

'For the millions, not the millionaires'



Socialist Campaigner



National newsletter of the Socialist Alliance, Number 3, August 2003

DONATION \$1

A real opposition

Just five months after a million people took to the streets to condemn the Howard government's decision to go to war against Iraq, and just three months after Costello presented a federal budget which plans to decimate Medicare, higher education and other public services, the Coalition continues to have a clear lead in two-party preferred support in every opinion poll.

A majority of Australians now say they believe that the government lied to them about the reasons for going to war, and the cash for visas scandal has shattered what little public credibility Philip Ruddock retained after the "children overboard" inquiry, yet still the polls indicate that the Coalition would win an election held tomorrow.

How is this possible? The fact that a government which has, for over eight years, attacked the basic rights and standard of living of so many sections of the community can have such staying power is largely explained by a corresponding weakness in the public credibility of the opposition.

In the last year or so, the Labor opposition presented slightly more liberal posture on the issues of war and refugees - an adjustment to the broad mass movements that emerged around these issues. But the differences were very slight.

On the war, the ALP leadership's opposition was weak. It echoed the government's lies about the need to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and fight "terrorism", and as soon as the war commenced, dropped the call for the troops to be brought home. Today, Labor wholeheartedly supports the continued presence in Iraq of 1000 Australian troops and many people have drawn the correct conclusion that, had the ALP been in government at the time, it would have stood shoulder to shoulder with Bush and Blair.

On the issue of refugees, Labor's adoption of a policy which is barely distinguish-

able from the Coalition's has further revealed the tokenness of its "opposition" role, and on most other issues - privatisation, "law and order", civil liberties, etc - the policy gap between Liberal and Labor is even narrower.

Whatever the differences in rhetoric, Labor has offered a continuation of the economic rationalist policies that the previous federal Labor government pioneered - and growing numbers of people see it.

The failure of the Labor "opposition" to deliver, or even offer, significant social reforms is in increasing contrast to the deepening public anger about the job- and service-cutting policies of neo-liberalism and broad opposition to its wars and civil rights abuses.

The ALP knows this too, and in an effort to stem the loss of support to the Greens and claw back some of its traditional working-class base, it has seized on the issue of Medicare to differentiate itself and remould its image as an opposition worth voting into office. Labor polities are hitting the streets, the community meetings, suburban letterboxes and the media with a list of promises to oppose in parliament large parts of Howard's attack on Medicare, defend the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and possibly even change tack on its previous support for private health insurance subsidies.

Of course, whether or not the ALP keeps these promises will be decided, not by a commitment to universally accessible, high quality public health services, but by its judgement of how high a dividend it will get on polling day for being seen to take a stand.

To save its political skin, Labor may actually keep its promises on Medicare. If it does, all the better. Socialist Alliance will stand together with the ALP and the Greens when they oppose Howard's attacks on Medicare, higher education and union rights.

But we know that we cannot rely on parliament — it is only through collective action on the streets, and in our workplaces, schools and communities, that working people can defend our interests.

We also know that Labor's newfound responsiveness to community concerns about



Medicare won't make it a real opposition, one which can be relied on to respond to (let alone lead) a charge to defend all people's right to good health and education; secure and well-paid work; and so on.

Nor will it quench the deep-going disgruntlement and anger among working people after years of attacks and betrayals by Liberal and Labor alike. More and more people are not just wishing there was a serious, consistent opposition to neo-liberalism, but are prepared to help create one. The 40% growth in Socialist Alliance membership during the anti-war movement attests to that, and our continued growth (around 10%) in the last four months shows that there is a receptivity to socialist solutions, to going well beyond simply opposing one or another government policy to envision and fight for a society which puts meeting people's needs before profits.

Strengthening this sort of opposition is an urgent task for us all. At any time now, Howard may call an election. While we continue to campaign on the streets, in workplaces and elsewhere, Alliance branches need to start planning now how we will raise the flag of real opposition in the next election. Which electorates to contest, which candidates to stand, what issues to focus on - these questions now need to be addressed by every branch.

www.socialist-alliance.org

CPSU members getting organised

BY ANDREW HALL
CANBERRA BRANCH

Following the positive results for Members First, the rank-and-file network in the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) in the May union elections, and the national caucus of CPSU members held at the Socialist Alliance national conference, the Canberra and Victorian Alliance branches have now held caucuses of members and supporters to discuss what steps we can take to get our CPSU work more organised.

At the caucus meeting in Victoria, Alliance member Terry Costello, a delegate to the CPSU's national council, reported on the council's decisions, including the adoption of a motion, initiated by SA members, calling for an industrial and political campaign around the federal budget. The caucus discussed how to pressure union leaders to put this motion into practise, including the possibility of volunteering as CPSU delegates to a Victorian Trades Hall Council meeting to plan action against the budget.

The question of casualisation in the public service was also discussed. The caucus decided to write an article on the topic and make a submission to a state government enquiry on casualisation.

In Canberra, the caucus discussed the document adopted at the Socialist Alliance national conference - "Rebuilding democratic, militant unionism: Socialist Alliance and the trade unions" - as it related to our CPSU work, and what activities we could undertake in Canberra.

Some of the things we decided to do were: to organise semi-regular Socialist Alliance CPSU members events to discuss and debate issues facing CPSU workers; to encourage monthly meetings of Members First so that the rank-and-file group can get more organised in preparation for the October union by-election; to consider producing Alliance CPSU bulletins (preferably national); to hold stalls and distribute the bulletins; and look out for ways to build the campaign against the federal budget attacks.

Socialist Alliance members in the CPSU are encouraged to stay in touch and join the national effort to get more organised by subscribing to the CPSU caucus e-group. Just email Daniel Watson at: aneiki@bigpond.com

For more information, contact the caucus conveners - in Victoria, Terry Costello at: TCostello@primustel.com.au or in the ACT, Andrew Hall at: andrew-hall@bigpond.com

Two new branches launched

Last month, Socialist Alliance members in Brisbane and Sydney launched new branches in the western suburbs of their city.

MARIA VOUKELATOS reports that, after a few months of pioneering work in their local area - organising speak-outs and regular campaigning stalls - members in Brisbane's inner western suburbs decided to bite the bullet and call a meeting to re-form a Brisbane West branch of the Alliance. A local branch had been established in the area when the Alliance was first launched, but has been folded into the central Brisbane branch for the last couple of years. Now, says Maria, there are more than enough opportunities to get organised locally again.

The first Brisbane West branch conference on July 17 kicked off with some general discussion about what the Alliance is and does, followed by a film screening. Five activists new to the Alliance came along to check it out, including two from Greenpeace who hope to build an ongoing working relationship and some joint projects with Socialist Alliance.

The new branch is having fortnightly meetings at Toowong Library, and holding four public information and campaigning stalls each week. Amongst its immediate aims are to regularise letter-boxing and paste-ups in the area.



Auburn rally against war on Iraq.

Auburn branch in Sydney's western suburbs, is the Alliance's newest branch. Branch member *LUKE WEYLAND* reports that it covers the large population area of Strathfield to Granville (bordered by Marrickville, Bankstown and Parramatta SA branches).

This area includes many suburbs with a high proportion of non-English speaking background residents, especially Turkish, Arabic, Afghan, north African and Chinese backgrounds. Many locals are recently arrived refugees.

Luke says that the issues of particular concern to the Auburn SA branch include refugee rights, opposing racism and racist stereotyping, opposing the war on Iraq, support for the Palestinian people, and opposition to the state government's proposal to make Auburn's waste transfer station cater for the whole of Sydney. Branch members include activists in refugee rights forums, the Auburn Community Peace Group and a Turkish-language newspaper.

Over the last two years, hundreds of locals have participated in successful Socialist Alliance-initiated rallies and public meetings in Auburn, then organised by the Parramatta SA branch (Auburn's "parent" branch). As a result, a lot of people in the area know about and are in regular contact with Alliance members. With a local branch, says Luke, we are hoping that more will now join SA.

For more information about the Auburn branch, contact auburn@socialist-alliance.org or phone Luke on (02) 9642 6973.

For more information about Brisbane West branch, contact briswest@socialist-alliance.org or phone Maria on (07) 3831 2644.



May 5 anti-war student strike, Brisbane.

Maria reports that one of the best developments so far is that, because SA members have been doing so many local stalls, these are becoming the regular contact point for anyone who wants some political discussion. A lot of people, particularly young people, have begun to approach us often to talk about what's going on in the world and what to do about it, and about socialism - their visions, questions, concerns and ideas.

The branch is now planning a networking and fundraising BBQ and banner painting.

National trade union committee update

BY SUE BOLTON
AND RIKI LANE

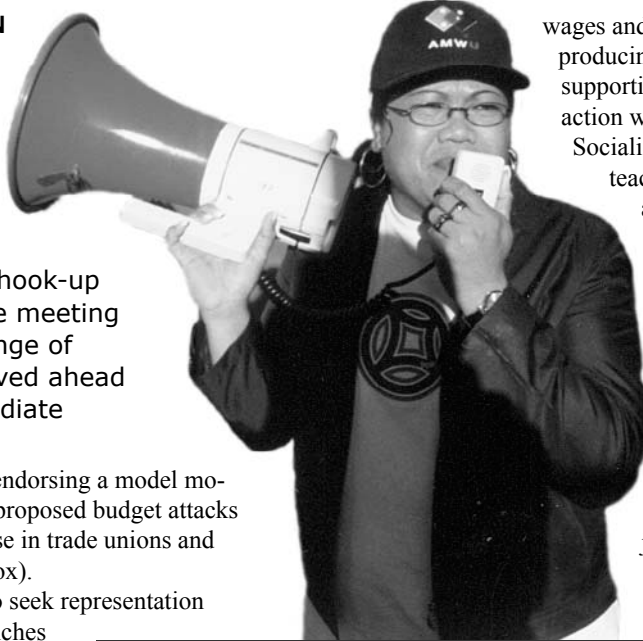
The Socialist Alliance national trade union committee held its second phone hook-up on July 20. The meeting discussed a range of issues and moved ahead on some immediate campaigns.

These included endorsing a model motion opposing the proposed budget attacks on Medicare for use in trade unions and workplaces (see box).

It was decided to seek representation from regional branches - Geelong, Wollongong, Newcastle and Northern Rivers - on future phone hook-ups to better reflect and involve members in our union work. In Sydney and Melbourne, we are proposing to continue with district, rather than local branch, representation on the committee to keep the hook-ups from being unwieldy, but as the committee develops, we will try to get a more balanced trade union representation.

Teachers' pay campaign

There was a lot of discussion about the call by the NSW Teachers' Federation for a national teachers' strike in September in support of their claims over



Striking worker at the Morris McMahon picket in Sydney, May 29.

wages and conditions. The idea of producing a national SA leaflet supporting teachers' industrial action was discussed.

Socialist Alliance has quite a few teacher members, covering at least five states, so the prospect of effective nationwide collaboration among teacher members is very good. The national trade union committee is asking all SA branches to identify any teacher members and supporters who might want to join a national teachers' caucus in the Alliance - in Melbourne, some Alliance members who haven't yet become involved in local

branches have been keen to be active in the AEU and NTEU caucuses.

To subscribe to the national teachers' email list, contact Alex Bainbridge in Hobart branch on 0413 976 638 or at alexb@dsp.org.au

To be put in touch with teacher members in other states, contact Sue Bolton on (03) 9639 8622, 0413 377 978 or at sue_bolton@hotmail.com

NTEU

Phil Andrews reported on how the education caucus, and the National Tertiary Education Union caucus, have been working in Victoria. NTEU and student members of SA in Victoria have been meeting as an education caucus to organise a coordinated response to the current attacks on higher education. Sydney district has also called a meeting of NTEU members and students to discuss the education campaign, and other branches should consider whether a similar caucus would work in your city.

ACTU congress networking

During the ACTU congress in Melbourne on August 18-21, a picket-line solidarity fundraiser will be held, jointly organised or sponsored by Socialist Alliance, the Skilled Six Campaign and key left unions.

The event aims to both raise some much-needed money for ongoing picket lines and create an opportunity for militant unionists from Melbourne to meet up with progressive unionists from interstate. If you know of any progressive unionists coming to the ACTU congress as part of their union's delegation, let Sue Bolton know so they can be invited to this event.

The next national trade union committee phone hook-up will be on August 17. Agenda items haven't yet been finalised but will probably include a discussion about the campaign against the federal government's attacks on the CFMEU and the September teachers' strike.

Model motion on Medicare

Drafted by Socialist Alliance's National Trade Union Committee for use in unions and workplaces:

"This branch of the [name of union] is committed to defending Medicare, and to its extension to a full, free, universal health-care system. The resources that go to private health insurance, private hospitals and the huge profits of global medical corporations should be redirected to create a health system that meets public need.

We reject the federal government's proposal to abolish bulk billing.

We call on the union to develop a campaign amongst the membership to:

1. Alert all members to the dangers posed by the Howard government's attacks on Medicare, which would further widen the gap between quality health care for those who can pay and a second-rate health system for the rest of us.

2. Organise delegate and workplace meetings to consider what action can be taken to defend and extend Medicare.

OPTIONAL EXTRA IF APPROPRIATE: This branch proclaims its willingness to take industrial action on the issue as part of a wider union campaign, and calls on our union, and the [insert state/region] Labor Council and ACTU, to organise such action."

Red Pen out now

Socialist Alliance members of the National Tertiary Education Union have produced the first issue of Red Pen, a national newsletter for members.

Issue No. 1 looks great and is packed with information that every self-respecting member of the NTEU, and every socialist, needs to know. There are articles on the campaign against the federal budget attacks on higher education, the good enterprise bargain results at UNSW, the need for student activists to unite with unionists, the campaign in solidarity with the skilled six, and the formation and activities of the NTEU SA caucus in Victoria.

Red Pen also contains a list Socialist Alliance contacts in the NTEU on campuses around the country. It can be read and/or downloaded from the Socialist Alliance web site at www.socialist-alliance.org

The enormous usefulness of the first issue has prompted members to start planning issue No. 2 already. To send contributions or comments to Red Pen, contact Nick Fredman on (02) 6620 3044 or nfredman@scu.edu.au



Socialist Alliance member, Simon Millar, campaigning for the Skilled Six on July 3.

Craig Johnston singled out

BY SUE BOLTON - MELBOURNE

The court cases against all but one of the unionists charged over the Skilled Six campaign were finalised in Melbourne's county court on July 30. Sixteen Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and Electrical Trades Union members were convicted of being involved in an unlawful assembly and received fines between \$1000-3000 and good behaviour bonds of between 12 and 30 months. The 16 were fined a total of \$21,000.

The charges arose from an industrial dispute in June 2001 when Johnson Tiles sacked 29 maintenance workers and replaced them with a sharply reduced workforce from notorious labour hire firm Skilled Engineering. The AMWU organised a picket line to get the workers' jobs back.

On June 15, 2001, a 10-minute protest was held at the Skilled Engineering offices. Initially, seven people were charged over the protest, but the other unionists weren't charged over the Johnson Tiles protest until almost 12 months later. In total, 20 people were charged but three were let off at the committal stage.

Earlier this year, the prosecution was forced to drop the initial serious charges of assault, affray, and criminal damage due to lack of police evidence to justify the charges. Only an "unlawful assembly" charge was pursued against most of the unionists.

However, one unionist has been singled out. Despite the lack of police evidence, the prosecution has refused to drop the more serious charges against Socialist Alliance member and former AMWU state secretary

Craig Johnston. Craig will face trial on May 10 next year.

The lack of evidence to justify the charges against Johnston indicates that he is being pursued for political reasons. The Victorian Labor government, the employers, the federal Coalition government and the tame-cat AMWU leaders have all indicated a desire to get Craig out of the road. They blame him for reintroducing militant unionism to the AMWU and for linking up militant unionism with the radical left (the Victorian branch of the AMWU, when Craig was state secretary, supported the S11 2000 protests against the World Economic Forum in Melbourne and played a crucial role in persuading other unions to support it also).

The ALP-aligned AMWU leaders would benefit if Craig was jailed as a result of the charges because the federal Workplace Relations Act bans anyone who has received a jail sentence from being a trade union official.

The Skilled Six Defence Campaign has organised a number of fundraisers to build support for the unionists. A function in Melbourne on August 1 attracted around 400 people and raised around \$30,000.

Now that Craig has been singled out, the campaign will have to move into a more political phase to explain why he is being targeted. To help this, a new leaflet has been produced by the Skilled Six Defence Campaign and a set of speakers' notes is being produced. To get copies of the leaflet, the articles written about the case or the speakers' notes, contact Sue Bolton on (03) 9639 8622, 0413-377978, sue_bolton@hotmail.com, or Craig Johnston on 0438 518 822, or Simon Millar on 0423 216 293.

New national broadsheet

Planning is well under way for the production of a new national SA broadsheet, due out in early September, in time for the September 12-13 international day of protest against war and globalisation, and actions against the occupation of Iraq.

The broadsheet will include:

- an article on the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement and how it is a threat to working people in Australia, not our bosses
- an article on the occupation of Iraq, realities and resistance, and the dangers of new wars
- an article on Australia's wars in our region
- an article linking the issues of war, "free trade" and the neo-liberal attacks on social services and workers
- an article on the current attacks on the CFMEU and NTEU
- coverage of the growing fight back by union militants
- a piece on the Indigenous wages campaign
- an "action" section covering the Cancun actions, future anti-war actions, Iraq solidarity projects and a list of resources - model motions, petitions, information pamphlets, etc.

The broadsheet will supplement a new national four-page A3 brochure being produced by mid-August for use around the ACTU Congress in Melbourne, and beyond, which will focus on the government's current attacks on Medicare, higher education and the trade unions.

For more information, and to place orders for bundles of the broadsheet, contact the national conveners at: ne@socialist-alliance.org

Also useful is the informative 12-minute video about the militancy of the AMWU Victorian branch under Craig's leadership produced by Socialist Alliance member Jill Hickson from Actively Radical TV in Sydney. To get a copy of the video (\$10), phone Jill on (02) 9564 1277 or 0417 220 504.

With advance notice and a contribution towards interstate travel costs, it might also be possible to line up speakers from the Skilled Six Defence Campaign to address public meetings in other states. To arrange this, ring Sue, Craig or Simon on the numbers above.

Where are we at? Try a survey



BY ANDREW WATSON

NORTHERN RIVERS BRANCH

Northern Rivers Socialist Alliance has changed considerably since a handful of affiliated members first set up the branch a couple of years ago.

The branch grew by 50% during the anti-war campaign and has expanded steadily in the months following. Our film events have attracted hundreds of people and monthly branch meetings have been around the 20 mark.

At the end of May the branch changed its name from Lismore to the Northern Rivers, recognising that our members are based across the north coast region, including in Byron Bay, Casino, The Channon, Clunes, Dunoon, Goonellabah, Kyogle, Lismore, Mullumbimby, Newrybar, Nimbin, Rock Valley, Rosebank and Tabulum! The branch membership is 33 and rising.

Like most branches, Northern Rivers has a mixture of people coming from different political backgrounds, as well as people who are completely new to politics. And like most branches, the majority of members are independents, many of whom supported the Non-Aligned open letter the national conference calling for a united socialist party.

But beyond this specific objective, how do members perceive the Alliance? What is their understanding of socialist theory and political tactics? What do they think we should be doing and where do they think we should be going? How can they contribute to SA?

With all these questions in mind, the branch voted to “distribute a survey to all branch members seeking their views on socialism, Australian politics, the future of the SA, etc to help facilitate discussions” at its May branch meeting. The branch executive was directed to draw up, distribute and collect the survey.

The survey covered everything from nuts and bolts – meeting times, agenda structure,

venues – to topics for educational, ideas on fundraising, stalls, organising events, and specific tasks such as putting up posters or researching local issues. In other words, this was a bit more substantial than the questionnaires we’re used to from local MP Thomas George.

To date, about half the surveys have been returned (good going by North Coast standards!). But the time that people have taken to complete them and think about their comments and suggestions has shown the process to be really worthwhile.

The results have been compiled, including all individual comments, and distributed back to the branch. As the other surveys trickle in they will feed into the ongoing discussion on developing the Northern Rivers SA.

As far as branch meetings are concerned, a clear preference has emerged. Most members want tightly run meetings of about 2 hours duration maximum, with succinct reports and discussion on organisational issues, allowing adequate time for educational presentations and debate.

Members who completed the survey “voted” the number one topic to be “What is Socialism?” and this was discussed at our last branch meeting. The meeting agenda plus educational text was circulated to members in advance, resulting in a great meeting that even ran to time! Our next educational will be on globalisation and imperialism.

NSW SA wins re-registration!

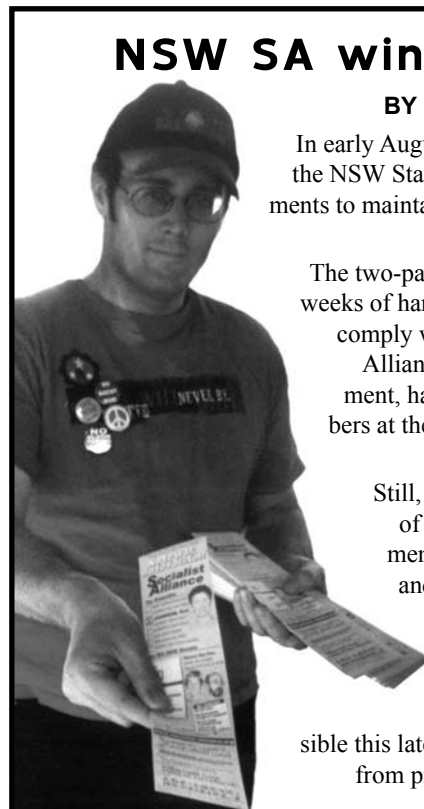
BY PAUL BENEDEK - NSW STATE EXECUTIVE

In early August, Socialist Alliance received notification from the NSW State Electoral Office that we have met the requirements to maintain our electoral registration in NSW for another 12 months.

The two-paragraph letter from the SEO was the outcome of weeks of hard work by Alliance branches around the state to comply with the undemocratic requirement that Socialist Alliance, because it does not have a member in parliament, have at least 750 current, correctly enrolled members at the end of every financial year to keep its name on ballot papers.

Still, all the work was worth it from the point of view of Alliance building too – lots of new (or renewed) members, a much better knowledge of our members and their interests, and a membership database that will help us stay in touch with and involve SA members more.

Congratulations and thanks to all those members across NSW who helped make possible this latest win against the state’s attempts to exclude us from presenting a genuine alternative at election times.



For the millions ...

BY LISA MACDONALD

This month, the Socialist Alliance launched a nationwide fundraising campaign to help it carry out the exciting and ambitious projects adopted by the May national conference – and we need your help.

The projects include a range of publications which will give socialists a stronger public voice and facilitate more discussion between Alliance members, including quarterly campaign broadsheets, a series of pamphlets on movement issues, regular members' discussion bulletins, a new quarterly magazine, and a book on socialism.

As well, the Alliance will continue to work hard to build the movement against imperialist wars, stop the federal budget attacks on Medicare and public education, help rebuild militant, democratic unionism, and carry out solidarity with Third World peoples' struggles for justice.

This publishing and campaigning work will strengthen the Socialist Alliance's electoral work, which we plan to extend, wherever possible, to contest elections at all levels of government.

Finally, as the Socialist Alliance becomes an increasingly important factor in Australian politics, it is becoming clear that



Unlike the US President, the Socialist Alliance depends on its members and supporters to fund projects and campaigns that provide an alternative voice.

we need to employ a full-time administrative officer to manage the legal requirements of electoral registration and some of the work resulting from the higher level of activity between elections.

Successfully achieving all of these aims would enable the Alliance to build on the enormous progress it has made so far, and take some crucial next steps towards creating a strong, united socialist voice and organisation in this country. But it will also cost money – around \$50,000 over the next year.

We are therefore asking all members to consider making a regular automatic donation to the Alliance to help meet that target.

There are a range of options for donating regularly: via internet banking (which incurs no fees so is the best option), by periodical payment, or by credit card.

If you are not able to make a regular donation at the moment, a once-off donation would also be a valued contribution. Don't forget, donations to political parties of \$2 to \$100 per financial year are tax deductible.

We hope that you can help at this crucial stage in constructing a strong socialist alternative in Australia. Every cent you give will go a very long way towards creating a world that is truly for the millions, not the millionaires.

For more information, or to be sent a regular donations form, email ne@socialist-alliance.org or phone Lisa Macdonald on (02) 9690 1230.

Dare to fight, dare to win

BY LEON PARISSI
MARRICKVILLE BRANCH

Socialist Alliance branches in Sydney organised a successful public meeting on July 30 examining some of the current struggles in unions and workplaces around the country. About 60 people came out for a lively discussion following speakers on recent developments in the Maritime Union, National Tertiary Education Union and the NSW Public Service Association.

The recent MUA elections returned a more militant leadership in several states. Alliance member and MUA activist Shane Bentley outlined these successes, having achieved a creditable result in NSW based on campaigning against an EBA which allowed numerous "give backs" to P&O.

The NTEU, explained Michael Thomson, is in the throes of enterprise bargaining and battles with the Commonwealth government's attacks outlined by the education minister, Brendan Nelson. The conservative push to pave the way for capitalist encroachment on what have been known as "public services" such as education, health and utilities is nowhere more clear than in the Howard government's attempt to intro-

duce an unfettered free market in higher education.

Jenny Long from the Progressive PSA explained that the NSW public sector is facing severe job cuts, beginning with an attack on the Department of Education and Training and TAFE.

Speakers from the floor discussed the apparent revival of union militancy and reported on other struggles, such as the Morris McMahan metalworkers' struggle for union recognition. Those workers won their demands, but it was reported to the meeting that the employer is still refusing to offer work to some of the leaders of that struggle. Participants also debated the extent of the fight back and the significance of the MUA election results, the Workers First group in the AMWU and other signs of change among organised workers.

The Socialist Alliance branches in Sydney are now building a half-day union activists' seminar on August 30 titled "Life is getting harder: Workers' rights under Global Capitalism". The seminar will feature a range of speakers, including Martin Kingham, Victorian secretary of the CFMEU, and will host a series of action-oriented workshops for unionists in different sectors. For more information or to register, email: sydeast@socialist-alliance.org or phone Melanie Sjoberg on 0418 471 626.

Have your say in *Alliance Voices*

The Socialist Alliance produces a national internal discussion bulletin for members to present and debate their ideas on theoretical, policy, campaigning and organisational questions, and to communicate important resolutions passed by the national executive and other information relevant to all branches and members.

The bulletin, *Alliances Voices*, can be downloaded from SA's web site, or you can obtain hard copies from your local branch. If you are thinking about making a contribution to the bulletin, please don't hold back. Other members would like to know what you think, and every individual's idea contributes to a richer and more useful national discussion.

Members who would like to make a contribution should email it to the national conveners at ne@socialist-alliance.org or post it to PO Box A2323, Sydney South 1235.

Leading in public sector campaigns

BY MELANIE SJOBERG
SYDNEY EAST BRANCH

The June NSW budget proclaimed an emphasis on social justice, but Socialist Alliance members who work and are union active in the state public sector are discovering a very different picture.

The TAFE and administration area of the education department is threatened with 1000 job cuts and most other departments are undergoing major restructuring. The Labor government is also hell-bent on introducing a new style of human resource and IT service delivery called Shared Services Network. SSN, or "Businesslink", is the first phase of preparing for competition and possible outsourcing.

Alliance members have been at the forefront of challenging the union officials to expose the SSN agenda and confront management about the restructure plans. We are especially well-placed to lead the fight against the job cuts in education and TAFE, with the secretary of each delegate committee being an SA member, and Alliance members at the centre of the Illawarra and Central Coast TAFE networks.

SA members in the Public Sector Association, who are scattered across the myriad of work sites, have begun organising through phone and email networks. We are working to stress the importance of union delegates deciding on the direction of the campaign, rather than the more cautious union officials. We have also produced a bulletin and call for solidarity through the union's left caucus, the Progressive PSA (PPSA).

Of the 21 Socialist Alliance members in the NSW PSA that we know of so far, 15 are lead-



Protest against TAFE job cuts, July 3.

ing in their delegate committees, five are elected PSA Central Council members and another three or four attend Council meetings as proxies, two are regional TLC delegates and one is a paid organiser. The PPSA has a long history and many SA members are active within it. The PPSA holds monthly organising meetings, maintains an excellent web site and has email discussion lists.

Alliance members working in the NSW public sector should consider getting active in the PPSA to strengthen our campaigns and widen the discussion network. You can check out the PPSA web site at: www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2960/, or email psaprogressive@yahoo.co.uk

We will be convening a public sector unionists' workshop at the Socialist Alliance's August 30 union activists' seminar in Sydney (see page 6).

Campaign resources update

Visit the Socialist Alliance web site to download any of the following campaigning resources to take along to the next rally, info stall or community meeting.

Trade union and worker rights

- "Hands off the CFMEU! Defend militant unions" leaflet
- "Defend the Skilled Six" leaflet and speakers notes (see page 4 for details)
- "Make Labor Pay" leaflet for NSW teachers' pay campaign
- "Money for education, not war" petition
- *Red Pen* - newsletter of SA members in the National Tertiary Education Union
- *Dare to Struggle, Dare to*

Win pamphlet - containing articles on the current government attacks on militant unions, the Workplace Relations Act, unions and anti-racism, women workers, and more (available mid-August)

Medicare

- "Medicare not missiles" petition
- Model motion on Medicare for use in trade unions
- "Stop Howard's war on workers" brochure - containing articles on the budget attacks on Medicare and higher education, and the offensive against trade union rights (available mid-August)

Anti-war

- "End the occupation of Iraq"

leaflet

- "Troops out of Iraq: aid not occupation" petition
- "No troops to the Solomon Islands" statement
- Anti-corporate globalisation
- "No Free Trade Agreement" petition

Refugee rights

- "End mandatory detention" petition
 - Refugee rights fact sheet
 - "No detention. Full rights for refugees" leaflet
- ... and don't forget the latest issue of *Socialist Campaigner*

Keeping in touch with members

As Socialist Alliance continues to grow, the importance of all branches (there's now 27!) being able to keep in touch with their full membership regularly and efficiently is becoming paramount. There's so much going on - in politics generally and within the Alliance - and we know that keeping everybody in touch is the first step in ensuring an ever-stronger network of like-minded activists who, collectively, can have a real impact on the direction of politics in this country.

To achieve that, every branch needs to know its members and supporters well, and be in regular contact with them all. To help branches do this, Newcastle SA member and database whiz-kid Geoff Payne is currently testing a new database he has designed for potential use by all branches. It is an all-in-one, user friendly and flexible system which will enable branches to keep track more easily of their financial accounts and membership dues; members' and supporters' contact details, interests, etc; distribution of newsletters and other materials; election campaign information (such as polling booth results); and much more.

If you would like to know more or can volunteer some time to help refine and implement the new system, please contact Geoff at: newcastle@socialist-alliance.org. We'll keep you posted about its progress.

www.socialist-alliance.org

