



for the millions, not the millionaires

Socialist Campaigner

National Newsletter of the Socialist Alliance. Number 9, July 2004.

100 Club raises more than \$15,000

By Chris Williams

The national drive for donations to the Socialist Alliance federal election campaign has had huge success. By mid-July members and supporters had donated over \$15,000, with nearly 100 people joining our "100 Club" by making donations of \$100 or more.

It proves that there's a real financial support base for the Alliance's election campaign and means we can energize the campaign with real resources - such as the 200,000 anti-war postcard which are now being letterboxed around the country.

\$15,000 is impressive, but we can raise a lot more! Our support base is only just beginning to be tapped - we can reach out to many more members and supporters and push toward a campaign fund of \$40,000.

With the election likely to be in October, we will need more funds for a longer campaign. But more time means we can raise more money.

There have been some fantastic side effects to the 100 Club drive. For example, Brisbane branch's home visits to members and supporters has been a great way to catch up with and involve members who may not regularly attend branch meetings.

Brisbane comrades have had a great response, not only in donations, but in rejoining former Alliance members, publicising branch events and generally keeping in touch with the membership.

Collective ring-arounds are proving very successful too. Perth branch, for example, raised over \$2000 in donations, mostly from their "donations-a-thon" which involved many comrades phoning members and supporters in one afternoon.

The main thing is that where branches have put in the organising effort, they have seen results. Members and supporters are very willing to express their support for the Alliance's politics by donating money, however large or small - we just need to be confident enough and organised enough to ask. Even Taree, our smallest branch, raised \$240 from a ring-around of supporters.

More generally, branch fundraising is moving along well. A number of election campaign launches have been very successful financially as well as politically, and there's been some very creative fundraisers organised. In Launceston, for example, a member has donated a roof-painting job worth over \$2000 for Tassie's guessing competition!

With some great experiences under our belts now, let's continue the push towards \$40,000 for the election campaign. And with Mike Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* screenings, the sky's the limit for general fundraising.

Please keep sending me the results of your efforts so we can keep the inspiring stories collectivized! Email me at: bendigo1977@yahoo.com.au

Renew and donate on-line

Do you need to renew your membership of Socialist Alliance? Would you like to make a donation to help the Alliance's election campaign?

You can do it quickly, easily and securely on the web.

We subscribe to Paymate, a system that allows you to make a credit card payment to Socialist Alliance direct from its web site. Paymate is a well-respected company which guarantees that credit card numbers provided on-line are entirely confidential and secure.

Simply go to www.socialist-alliance.org, click on the "Join" or "Donate" buttons, then follow the instructions from there.

All donations to Socialist Alliance up to \$100 per year are tax deductible.

Using our anti-war postcards & on-line poll effectively

By Margarita Windisch and Jorge Jorquera

The Socialist Alliance's new "Bring The Troops Home Now!" postcards echo the message going out to millions of people around the world through Michael Moore's record-smashing documentary film, *Fahrenheit 9/11*. As the postcard puts it: "Howard, like Bush, is waging a war on the poor, stealing Iraq's oil to feed business profits."

This makes the postcards an especially useful string in our federal election campaign bow right now and we need to be creative about how we use them. While they are an interesting and handy supplement to letterboxing leaflets for the election, we shouldn't limit their distribution to letterboxes but use them strategically to maximise their impact.

The postcards are also a calling card for our web site. With 200,000 postcards going out, we should be able to significantly increase the number of people who visit the SA web site and thereby get a big dose of our politics.

Some concrete ideas for how to use the postcards most effectively:

1) Every person who shows interest in our street campaigning stalls should be given a postcard AND encouraged to sign the on-line poll. The nationally produced A3 poster advertising the on-line poll will attract people to your stall.

2) Screenings of Moore's *9/11* are perfect for SA postcard distribution. Most people going to see the film are very open-minded and interested in politics: a queue of 800 people waiting to see the film in Melbourne was my "postcard guinea pig", and nearly everybody took a card! This is precisely the constituency for Socialist Alliance's politics, and it is up to us to make the best use of it.

3) Progressive bookshops and cafes are also a good spot to leave small stacks of postcards for people to pick up.

What's a blogspot?

The Socialist Alliance web site now hosts a new feedback "blogsite" called "Who's with Michael Moore?" ("blog" is short for

weblog - a public diary published in the internet).

The blogspot was set up by Brisbane member Dave Riley who said within 24 hours of establishing the blogspot it was being used by a wide range of people to put in their two bob's worth on the topics of Michael Moore, *Fahrenheit 9/11* and the Iraq war.

Dave is writing some instructions for how to set up a blogging site - apparently it takes about 5 minutes and is dead easy - so that any branch can set one up for newsletters, announcements, etc. The blogspots can, as they are established, also be linked to the national SA web site. For more info, contact Dave at: dhell2@optusnet.com.au

Seeing Red #2 out soon

The eagerly awaited second issue of Seeing Red will hit the branches, bookshops, campuses and streets by mid-August (at the latest). Production of issue number two was held up a bit by a glitch with a lead article, but it is now pretty much ready to go and, like the first issue, contains a wide range of articles, ideas and artwork.

Judging by the frequent phone calls to the national office, issue number two is eagerly awaited by hundreds of people, all of whom have been delighted by the launching of a new forum for political, social and cultural dissent.

So, keep your eyes peeled for its arrival in your branch or, better still, take out a subscription today and get it mailed to you hot off the press.

Ideas to change the world

By Nick Everett

"Ideas to Change the World" was the theme of Canberra's inaugural socialist ideas conference, held at the Australian National University on July 10.

Sixty socialists and activists from the ACT, NSW and Victoria came together to discuss themes of imperialism, international solidarity, trade union struggle, the environment, racism and socialism. Many were first-time participants in a Socialist Alliance-sponsored event.

The keynote speakers included East Timorese ambassador Jorge Da Conceicao Teme, Venezuelan Ambassador Leonel Vivas and Seeing Red editors Humphrey McQueen and Alastair Greig. The conference opened with a punchy introduction by Alastair who described the stiffening resistance US rulers are now confronting, both in Iraq and at home. Humphrey described the "death cycle" in which the US rulers continue to spend ever-increasing amounts on military infrastructure.

Three workshops discussed international solidarity. Leonel Vivas described the challenges being confronted by the Chavez-led Bolivarian movement in Venezuela. Sydney-based Palestinian activist Rihab Charida and International Solidarity Movement coordinator Michael Shaik discussed the Palestinian people's struggle for an independent state and the role of international solidarity. And Jorge Teme presented a workshop on the East Timor's struggle to secure a just share of revenue from Timor Sea Oil. Participants at that workshop committed themselves to take part in a national campaign to pressure the Australian government to negotiate a maritime boundary with East Timor in accordance with international law and to recognise East Timor's sovereignty over its oil and gas resources. Socialist Alliance is supporting a call for a mass demonstration outside

Parliament House in Canberra when negotiations recommence on September 20.

Other workshops addressed struggles closer to home. Tim Gooden, assistant secretary of Geelong TLC, a CFMEU shop steward and Socialist Alliance election candidate, and Sue McKay, a CPSU delegate, spoke on building fighting unions.

Save the Ridge activists Paul Oboohov and Greg Parsons presented a workshop on the campaign against the Stanhope government's bulldozing of O'Connor Ridge to make way for a new freeway. Paul pointed out that in the ACT only 5% of residents use any form of public transport. Arguing that a decisive shift of resources was needed towards public transport, he explained how the call for a light rail system connecting Gungahlin with metropolitan centres had struck a chord with people during the campaign.

Andrew Hall, convenor of Public Servants for Refugees presented a workshop on alternatives to the federal government's mandatory detention policy. A workshop by Humphrey on "What is socialism" generated a good discussion and demonstrated SA's important role in introducing socialist ideas to a new generation of activists.

The final session heard SA's candidate for Fraser, James Vassilopoulos, the ACT Greens Kathryn Kelly, and SA national convenor Raul Bassi address the question "Building alternatives: is a socialist future possible?" James called on everyone to get behind national "End the lies, troops out, Howard out" rallies on the Sunday before the federal election.

The conference raised \$460 to support our election campaign and several participants volunteered to assist with letterboxing and other campaign activities. Most importantly, the rich political discussion that such a socialist

ideas conference generates makes them very worthwhile organising.

Home visits – try them

By Graham Matthews

Following Brisbane's lead, where home visiting of Alliance members and supporters who aren't often able to come to SA branch meetings or other events is proving very useful, Vivian Messimeris (co-convenor of Melbourne North East branch) and myself visited three former branch members last week, delivering them leaflets and having a chat about politics, what the Alliance is doing and so on.

The result was three renewed memberships, 1,000 more election leaflets distributed and a subscription to Green Left Weekly.

Taking the time to visit members and supporters is well worth it - and much appreciated by those we visit.

If you haven't done so already, try it in your branch.

Queensland launches membership campaign

By Marce Cameron (Qld co-convenor)

During our federal election campaign we'll be reaching out to thousands of people who may be interested in joining the Socialist Alliance. At present the Alliance has around 1,100 financial members, but there must be thousands of other people out there who would consider joining if they knew just a little bit more about our ideas and activities. Sometimes it's just a matter of asking.

How can we make sure our election campaign results in a big surge in membership? Much depends on branches and districts having a clear plan for how to do this. If it's not planned and organised with a view to involving all members and supporters of the Alliance in some way, we may get a trickle of new members, but this trickle could be a flood.

On July 14, the Queensland state executive adopted a recruitment campaign for the months of July, August and September. The aim is to increase our financial membership statewide from around 100 to more than 250, and to explore the possibilities for establishing Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast branches, where we already have a handful of members and supporters.

This may seem like a lot, but it's not really. I'm sure Queensland isn't the only state with a long list of former members who have never been approached to renew their membership. So, the

first port of call is a systematic push for membership renewal. Even if only half of the ex-members in Queensland rejoined we'd have an extra 40 members.

Then we've set ourselves a target for each of the four Queensland branches to increase their membership from around 25 to 40 or more. With tens of thousands of postcards and leaflets landing in folks' letterboxes (our leaflets have a clip-off to join) and with all those street stalls, media stunts and people visiting the web site, this should be easy. Add in 10 new members from regional areas of the state - for decades the Communist Party-inspired "Red North" has been a vast untapped frontier for socialist organising - and we're up to 110 additional members.

But joining a branch directly or through the web site isn't the only way people sign up. Over the past year, many Socialist Alliance caucuses, working groups and ad hoc committees have been established to help our work in trade unions, the anti-war movement, among migrant communities and so on. Each of these too should have a targeted approach to signing up new members as part of the recruitment campaign.

In Queensland we will draw up lists of supporters to approach in the AMWU and other trade unions; the Aboriginal, Latin American and Sundanese communities; progressive academics, teachers and student activists on campuses and high schools; and antiwar, refugee rights, and women's,

gay, lesbian & transgender rights campaigners. Altogether we aim to join up another 50+ people from these efforts. So, there you have it: more than 250 members in the state!

The next step is for the branches, caucuses and working groups to brainstorm how to make this recruitment drive come to life. Maybe we need A-frames to go with our campaign stalls with a big picture of Michael Moore and the caption, "Michael Moore Says Throw Howard Out - Join the Socialist Alliance!" One of the Sydney branches is already doing this to great effect.

Perhaps we could call up all those people who attended Michael Moore advance screenings of *Fahrenheit 9/11* for the Socialist Alliance and ask them if they'd like to join? Brisbane is planning this, and we gave everyone at our advance screening on July 18 a special "showbag" containing leaflets and stickers.

We've already made one excursion to the Sunshine Coast to talk to members and supporters about establishing a branch, and SA members on the Gold Coast are planning a "meet the candidates" meeting. We're also thinking about a big regional trip up the Queensland coast to touch base with members and supporters scattered over a state that's bigger than Texas.

Every new member we join is a small step in helping the Alliance grow and fulfill its potential.

Staying in touch with members

By Kerry Vernon (Newcastle branch)

Newcastle SA branch has pushed its financial membership up from 21 members earlier this year to 46 members simply by contacting every past member to renew their membership and keeping all members in touch with what is going on in the branch.

We use email a lot, but not every member uses a computer or email so it's crucial that a regular monthly mail-out be done to those members in particular, and to all supporters as well. Involving as many members as possible in the democratic functioning of SA means that time needs to be set aside to do the phone calls and mail-outs regularly. This is an important task of the branch committee - to develop ways to involve those who may not be able to come to SA meetings, but who support the Alliance in other ways.

The most successful meeting and discussion that Newcastle branch has had recently was a forum on "Defending militant unions". Fifteen people participated, a result of publicity leaflet and thoroughly contacting our membership about it. This is a topic of great interest to SA members. The Newcastle branch is hoping to get its trade union committee up and running soon to involve and assist those members in unions, and to develop an understanding of Socialist Alliance's positions.

Our candidate for the seat of Newcastle, Peter Robson, gave a very good talk at a branch forum on July 13 titled "Will Latham Free the Refugees?". The meeting discussed the refugee rights movement, the

Howard government's record and the response of the ALP and really helped to reach out with SA's politics.

Bookings for Newcastle SA's fundraising screening of Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* on August 6 are going very well. We have nearly 60 bookings, despite the fact that the film is already being shown commercially in Newcastle.

Red-baiting works

By Graham Matthews

Two weeks ago, Melbourne received a clip-off to join the Alliance from a worker in the Latrobe Valley. I called Rob and he indicated that he was an AMWU member and a supporter of Craig Johnston. He said he wanted to join the Alliance because he saw it as the next logical step. I sent Rob the forms and waited.

Then last Friday Rob walked into the Resistance bookshop and introduced himself. He had a long discussion with myself and Sue Bolton, the national trade union committee co-convenor.

Rob told us that the reason he had checked out Socialist Alliance in the first place was the red-baiting of the Doug Cameron-aligned AMWU organiser in the Valley, who had told him that all the Workers First members in Melbourne were Socialist Alliance members (if only...). Rob looked SA up on the web, liked what he read and is now one of our newer members. Before he left the bookshop, Rob had joined at the \$60 rate and bought a subscription to *Green Left Weekly* on the strength of its support for Craig and militant unionism.

Just goes to show - red-baiting works, but not always for the other side!

New workers' rights charter

As this edition of *Socialist Campaigner* goes to print, the Socialist Alliance's Workers' Rights Charter is in the final stages of production. The charter presents in an accessible, attractive, A3 folded format the Alliance's policies on worker and trade union rights, as well as explanations of why workers need a political party of our own, the role of the Socialist Alliance in rebuilding fighting unionism, and why people should join the Alliance. It also includes comments from a range of union active Alliance members.

With more and more trade unionists joining and/or looking to SA to provide leadership in their struggles and answers to the broad range of questions being thrown up by the crisis of social democracy, we hope and expect that this charter will help SA members to open up political discussion with their workmates and fellow unionists. It will be invaluable for strengthening support among workers and unionists for the Socialist Alliance's election campaign as well as for our ongoing movement work.

The charter will be available through all SA branches and trade union caucuses, or contact the national office at (02) 9690 2508 or ne@socialist-alliance.org to order copies.

NOWSA

By Rachel Evans (Marrickville branch)

The mid-year annual national student conferences are great opportunities for Socialist Alliance to showcase our ideas and activities to a wide range of students thinking about the environment crisis (at the Students, Science and Sustainability Conference), about feminism (Network of Women Students of Australia conference), and about queer rights (Queer Collaborations conference). This year, 300 students registered for QC, 300 for NOWSA and 500 for SS&S - most of them young people who want to understand oppression, and fight it.

Socialist Alliance members Kim Bullimore, Amber, Rihab Charida, Rachel Evans (Sydney), Natalie Zirngast (Melbourne) and Maria Voukelatos (Brisbane) all attended the NOWSA conference in Lismore in July. Four of us gave plenary talks and all but one also presented a workshop.

Rihab addressed the conference on the devastating impact that the "apartheid wall" and Israeli militarism is having on women in Palestine. She told the conference that the fight for equality was at the heart of the Palestinian resistance and that until the Palestinians won that there would be no peace in the Middle East.

I spoke on behalf of Socialist Alliance and Community Action Against Homophobia about the federal Coalition government's recent homophobic attacks on the queer, gay and lesbian communities. The conference voted unanimously to oppose the attacks and support CAAH's "Equal rights for same-sex couples" rally in Sydney on July 25.

Kim gave a presentation on how the "war on terror" and neo-liberal globalisation are impacting on Indigenous women around the globe, and Natalie spoke on women in the Philippines. Maria gave a talk on feminism and socialism.

The conference participants (all women) were all very interested in all of the Alliance speakers. They all got a Gender Agenda and our members did a great job of profiling Socialist Alliance at all the workshops.

Our mark on the conference was twofold. I think SA's presence definitely deepened the political discussion throughout the conference. Secondly, we provided some answers about how women could fight their own oppression and also play an important role in the anti-war and other campaigns. In the process we ensured that there were some immediate, concrete outcomes from the conference, such as building the July 25th rally.

We distributed lots of copies of SA's election manifesto and collected contact details of people interested in the Alliance. At a workshop on "Marxism and Feminism", the issue of left unity was raised. It was clear that all the participants knew about and were impressed with the Socialist Alliance's progress and they took the opportunity to express their frustration at Socialist Alternative's refusal to come into the alliance.

Thanks to Kim who coordinated the SA crew for NOWSA, and also to Northern Rivers SA member Tom Flanagan who gave his house and computer over to us for the week!

Evolution

By Lisa Macdonald

This month the Alliance's Membership, Finances and Branch Building Coordinating Committee (aka the Health, Wealth and Happiness Committee) decided to reshape SA's national newsletter in an effort to meet branches' and the diversity of members' needs better. We realised after some reflection that, as the Alliance grows and develops, so too our methods of communication need to change.

So, this will be the last issue of Socialist Campaigner in its present form. Instead, we are going to trial two things:

First, we will produce a smaller (1 or 2-page) more frequent (fortnightly) news bulletin which compiles a wide range of brief accounts from branches, committees and caucuses about their recent SA building experiences – all the bits and pieces of information from around the country that are rich with ideas and lessons but at the moment tend not to be communicated beyond the branch or committee members concerned.

This fortnightly e-newsletter would be distributed to branches by email, to be forwarded on to all branch members, and/or used as a basis for the production of local branch newsletters. It would also be laid out simply so that branches can more easily and cheaply reproduce it in hard copy form if they choose.

Members contributions to the e-newsletter can be less comprehensive and "polished" since it will be targeted at SA members rather than the broader "public" - the main aim is to get the information out quickly.

Secondly, to complement the fortnightly bulletin we will produce a larger, quarterly national newsletter, similar in format to the current *Socialist Campaigner*, which is intended principally for hard copy distribution to members in branch and statewide mail-outs. The quarterly newsletter, which will report SA's perspectives and progress in national campaigns and activities, will also be uploaded onto the web site.

This newsletter would be available to all members and others who are interested (that is, it could be used on stalls, etc), but is intended, in particular, to help branches stay in touch with those members who do not have access to email and/or are not in regular face-to-face contact with their local branch.

We hope these changes will make it easier for branches to share their experiences and ideas with others in SA and look forward to your regular input and feedback, which should still be sent to the national conveners at: ne@socialist-alliance.org