had all been involved in many efforts of informal political organizing that have been rushed, where small groups organized around a simple basis of unity, then quickly opened up the process to others. Very quickly, people would begin to realize that they were not sure why they were all there and what they were doing. After a few weeks or months, and sometimes a little longer, the groups would disband due to confusion and a lack of formal commitment.

In the case of Stand, the Organizing Committee has been very careful about proceeding too quickly. We have made sure that the few of us on the organizing committee know why we have come together and arrived at basic political strategies for achieving our goals. We want to make sure there is something to work with before asking people to participate in this process with us. That is only fair. A good analogy is with a play script. If there was a playwright who put together a very poorly written script where it was impossible to tell what tense he was speaking in or what characters are talking to what other characters, what would be the sense of inviting others to help develop the script further. If the story makes little to no sense, the next move is to throw it out and start over. We feel that with Stand, we have a good script to work with, but it is only a start. Today, the Organizing Committee will dissolve and Stand will form. The story until now is only a beginning and we are inviting others to help us add to it.