

CAN SMALL GROUP ORGANIZING SAVE THE COUNTRY?¹

Sarah Byrnes[©]

At last, the election is over. No matter what your take is on the outcome, a season so full of deceitful ads and partisan bickering makes us all uncomfortable. Our democratic process is fraught with incivility, misinformation, and paranoia. People are voting their fears, from a place of deep insecurity. It's hard to imagine how we can move from these realities to a new economy based on real wealth that serves people in harmony with the planet. At the moment, it seems impossible to agree on even small things, let alone a big new vision for the future. How can we keep our spirits up in order to keep working when things are so daunting?

I needed a support group to remind me that even small steps matter, and that I'm not alone in the fight. Without this kind of community, we get drained, we burn out, we sit out elections, or we vote our fears. In fact, sources of strength are all around us, in our neighbors, friends, and co-workers, but we have to overcome our isolation to find them. Before joining a small group called a Common Security Club, I did my best on my own to be a good global citizen. I shopped locally, changed the light bulbs, and subscribed to a lot of social action mailing lists. I "clicked here" when directed, sending emails to decision-makers, and even making a few phone calls. That was all well and good, but it wasn't very nourishing. The pressure and the responsibility of creating a new economy felt overwhelming, even paralyzing, and what I was doing felt silly and small.

Though it might sound old-fashioned, what I needed was a support group—a group of people to remind me that even small steps matter, and that I'm not alone in the fight. Without this kind of community, we get drained, we burn out, we sit out elections, or we vote our fears. The simple truth is that there's only so far people can go on their own. We'll never create a new economy by just sitting in front of our computers "clicking here," or by thinking up perfect policy solutions. We need strong movements to turn these policy solutions into realities, and strong movements are made up of people who actually know and help each other.

There are many ways we can create these necessary human connections, and the Common Security Club approach is one. At clubs, groups of adults meet in person to learn, help each other, and engage in action. Hundreds are meeting across the country combat isolation and stave off burnout. The CSC Network is supporting these clubs, providing tools and pathways to deepen organizational networks and reach disconnected individuals. We don't want anyone to feel overwhelmed or too tired to fight. We want everyone to have a support group. The work is too important, and too overwhelming, to attempt alone.

¹ Yes! Magazine, November 05, 2010