

Québec solidaire: The Ecosocialist Network - ready for action!

Thursday 4 April 2013, by [RIOUX Bernard](#) (Date first published: 12 March 2013).

More than 75 members of Québec solidaire, from various regions of Quebec, held an enthusiastic meeting on Saturday, March 9 in Montréal to found the Réseau écosocialiste, the Ecosocialist Network.

They included members of existing collectives in QS such as Masse critique, Gauche socialiste, Alternative socialiste and Socialisme international. But the majority by far were members independent of any collective. The meeting adopted a statement of principles (base de regroupement) and some statutes, and elected an executive.

By no means merely an ideological coalition, the Réseau hopes to be a center for action-oriented initiatives.

The meeting was opened by four panelists who discussed the bases for ecosocialism, the major ecology concepts, the role of social movements in the process of social transformation, and the ecosocialist experiences in a number of “left of the left” parties, especially in Europe.

What is the basis for coalition and action of the Réseau écosocialiste?

Following a presentation on the draft statement of founding principles, the meeting then discussed it along with a series of proposed amendments.

Here is a summary of the major propositions adopted. They point to a triple crisis in the period opened by the Great Recession of 2008: an economic crisis; an environmental crisis arising out of an unsustainable mode of production and consumption; and a crisis of democracy, which is emptied of any content by an all-powerful financial oligarchy. In short, we are experiencing a global systemic crisis that demonstrates the impasse of contemporary capitalism, increasingly incapable of meeting the fundamental needs of humanity.

Ecosocialism is a new political project developed in response to this impasse. To overcome the present crises, we need to end the search for maximum profit, consumerism and productivism. While ecosocialism undertakes to deepen and renew the emancipatory project of socialism in 21st century conditions, it differs from the “20th century socialisms” which failed in terms of ecology, democracy, and social equity.

That is why ecosocialism values democracy, self-management and egalitarianism and rejects the green capitalism defended by Social Democracy, which claims we can overcome the present ecological crisis without challenging capitalism, the system responsible for this crisis. Ecosocialism proposes instead a democratically administered economy that breaks from the consumerism, commodification and privatization of all aspects of life. Ecosocialism poses the need to participate in social and environmental struggles alongside all those who are resisting.

This essentially entails reorganizing the economy on a radically democratic foundation, renewing democracy at all levels, and promoting the convergence of social and political struggles. Instead of

domination by the private sector, it means establishing ecological and participatory planning oriented to meeting the real needs of people in a way that is respectful of ecosystems. We need to break with the production priorities of the major energy, mining or industrial proprietors and the banks, which profit only them.

The founding principles of the Réseau écosocialiste emphasize in particular the need to link Québec solidaire to the social movements, not only by demonstrating the needed solidarity with them but by participating in their debates, to help define together some common perspectives for resistance to the plans of Big Business. In order to contribute to this process, Québec solidaire must be attentive to those of its members who are active in the various social movements.

Some tasks for the Réseau écosocialiste...

These tasks will be organized around the following themes:

- Establish a center for the development of ecosocialist perspectives, in order to be able to participate in the programmatic and tactical debates of Québec solidaire;
- Propose campaigns and activities in opposition to the austerity, anti-ecology and patriarchal policies of the ruling classes;
- Defend democracy within the party and help to deepen it;
- Build and consolidate the presence of Québec solidaire in the various social movements and adopt structures that can facilitate this task;
- Organize and lead debates and educationals on ecosocialist perspectives; and
- Build links with ecosocialist organizations on a global scale.

The discussion at the Montréal meeting revealed a broad unity of views around the proposed orientation. Participants were explicit in their recognition that the ecosocialist current worldwide is characterized by varying sensibilities, but they felt that the proposed founding principles were sufficiently flexible to welcome these differing approaches. Much of the discussion focused on how to strengthen the anti-patriarchal dimension of the ecosocialism that we defend. It was felt that ecosocialism must also include the abolition of patriarchy among its objectives. The establishment of an ecosocialist society must take into account the demands of women and the fundamental nature of the fight against patriarchy.

Important debate on the statutes

The statutes define the terms of membership, the role and powers of the general assembly as the highest body in the network, and the status of the regional assemblies and the inter-regional coordinating body. They also define the tasks of the executive committee and the division of labour within it.

The debates focused mainly around two issues: the conditions for membership in the Réseau and the statutory creation of working committees in which the members can be involved.

The first debate was over the proposal that “the members of the network are members of Québec solidaire who adhere to the basis of unity and contribute to the financing and activity of the Réseau.”

Questions were raised about the degree of openness of the Réseau. If it was to set its task as one of

working in particular to develop Québec solidaire as a party of the streets, it followed — according to the supporters of this option — that participation in the Réseau should be limited to members of Québec solidaire. Others, however, argued that the ecosocialist perspective could have a broader appeal, and it seemed desirable that anyone defining himself or herself as an ecosocialist should be able to join the Réseau. The debate produced a compromise solution: anyone who is a member of Québec solidaire or in political solidarity with the party could join the Réseau. This proposal was adopted.

As for the working committees, this founding meeting agreed to establish the following committees: a women's committee, a communications committee, an educational committee, and a committee for "a party of the streets." These choices demonstrated the members' desire to engage in action as rapidly as possible. As it happens, these committees, which are formed on a volunteer basis, recruited a fair number of members — especially the committee for "a party of the streets."

Election of the executive

The draft statutes proposed to elect an executive committee "composed of six persons, including at least three women" and "representative of the regions." In order to guarantee better representation of the diversity of members, the meeting decided to increase the number of members of this committee and to include at least four women. The elections produced a very welcome surprise; the executive will be composed of five women and three men. Unfortunately, some very valuable nominees were eliminated, but there is no lack of outlets for involvement in the Réseau.

The Réseau écosocialiste: an achievement for the left of the left, an achievement for Québec solidaire

The founding of the Réseau écosocialiste is an important moment in the consolidation of the left of the left in Quebec. It is part of the process of unifying the political left in Quebec that began more than a decade ago. It will constitute an achievement because it will strengthen the capacity of Québec solidaire to enter into the essential debates and struggles to come in response to the ecological crisis of the capitalist system, and will help to attract to the party some sectors of the youth who radicalized during the printemps érable, the Maple Spring.

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P.S.

* <http://climateandcapitalism.com/2013/03/14/quebec-ecosocialist-network-ready-for-action/>

* This article appeared in French on Presse-toi à gauche, on March 12, 2013. Available on ESSF (article 28310): [Québec solidaire : le réseau écosocialiste est prêt à passer à l'action.](#)

* Translated by Richard Fidler.