



*'For the millions, not the millionaires'*

# Socialist Campaigner

**WE SAY**

- ▶ US out of Iraq
- ▶ Medicare not missiles
- ▶ Hands off militant unions
- ▶ Freedom for Aceh

**DONATION \$1**

National newsletter of the Socialist Alliance, Number 1, June 2003

DONATION \$1

## Welcome to the first issue of the Socialist Alliance national newsletter

Getting this monthly newsletter up and running is one of many outcomes of the Socialist Alliance's very successful Second National Conference in Melbourne on May 10-11.

At that conference, the 121 delegates from 25 branches around the country discussed, debated and decided to implement a wide range of proposals to build the Socialist Alliance as a united, multi-tendency party, and to strengthen the progressive and working-class movements.

### **Fighting the US's war of terror—End the occupation of Iraq**

Against the backdrop of the United States and its allies' occupation of Iraq and escalating threats of US war against many other Third World countries, the Socialist Alliance will be continuing to build the anti-war movement through local community peace groups, in the trade unions, among students and in broad peace coalitions. We are supporting, and helping to organise, the July 4 protest actions against the occupation of Iraq.

### **No to Howard's war budget—Medicare not missiles, Books not bombs**

As part of the campaign to stop the warmongers here in Australia, the Alliance is circulating a "No to Howard's war budget" petition demanding "Medicare not Missiles. Books not Bombs". Our stand for free, universal health care and no education fees has been getting a good response at the public meetings we have organised to help build campaigns which can stop the government's withdrawal of these essential public services.

### **For militant, democratic unions – Defend the CFMEU**

One of the most important outcomes of the national conference was the adoption of a vision and plan for rebuilding militant, democratic trade unions in Australia.

The Cole Royal Commission's attack on the CFMEU is an attack on all unions that fight for workers' rights, and Socialist Alliance members will be campaigning hard to defend the CFMEU and strengthen fighting unionism in general.

To assist the many active unionists in the Socialist Alliance to do that, national caucuses of Alliance members in particular unions are in the process of being formed, alongside cross-union solidarity committees in a number of states and territories. As well, a new Socialist Alliance pamphlet on the state of unionism in Australia, the nature of the current attacks, and how to fight them, will shortly be published. This pamphlet will be the first in a series which aims to assist union militants and left activists to understand and organise effectively against the government and employers' offensive against working people.

### **Troops out of Aceh—End Australia's military ties with Indonesia**

Since our conference, the Indonesian military has launched a campaign of terror against the people of Aceh in an effort to crush their struggle for self-determination. The Socialist Alliance has issued a statement calling for Indonesian troops out of Aceh; an end to Australia's military ties with Indonesia; and self-determination for the Acehnese. Branches around the country have been doing film showings, forums and street campaigning in solidarity with the people of Aceh, and an Asia Pacific Solidarity email group has been set up for members.

### **Left unity**

There are many struggles ahead of us to halt and reverse the neo-liberal war on workers and oppressed peoples in Australia and around the world, but the tide is beginning to turn. The historic mobilisations against war this year revealed the deep disquiet and anger in wide sectors of the



community. It showed a growing awareness of the links between corporate interests and the manipulation of power and truth to achieve their ends. It also showed that masses of people are now willing to take united action against the corporate rulers' agenda.

The steps forward in left unity that the Socialist Alliance is taking will strengthen that broader unity in action, which is necessary to shift the balance of power from the profiteers to the people.

For more information about the discussions and outcomes of the Socialist Alliance national conference, or our campaigning work, visit the web site. ■

[www.socialist-alliance.org](http://www.socialist-alliance.org)



## Making the most of the web

BY JUSTIN RANDELL

The Socialist Alliance website is an increasingly important part of the Alliance's public face, so making it the best possible outreach and activist organisation tool is important to helping us implement many of the exciting proposals adopted at the May national conference.

As a first step, more time will be spent at the national level maintaining and updating the site so it is always current, informative, easily accessible and useful. Hopefully, by the time you're reading this the new look and functionality upgrade of the website will have been completed. Please go and have a look at it, and send your feedback to: [web\\_team@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:web_team@socialist-alliance.org) (constructive criticism is very welcome).

But we all need to be asking ourselves: Are we making the most of the website to build and profile the Alliance and the campaigns we are involved in? How could we make it a better outreach and organising tool?

Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

► We could be reflecting more of the diverse work of the Alliance on the web, particularly our trade union and movement building activities. Better web content will draw more people to the Alliance, and the campaigns and movements we're building, so all SA branches and caucuses should give some

thought to how their activities could be presented on the web.

► We could establish our national newsletter as a regular feature of the website, and make it possible for visitors to sign up for an e-version of the newsletter from any page on the site.

► We could establish specific local branch or state pages on the national site, where all public branch events and campaigns are advertised, along with branch contact details, etc. This means finding volunteers from your branch/state to maintain your page. Templates and technical training and support can be provided from the national office.

► It would be useful to have regular local branch or caucus discussions about making the most of the web. Are all the events from our union/movement committee on the web? Are we profiling the Socialist Alliance website in these campaigns by putting the address on our leaflets and posters, and advertising new content on relevant movement email lists? How could we use better the feedback forms on the site to involve interested activists? What resources (petitions, model motions, SA statements and media releases) should we put on the site, for use by both Alliance members and other activists?

Please send any other ideas or offers of help to maintain the site to me at: [web\\_team@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:web_team@socialist-alliance.org). We look forward to hearing from you. ■

## World Refugee Day

Socialist Alliance members around the country are involved in committees organising the rallies and marches on June 20-22 to mark World Refugee Day.

With hundreds of asylum seekers still imprisoned in the camps, the inhumane Temporary Protection Visa regime still in place, and the government now moving to forcibly deport many Iraqi, Iranian and Afghan refugees, the World Refugee Day rallies this year are more important than ever.

For details of the march in your city,

contact your local Socialist Alliance branch, or visit the refugee rights section of the web site. Join us to demand:

**Close the detention centres—Free the refugees**  
**Repeal the Border Protection Act—**  
**No 'Pacific solution'**  
**Abolish TPVs—Full citizenship rights for refugees**

## The Big One

BY TOM FLANAGAN  
(NORTHERN RIVERS BRANCH)

The Northern Rivers Socialist Alliance screening of Mike Moore's film *The Big One* proved to be exactly that.

Since the event was only moderately publicised, and projector failure forced us to resort to a TV set at the last SA film night, we had expected 20 to 30 people.

Fortunately, Maggie Moore's Pub (no relation to Mike) had a movable partition and lots of spare chairs so when the crowd stopped arriving we had squeezed 110 people into the room!

SA member Nick Fredman gave a brief intro explaining that Moore's film, while admirable for its concern for US workers, failed to address the situation of Third World workers, which has to be considered in any coherent response to global capitalism.

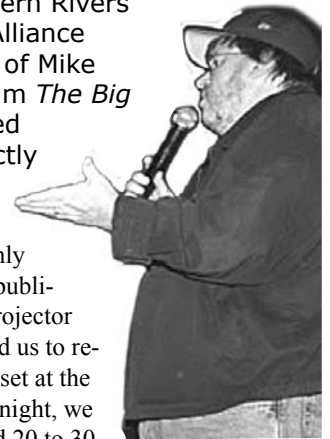
With an entry charge of just \$3/\$5 we collected \$350 at the door, and while we didn't make a lot of contacts for SA that night, (it may have been more a cult film audience than a consciously political one), considering how stretched we were, we were happy to have managed to distribute 50 Socialist Alliance budget broadsheets to people as they left.

Quick negotiations with the pub manager during the film resulted in a decision to screen Moore's film *Roger and Me* on June 24, possibly with two sessions. This was announced at the end of the film, so publicity has started early.

We hope that by showing Moore's films, as well as films by John Pilger and Ken Loach, on a monthly basis, the Alliance can build up a regular following that could develop into an audience for political films in general. In the process, we'll develop a regular source of income, strengthen our public profile and create opportunities to talk to a lot of new people about politics.

Since Northern Rivers branch has members in 10 towns and villages in the region, only a minority living in Lismore now, we are also looking at showing these films in Nimbin and other nearby towns.

**For more information about the wide range of films that are available for screening by your branch, contact Jill or John at Actively Radical TV in Sydney on (02) 9564 1277. ■**



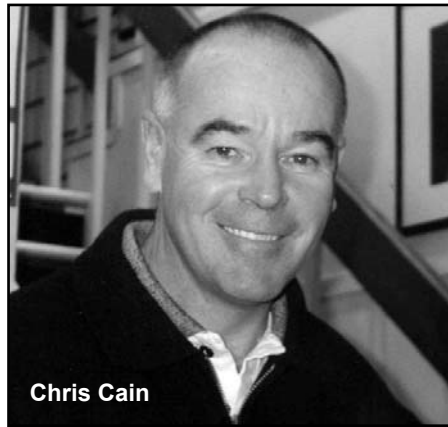
Mike Moore

# Huge support for MUA Rank and File Campaign

BY IAN JAMIESON  
(FREMANTLE BRANCH)

Rank and file members of the Maritime Union of Australia contesting positions in the union's quadrennial election are winding up after a long campaign.

Standing in a number of branches and in three national positions, the MUA Rank and File Campaign has been pressing hard for reforms in the MUA and a return to the militant traditions of seafarers and wharfies. Like other unions, the MUA has for many years faced attacks by federal and state governments and employers, the most infamous being the Patricks dispute in 1998. Casualisation in the industry is rampant, hard-won conditions have been lost and there is no respite in the drive for



Chris Cain

increased profits.

Among MUA members there is widespread feeling that many full-time officials have done little to stem the tide. Union structures on the job and union democracy are being neglected as incumbent officials attempt to placate the rapacious demands of employers. Enterprise agreements are negotiated with MUA officials circumventing even legal industrial action, resulting in the union constantly taking steps backwards.

Although the MUA Rank and File Campaign has been active for a number of years, presenting alternative policies to those of the officials, the 2003 election campaign is the most serious challenge yet. Candidates include many with decades of experience in both seafaring and on

the wharves, and who are members of the Socialist Alliance, the ALP and independent militants.

Perhaps the best known, Chris Cain, is a member of the Socialist Alliance National Executive. He is standing for WA Secretary of the union.

Chris and his running partners, Peter Treacy and Ian Bray, have reported tremendous support throughout their campaign in WA. In a lightning visit to regional ports, travelling 4,000 kilometres in four days, they raised more than \$4,000 from MUA members, spoke at more than 20 meetings and received a warm welcome from members, many of whom had never even seen a full-time union official.

The election will conclude on June 16 after eight weeks of a union-controlled postal ballot. Counting of votes is expected to take four to five days.

Whatever the outcome of the election, it is becoming clear that a sea change is occurring within the MUA. Incumbent officials can no longer take the ranks for granted and members are taking matters into their own hands. There can also be no doubt that many in the union movement nationally will be looking closely at the results of the 2003 MUA election.

**The MUA election results will be posted on the Socialist Alliance web site in the last week of June. ■**

## Can you help draft policy?

The recent SA national conference decided to push ahead on developing policies on a wide range of issues. Drafting working groups are now being formed around some of these issues, initially as moderated email groups open to any interested Alliance member.

If you would like to participate in a policy working group (or two!), please contact the National Conveners at: [ne@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:ne@socialist-alliance.org) and we will put you in touch with others interested in that area.

The policy working groups that the conference decided to form are listed below, but if you are interested in some other area, please let us know.

- ▶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- ▶ Agriculture and the countryside
- ▶ Democratic rights and civil liberties
- ▶ Economy and full employment
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Health
- ▶ Immigration, refugee and migrant rights
- ▶ Industrial relations and union rights
- ▶ International relations
- ▶ Lesbian, gay and transsexual rights
- ▶ Military and defence
- ▶ Social justice and welfare
- ▶ Women's rights
- ▶ Young people's rights
- ▶ Israel-Palestine conflict
- ▶ Cuba
- ▶ Drug use and drug law reform
- ▶ Disability access
- ▶ Public transport
- ▶ Family support
- ▶ Science and technology

## Attention all graphic designers

The Socialist Alliance is looking for a new logo. All ideas and submissions are welcome. Please send artwork to [ne@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:ne@socialist-alliance.org), or phone Michael Morphett on (02) 9981 2349 for more info.





## Aceh solidarity campaigning

BY JOHN GAUCI  
(SYDNEY NORTHSIDE BRANCH)

Inspired by the national conference, Sydney Northside SA branch decided to spice up its fortnightly meetings by including a topical educational item in the agendas. Our June 4 meeting focussed on the crisis in Aceh.

We showed the 30-minute documentary *Aceh: the people's struggle*, which provides a good background on the people's struggle for self-determination, and invited members of the Australian Aceh Association to update us on the current situation. After some interesting discussion about the Australian government's support for the Indonesian military's terror campaign in Aceh, the branch decided to endorse a statement calling on the Howard government to cut all military ties with Indonesia, provide the Acehnese with much-needed humanitarian aid and resources, and pressure the Indonesian government to end its war and resume peace talks with the Acehnese.

The Northside branch is now also using its suburban stalls to promote the June 24 national protest against war and militarism in Canberra, which many Acehnese in Australia will be joining.

The educational focus of our next branch meeting will be Palestine, including a screening of John Pilger's documentary *Palestine is Still the Issue* and a guest speaker on the United States' "roadmap to peace".

**To obtain a copy of either *Aceh: The people's struggle* or Pilger's documentary on Palestine, contact Jill or John at Actively Radical TV on (02) 9564 1277.**

# Why I joined Socialist Alliance

Since our second national conference in Melbourne last month, dozens of people have decided to sign up to Socialist Alliance. They have joined for many reasons, but some of those are expressed well by new member **HENRY WELLSMORE** from Carey Bay who joined Newcastle branch a fortnight ago. He says:

"Up to and including Bob Hawke's victory in the 1980s, I had always voted Labor and felt 'at home' with that decision. I can still remember the joy I felt when Bob Hawke won. I think I got terribly drunk to celebrate.

However, joy quickly turned sour and a feeling of alienation settled in. The Labor Party moved further and further to the right, and I was left out in the cold. The alienation which began with Hawke developed into full-blown estrangement under PM Paul Keating.

Since the early '90s I have been looking for a political 'address' which would satisfy my particular view of how the world could be. In the last 10 years I have flirted with the Democrats and the Greens, and had a brief affair with Labor (just to see whether my feelings had changed). These 'affairs' have resulted in my being on a ticket in two elections, being a campaign manager in another, being a 'ghost writer' for a local candidate, and invariably working a booth at

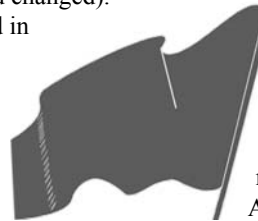
election time. Even though this was in the main good fun and it was rewarding to be doing my bit, there was still the sense of being 'a man without a church'.

Last October, out of sheer frustration, I found and joined the No War Coalition in Newcastle. Through this coalition I met politically like-minded people who were not sitting around on their bums waiting for the next election. They were willing to take action on those issues that mattered to them. They saw other ways of making their presence felt apart from the ballot box.

I suddenly realised what my sense of frustration was all about. My experience of political parties was one of work your butt off for about a fortnight before the election to try to convince people to vote for you, almost kill yourself on the day of the election, watch the count hoping you get your deposit back and maybe make a bit of money for the next campaign, and then everything shuts up, the politicians go home, nothing much has changed.

I saw in the Socialist Alliance another way — a way based on the strengthening and mobilisation of people power.

I am reminded of a Peanuts cartoon in which Lucy is having an argument with Charlie Brown and she holds up her right hand and says about her outstretched fingers, 'Separately we are nothing'. She then makes a fist and says, 'But together we make a powerful force'. I therefore look forward to being part of the revitalisation of an authentic left in Australia." ■



## Campaigning against the Nelson Review

BY MARCUS PABIAN

The breadth of the attack on higher education contained in the Nelson Review spurred the Victorian State Executive to organise an Education Caucus meeting on June 7 for all interested Socialist Alliance members. Thirty staff and students from eight universities attended.

Liz Thompson, the National Education officer at NUS, outlined the implications of the attacks for students, and Jeremy Smith, an NTEU National Councillor, covered the industrial relations attacks on staff. Reports from campuses revealed the lack of a coordinated campaign to date but affirmed that a strong student-staff alliance to organise a second semester campaign was possible.

Discussion around a late August cross-sector anti-budget rally raised confidence in a second semester campaign. The June 13 Victorian Trades Hall executive will be presented with a motion from the CFMEU to organise such a demonstration/strike

to oppose the Nelson Review, cuts to Medicare, funding of union-bashing Royal Commissions and increases in military spending. It aims to bring together militant unionists, high school and university students and staff, and the general community.

The SA Education Caucus also decided to:

- ▶ Pursue joint student and staff committees for the campaign on campus.
- ▶ Create an email group for the caucus.
- ▶ Circulate timelines of cross-campus activist committees to the e-group.
- ▶ Submit proposals for ways to organise the caucus in the campaign to the e-group.
- ▶ Hold another caucus at the June 28 Socialist Alliance Victorian State Conference.

▶ Support the August anti-budget rally  
**To contact the Socialist Alliance Education Caucus, phone Marcus on (03) 9639 8622 or 0403 876 934, or email: red\_spring10@yahoo.com.au ■**

# Building solidarity, not begging

BY TIM GOODEN  
(GEELONG BRANCH)

At our last Socialist Alliance branch meeting, members in Geelong decided they wanted to collect money for the 110 locked out workers at Geelong Wool Combing. The workers, members of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union, have been locked out since April 28.

But we also wanted to involve the workers themselves, so I was delegated to visit the picket line and suggest to the shop stewards that they organise the workers to participate in the money-collecting stalls. I quickly realised that my request was going to take some explaining: these workers are very proud, they have never been locked out before and, in their words, they “never beg”.

I explained how street stalls are used for campaigning, that we would hand out leaflets about the dispute to inform the public and build support. This would counter the local media, which had given the workers demands no coverage. I also explained that shaking the bucket was not begging, but a way in which all workers can join the fight to make sure the bosses’ lockout tactic fails.

On the following Saturday morning, most of the active members in our branch joined the mobilisation. Armed with A-frames, buckets and card tables (and after a pancake breakfast together), we all headed out to various parts of Geelong with five stalls.

It was a bit slow at first because not too many people had heard about the dispute. Most people made a donation only after reading the leaflet and a fair bit of spruiking was required to get people’s attention. But the end result was great — \$580, mostly from the working-class areas. As well, members reported having had some really good yaks with people about the lockout



and got to know some of the wool combers better.

After the stalls, we drove up to the picket line to hand over the money and discuss how things were going. Well, the workers were stoked and immediately wanted to know if we could all go out again the following Saturday. The next week we raised another \$400 in the smaller suburbs and the wool combers, who were now getting the hang of doing public stalls, decided off their own bat to hit the two Sunday markets and the footy game, and collected another \$400 dollars.

Last Saturday was our third bucket-collection mobilisation and I am pleased to report that the wool combers’ stalls are now better than ours. They have made up information boards that include photos and a copy of the lockout notice, and they are spruiking like they’re at the fruit markets.

Geelong people are answering the call. People now donate without being prompted. One ex-CityPower worker donated \$250 at a stall. And, at last, the local media have begun to cover the dispute, reporting last week that the wool combers have received a second month-long lockout notice.

The Socialist Alliance has played an important part in helping these workers fight the boss. In the process, we have mobilised our members more and begun to establish valuable credibility with other unionists as a serious, pro-worker, campaigning organisation. ■

## Campaigning for migrant services

BY BEN COURTICE  
(MELBOURNE WEST BRANCH)

More proof has been provided that the government hates poor people and immigrants (and most of all, poor immigrants) with the closure of the Inner West Migrant Resource Centre in Footscray after the government refused to renew their funding. After an initial public meeting, where more than 200 people voiced their anger at the de-funding, the Socialist Alliance’s Melbourne West branch has joined the campaign to save Footscray’s MRC.

We had been told by some former MRC workers that the MRC management “mis-

managed” the centre and were anti-union, and therefore that SA should not support them. However, it was fairly obvious to us that this is beside the point, and that closing the MRC is part of the government’s “mainstreaming” agenda — that is, axing specific services aimed at disadvantaged groups such as women and migrants, and privatising welfare.

The Alliance has linked this campaign to the federal budget’s spending priorities and to the huge cost of the Immigration Detention Centre up the road in Maribyrnong to highlight how racist the government’s priorities are.

While the MRC workers are a bit demor-

## Join your trade union caucus

One of the big steps forward that Socialist Alliance took at its May national conference was the enthusiastic adoption of a vision and plan for rebuilding militant, democratic unions in Australia (visit the web site for the full text of the resolution).

The membership of the Socialist Alliance includes a high proportion of union members and delegates, many of whom have a wealth of experience in fighting for workers’ and union rights.

Trade union workshops at the conference decided to establish national caucuses and email groups for Socialist Alliance members in particular unions. If you are in one of these unions, we encourage you to join the relevant e-group so you can contribute to and draw on the experience and support of fellow unionists in the Alliance.

To subscribe to any of the national union e-groups established so far (more will be set up over time), contact the following:

### CPSU

Email Daniel Watson at:  
aneiki@bigpond.com

### NTEU

Email Susan Price at:  
suzibaluzi@hotmail.com

### Teachers unions

Email: saew-subscribe@yahoogroups.com, or Alex Bainbridge at: alexb@dsp.org.au

Socialist Alliance caucuses and email groups have also been established for some state unions, including state public sector unions, the AMWU, and others. For more information about the state union caucuses and e-groups, contact your local branch or the National Conveners at ne@socialist-alliance.org

alised and the migrant community organisations are not always easy to mobilise, our SA branch is starting to make good contacts in the area, especially among migrants.

When one of the MRC workers told the local Labor MP that, despite “political differences” with SA, he was working with us on the campaign, the MP replied that Socialist Alliance members seem to be “organising everything”. Welcome praise from unexpected quarters. ■

# Building the confidence to win

**BY LIAM MITCHELL  
(MARRICKVILLE BRANCH)**

When 60 workers at the Morris McMahon factory went on strike in March, Socialist Alliance members from branches around Sydney were quick to begin organising solidarity.

With little coverage of the dispute in the mainstream media, SA activists took it upon themselves to get the word out to other workplaces and unions, and to the public generally. In the process of building regular community pickets at the factory gates to confront the scabs in buses crossing the picket line each day, Socialist Alliance members and other activists helped break the silence about this dispute.

Members of many unions and communities joined the picket line in the early mornings and afternoons, and the strikers, members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, most of whom had never before been on strike, greatly appreciated this solidarity.

## An 'attractive vehicle'

**BY LINDA WALDRON  
(MELBOURNE WEST BRANCH)**

On May 28, after our branch meeting, Melbourne West members drove out to Laverton to visit the Electrical Trades Union three-month-long picket line at Smorgon Steel.

AMWU (Workers First) organiser and fellow SA branch member Fergie Eiffe was already there with the six picketers holding the line that night. We distributed "Hands off our union" badges to the strikers and kept them company for a couple of hours over cups of tea and lots of discussion about the latest in the struggle.

The next day was the 100th day of the picket, and five of our branch members went along to the well attended picket-line breakfast for young workers, where we handed over the donations we had collected at a Socialist Alliance public forum on the budget held the previous Monday.

At the breakfast we ran into AMWU activist Jorge, who is also a member of the Chilean Communist Party. He told us that the Socialist Alliance was the first party in 20 years that CCP members in Australia saw as an attractive vehicle for their political work. The CCP (Australia) is currently discussing affiliation to the Alliance.

The CCP hosted a fundraiser for the strikers the following Saturday, at which Socialist Alliance gave greetings. ■

Alliance members concentrated on ensuring that the workers' demands had a public face. By reporting about the dispute on hundreds of email lists, distributing thousands of leaflets on the street and in workplaces, posterising local areas, fundraising, producing community TV programs about the dispute, mobilising students for the picket line, and simply talking to the many people we come across in our day to day work, we have played a role to be proud of in this campaign.

Solidarity with struggles such as at Morris McMahon is vital to help strengthen the fighting spirit of working



people. This dispute has now entered its 13th week and a victory seems imminent. If these workers win, it will boost their confidence, and that of other workers, to engage in militant struggle, and win, in the future. ■

## Solidarity with Campaign 2003

**BY RACHEL EVANS  
(MELBOURNE NORTH EAST BRANCH)**

**Members of the Melbourne North East branch of Socialist Alliance have been busy campaigning in solidarity with Australian Manufacturing Workers Union members' pickets at three sites - Pac Metal and NCI Packaging, where the workers were out for a week and a half before winning their demands, and at the Stramit Industries site in Preston, where the workers have been locked out since mid-May.**

**Some of the most useful initiatives taken by our branch have been producing and pasting up a poster advertising the addresses of all the picket lines, the demands of the AMWU's Campaign 2003 and a phone number for**

**more information; writing a statement of support which contained information about the campaign for general distribution; activating email lists and collected donations.**

**We've also organised a number of suburban street stalls to build support and collect money for the picketers and, in the process, have made contact with quite a few people interested in left politics.**

**Following reports on these struggles at our branch meetings, we've encouraged all members to go down to the picket lines at the end of the meeting. We have now drawn up a roster for North East branch members to maintain our presence at the Stramit Industries picket until the unionists win their demands. ■**

## Funding militant unionism

**BY SUE BOLTON  
(WILLS BRANCH)**

On Friday June 6, a fundraiser for the ETU picket line at Smorgon Steel and the AMWU picket lines scattered across Melbourne was held at Comrades Bar in Melbourne.

The function, an initiative of the Socialist Alliance's state Trade Union Solidarity Committee with the support of the ETU and the AMWU, was pulled together in just 10 days. Despite the short notice, the night was a great success — more than 100 people attended and \$2700 was raised for the striking workers.

As well as raising much-needed funds, the event alerted many trade unionists to the fact there are a large number of picket lines in Melbourne at the moment, and that the Smorgon Steel line has been held for more than 100 days. The eight Smorgon workers who came to the fundraiser got a huge morale boost from mixing with other unionists who have been involved in a

range of disputes.

ETU state secretary, Dean Mighell, ETU organiser Gerry Glover, and ETU shop steward from Smorgon Steel Ronnie Goodfellow told the crowd about the significance of the Smorgon dispute. TCFUA state secretary Michele O'Neil outlined the situation facing the locked out Geelong Wool Combing workers who are fighting a 26% wage cut, and AMWU organiser Tony Mavromatis described the events leading to the strike by ACI Box Hill workers.

Former AMWU state secretary and Socialist Alliance member Craig Johnston, who was the MC on the evening, pointed out that the laws which are preventing the Smorgon Steel workers from blocking access to the plant were introduced by the Labor Party, and on that note introduced Simon Millar, the main organiser of the fundraiser, to explain why a political alternative such as Socialist Alliance is so necessary. ■

# Electoral systems: socialists have a say

BY RUTH RATCLIFFE  
(DARWIN BRANCH)

The NT Labor government is reviewing the territory's electoral system and, despite having plenty of other work to do, Darwin Socialist Alliance branch decided that we needed to make a submission to the review if we wanted the public fuss that we'll make about any restrictive electoral regulations that are introduced to carry some weight.

A likely result of the review will be that the NT will be brought into line with other states and territories, which require party registration. This doesn't exist in the NT at present, so parties' names are not listed on ballot papers. In our submission we supported the registration of parties so that party names appear on ballot paper, but stressed that the registration requirements be minimal (10 members enrolled) to allow maximum involvement in the electoral process. We also argued that all federally registered parties should automatically be registered in the NT.

The current system of mobile polling in the NT, in which electoral officials tour



remote indigenous communities to collect votes, is a total farce. There are repeated accounts of officials turning up on a day when the community is away visiting or engaged in traditional business, thereby losing their opportunity to vote. Socialist Alliance called for a massive literacy and education campaign in remote communities, as well as genuine community consultation and flexibility with the mobile polling circuit.

Our submission also called for:

- ▶ voting rights for everyone 16 years and over, permanent residents and prisoners
- ▶ MPs to receive no more than the average wage of a skilled worker and for all their public expenditure to be disclosed
- ▶ MPs to be recallable by their electorate
- ▶ all candidates to receive a free five-

minute TV ad

- ▶ standardised how-to-votes for each candidate to be posted in all polling booths
- ▶ the right to campaign outside polling places to be maintained.

One of the most important reforms — introducing proportional representation — is not being considered in the review because the Self-Government Act requires single member electorates in the NT.

While the short time for submissions meant that Darwin branch had to make some quick interim decisions about what we thought on various electoral issues, we hope that a nationwide discussion about our submission (which will be submitted to the next Discussion Bulletin) will help Socialist Alliance develop a detailed socialist policy on electoral systems. ■

## We want your news

Has your branch held a successful public event lately? Done some good campaign building? Joined lots of new members? Have you had some especially interesting discussions in the branch? Uncovered some juicy political gossip? Or discovered an untapped goldmine? If so, other Socialist Alliance members need to hear from you.

It's not easy for any local branch to stay in touch with what's happening in the 24 other branches, but the newsletter can help by recording, and therefore generalising, the wide range of experiences and ideas about building Socialist Alliance that are accumulating "on the ground".

Please think about what contribution you/your branch could make to this information sharing process. It doesn't need to be the definitive article — just something you think may be of interest to other members. Or it could just be some entertaining light relief (who says socialists have no sense of humour?).

Please send all contributions to the National Conveners at: [newsletter@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:newsletter@socialist-alliance.org), or phone Lisa Macdonald on (02) 9690 1230.

## Towards a Taree branch

BY RON BAILEY  
(WINGHAM, NSW)

Three months before the March 2003 NSW election I started campaigning for Socialist Alliance. At that time I was the only active member in my area.

I started by letterboxing the town of Wingham (population 4,700) with Socialist Alliance pro-union leaflets. I then did a second drop of the Newcastle branch newsletter. I thoroughly saturated Wingham.

With four weeks until election day, I turned my attention to the nearby town of Taree (population 20,000). I letterboxed the main part of Taree with 2,500 of the Alliance's anti-war leaflets.

I then did Taree households again with 2,000 Socialist Alliance NSW election broadsheets, and handed out another 500 in the streets. I sold Alliance badges and stickers at the weekly anti-war vigil outside federal MHR Mark Vaile's office

Every Saturday for 11 weeks I set up a

stall in Wingham. I then defied a possible council ban on paper sales to have a go in Taree.

I established good relations with the *Manning River Times* editor and community station 2BOB Radio. I was interviewed twice on the radio, and letters and articles were printed in the paper.

By polling day I had raised five supporters to do shifts covering one Taree polling booth while I worked a Wingham booth all day. They all enjoyed the day and some stayed till the booth closed. Several Wingham voters asked for the SA how-to-vote — an indication that the letterboxing and public profile had an impact.

By the end of the campaign I had signed up two other locals to the Socialist Alliance, and now have a small but very supportive periphery as well. I am hoping and confident that we can form a new branch of Socialist Alliance in the Taree-Wingham area in the not too distant future. ■

# Take a stand, get involved

# Join the Socialist Alliance

**If you've had a gutful of governments that rule for the rich, join Socialist Alliance.**

If you're angry that corporations are allowed to kill for profits, join Socialist Alliance.

If you want to get together with others to make a better world, join Socialist Alliance.

Socialist Alliance is a broad, multi-tendency party. We stand for socialism — democratic ownership and management of the wealth of society. We believe that a society based on satisfying human needs can be created, but only by taking power from the elites who now rule.

We want a society run by and for working people, both here and internationally. We believe that socialism will be achieved by masses of people taking action on the streets and in the

workplaces.

Socialist Alliance members come from many different walks of life and political traditions. They are involved in a range of progressive movements; in local community campaigns; in building militant, democratic trade unions; and on schools and campuses.

We also seek election to parliaments, not to "represent" the people's movements, but to help build them and help them win their demands.

There are 25 Socialist Alliance branches around Australia. They hold regular branch meetings; public forums; film nights; caucus meetings for trade unionists, students and other members; and social-fundraising events. To find out more, contact the branch nearest you or visit [www.socialist-alliance.org](http://www.socialist-alliance.org)

## I would like to join the Socialist Alliance

- \$60 high waged     \$24 waged     \$12 unwaged     \$6 highschool  
 Cheque/money order enclosed     \$\_\_\_\_\_ donation

Name	
Address	Post code
Phone	Email

**Return to:** Socialist Alliance, PO Box A2323, Sydney South, 1235.

Cheques should be made out to Socialist Alliance. Email <[ne@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:ne@socialist-alliance.org)>.

## [www.socialist-alliance.org](http://www.socialist-alliance.org)

## We want your feedback

A Socialist Alliance national newsletter is a good idea, but like all good ideas, it must be tested in practice. So, this first issue of *Socialist Campaigner* is a bit of a test-run. The test it must pass is whether or not it is useful and interesting for members.

*Socialist Campaigner* aims to help keep Alliance members informed about major national campaigns, new campaign resources, how to get in touch with other members in your union or movement activity, how you can participate in policy

development, and to enable an exchange of ideas about building the Socialist Alliance at the grassroots.

If the newsletter is to pass the test, we need your feedback — especially at this early stage. Is the information accessible? Are the contributions too long or too short? Is it boring? What other sorts of content would be useful?

Don't hold back. Send your comments and suggestions to the National Conveners at: [newsletter@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:newsletter@socialist-alliance.org)

## Contact us in your area

### Adelaide

Ph: (08) 8212 6706, 0410 611 917  
[adelaide@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:adelaide@socialist-alliance.org)

### Blue Mountains

Ph: (02) 4758 9373  
[bluemountains@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:bluemountains@socialist-alliance.org)

### Brisbane

Ph: (07) 3831 2644, (07) 3891 5385  
[brisbane@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:brisbane@socialist-alliance.org)

### Canberra

Ph: (02) 6247 4549, (02) 6247 2424  
[canberra@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:canberra@socialist-alliance.org)

### Canterbury-Bankstown

Ph: (02) 9793 2188, 0412 751 508  
[canterburybankstown@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:canterburybankstown@socialist-alliance.org)

### Darwin

Ph: (08) 8981 4714  
[darwin@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:darwin@socialist-alliance.org)

### Fremantle

Ph: (08) 9218 9608, (08) 9472 6758  
[fremantle@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:fremantle@socialist-alliance.org)

### Geelong

Ph: (03) 5222 6900  
[geelong@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:geelong@socialist-alliance.org)

### Hobart

Ph: (03) 6234 6397  
[hobart@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:hobart@socialist-alliance.org)

### Illawarra

Ph: (02) 4257 7667  
[illawarra@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:illawarra@socialist-alliance.org)

### Launceston

Ph: (03) 6327 1751  
[launceston@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:launceston@socialist-alliance.org)

### Marrickville

Ph: 0439 600 361, 0415 365 937  
[marrickville@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:marrickville@socialist-alliance.org)

### Melbourne North East

Ph: 0403 798 420  
[melbnotheast@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:melbnotheast@socialist-alliance.org)

### Melbourne South East

Ph: (03) 9687 0789  
[melbsoutheast@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:melbsoutheast@socialist-alliance.org)

### Melbourne West

Ph (03) 9687 0789  
[melbwest@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:melbwest@socialist-alliance.org)

### Newcastle

Ph: (02) 4926 5328  
[newcastle@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:newcastle@socialist-alliance.org)

### Northern Rivers

Ph: (02) 6622 2862  
[northernrivers@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:northernrivers@socialist-alliance.org)

### Perth

Ph: (08) 9218 9608, (08) 9472 6758  
[perth@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:perth@socialist-alliance.org)

### Rockhampton

Ph: (07) 4927 0355  
[rockhampton@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:rockhampton@socialist-alliance.org)

### Seat of Melbourne

Ph: (03) 9639 8622  
[seatofmelbourne@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:seatofmelbourne@socialist-alliance.org)

### Sydney Central

Ph: (02) 9690 1977  
[sydcentral@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:sydcentral@socialist-alliance.org)

### Sydney East

Ph: 0417 040 071  
[sydeast@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:sydeast@socialist-alliance.org)

### Sydney Northside

Ph: 0413 310 452  
[sydnortheast@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:sydnortheast@socialist-alliance.org)

### Sydney West

Ph: (02) 9687 5134, 0408 321 327  
[sydwest@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:sydwest@socialist-alliance.org)

### Wills

Ph: (03) 9687 5134, 0408 321 327  
[wills@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:wills@socialist-alliance.org)