

Alliance Voices

Socialist Alliance Discussion Bulletin

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M20 marks anti-war movement revival

By Pip Hinman (Marrickville branch and Co-convenor of National Anti-war Steering Committee)

One year after the invasion of Iraq, the anti-war movement is on the rise again. The election victory of the Spain's Socialist party, pledged to withdrawing Spanish troops from Iraq, had a significant impact on the M20 anti-occupation rallies here and overseas.

The largest protest was in Rome, where a million marched. The US rallies were always going to be the critical ones. US troops are the main occupation force and will continue to be even if the UN flag flies over occupation after June 30.

There were 100,000 in New York, other demonstrations in more than 250 cities and towns across the US, including major regional demonstrations of 50,000 in San Francisco, 20,000 in Los Angeles and 10,000 Chicago.

All this spells trouble for the US military occupation under any name.

Marches in London drew 75,000 according to organisers, Tokyo 60,000 (120,000 across Japan), Madrid 10,000 and Athens 10,000.

The Australian demonstrations totaling 12,700 were good considering the lack of institutional support (unions and church networks). In Perth and Sydney where the anti-war coalitions had split, the Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition and the WA Peace Network declined to support M20. The SP&JC organised their own pre-rally events, attracting just a handful of people.

While a number of unions did pass motions of support for M20, particularly in Victoria and WA (see previous article in Socialist Campaigner), that didn't translate into any serious union mobilisation for the day.

Socialist Alliance activists played a critical role in initiating and building the M20 protests in all major cities, and in Lismore and Darwin. We can and should take credit for pushing for anti-war coalitions across the country to take up the "Troops out, end the occupation" focus.

Despite the widespread ambivalence about what should happen with the troops (this was before Mark Latham went on radio to call for them to come back by Christmas), the protests revealed that significant numbers remain angry about the war and the government's lies. There's no doubt too that the Spanish election result inspired many, and helped build the last-minute push for the rallies.

At most rallies, SA comrades managed to get the call out - through the chair or speakers - that Howard was being put on notice to pull the troops out, and that the ALP leader must "follow the Spanish example" and commit to withdrawing the troops if elected into government. Everywhere this was put, it received strong support.

Latham promises to get troops out

ALP federal opposition leader Mark Latham's call two days later for the troops to come home by Christmas opens up many more opportunities for SA, and for our work in building the anti-war movement.

Regardless of his particular spin, as long as Latham sticks to his guns on this call, the anti-war movement is likely to broaden out.

The call for the troops to come home gives hope to those who had become demoralised about politicians' dismissal of the huge anti-war protests last year. It also makes the notion of helping Iraq and the Iraqis a lot more tangible. Unions are likely echo this call, something which makes it important to pick the next mobilising date soon.

It's also the case that the only way to ensure that Labor doesn't retreat from Latham's promise to withdraw Australian troops from Iraq is to broaden and strengthen the movement in the lead-up to the federal election.

This means that SA has some important work cut out for it. Getting motions and statements through the unions calling for the troops to come home has to be made a priority, as should supporting the next mobilisation. Similarly, SA members in the anti-war coalition should make a concerted effort to win broad support for the initiatives the movement takes.

June 30 next rally focus

Besides Palm Sunday and May Day, anti-war coalitions in Sydney and Melbourne are starting to discuss making June 30 the next rally date around the demand "Troops out!".

June 30 is when the US has decided it will "hand over" Iraq to its handpicked Iraqi Governing Council. But as Naomi Klein said: "On June 30, the occupation won't end, it will simply be outsourced to a group of hand-picked Iraqi politicians with no democratic mandate or sovereign power."

The Bush gang has committed to 100,000 troops until 2007 and the newly formed Iraqi armed forces, along with the multinational force, will be under the operational control of American commander, Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez. The US will appoint the Prime Minister and no date has been set for democratic elections. US-brokered decisions, such as selling off much of the Iraqi economy to Western corporations, will also remain law.

In Sydney, the Stop the War Coalition (StWC) has decided on a rally and is approaching the Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition to co-sponsor it. The StWC is also preparing a "Statement for Peace" which is aimed at gathering more support for the troops out demand and to broaden its networks through union, student, community and church networks.

In Melbourne, the Victorian Peace Network is planning to host Tariq Ali at a public meeting around the June 30 date. Other anti-war coalitions, including Perth NoWar Alliance and Darwin NoWar are starting to discuss how to mark this date.

SA is in a good position in most of the anti-war coalitions across the country. In Sydney, we should be arguing for the ALP-led Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition and in Perth for the ALP/Greens-led WA Peace Network to join forces on June 30.

Now is the time to make a broad appeal for unity. Differences over the role of the United Nations must not be allowed to stand in the way of the anti-war movement uniting around the growing call worldwide for the occupation troops to leave Iraq.

Now, those arguing for the UN force to go in, may well see their dream come true - but it will not have a significant impact for the better. The UN in Iraq is being set up to legitimise the US occupation, not to displace it.

How Socialist Alliance went at the M20 rallies

Sydney

Despite repeated requests from the Stop the War Coalition, the Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition refused to support M20, and then decided to organise its own events on the day. However, they managed to get only 15-20 people to their pre-rally event - a collection for aid work in Iraq at Town Hall. Some SPJC supporters didn't even know there was a rally on later, but when told, happily handed out leaflets advertising it.

Unfortunately, some of the SPJC leaders actively tried to dissuade long-term peace activists from supporting or coming to the M20. This tactic backfired, and they received some angry emails about why they had not supported M20.

There was also little official union support for the Sydney rally. While some carried union flags and banners, there were no decent contingents, and unionists that inquired why were told that due to a split in the peace movement, the union movement would not support Stop the War's initiatives.

The Teachers Federation's industrial officer Richard Walsham (who is also President of the Search Foundation) refused to even allow the union's flags to be taken to the rally by teacher unionists who were offering.

Considering this lack of institutional support and the fact that the city's rail network was closed for maintenance, the rally which grew to 7000 was a considerable success.

The NSW Greens played a good role in building for this protest, and drew a fair number of their members. This marks a further step in the consolidation of the Stop the War Coalition. The Greens Kerry Nettle called for the troops to be pulled out by June 30 - the date of the hand-over to the Iraqi Governing Council.

The Socialist Alliance profile was loud and strong, especially thanks to the new SA core flutes, with Greens coming second in term of profile. Socialist Alliance's Susan Price spoke, and Pip Hinman co-chaired. Five people joined SA.

Melbourne

In Melbourne, despite difficulties in getting the Victorian Peace Network to seriously build the protest, 2000-3000 people turned up. For example, with \$14,000 in the account, the VPN refused to put an ad into the *Age*, and the publicity came out late.

However, SA member Margarita Windich managed to get the *Age* to publish an article by John Pilger on March 20 in which the rally details were mentioned. SA member Margarita Windich also had to push to ensure that a unionist - Martin Kingham of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union - was included on the platform.

A vibrant SA stall attracted lots of interest, and the SA contingent was by far the largest and most overtly political. SA recruited two new members and gained at least 23 new contacts. Socialist Alternative was impressive with around 50 red flags, but one notable omission was the Greens.

Canberra

In Canberra, Socialist Alliance members James Vassilipoulos (candidate for Fraser) and Michael Shaik (representing Australians for Justice & Peace in Palestine) spoke on the ACT NOW platform, and were well received.

James captured the mood when he called for Bush, Blair and most importantly Howard, to face the same fate as Aznar's Popular Party government in Spain. Michael also gained a warm response when he told the crowd "The only force that can stop this war and any future wars" is a mass movement. SA joined one person and gained a few new contacts.

Lismore

Around 100 people took to the streets around the main CBD block with many joining on the way, and many more indicating support. War veteran Arthur Pike, picked up on the SA's demand "Medicare not warfare" demand in his speech, which went down well. The musicians were mostly new SA contacts and they have agreed to do an SA benefit concert at one of the local pubs. Matt Eagan from SA chaired the rally, and Tom Flanagan spoke for SA.

Brisbane

The turnout of at least 1000 people was very good considering the Queensland Peace Network didn't seriously build the rally (including refusing to fork out for an ad in the Courier Mail despite having the money).

SA activists say that advertising M20 through the state and local government elections would have helped swell the numbers. Otherwise, the rally was built through the networks with not a great deal of street publicity.

ALP president Carmen Lawrence gave a good hard-hitting speech, as did Sam Watson, indigenous leader and SA lead Senate candidate.

An SA recruitment push netted six new joiners plus many contacts and a wide distribution of SA literature. According to Marce Cameron, it was a very positive, confidence-building experience which demonstrated the reality of greater socialist unity.

SA had a very visible, loud and tight contingent and some great new chants brainstormed at an SA working bee the weekend before. Our contingent dwarfed Socialist Alternative's and the Greens only had a few triangles.

Darwin

The rally was small - about 50 people - but lively with a clear focus on opposing the proposed new US base. Building momentum around the anti-bases campaign will be the next step for the anti-war movement in Darwin, as there is a real resonance for this campaign. SA activists are the backbone of the NoWar group.

Adelaide

Having Andrew Wilkie as a key speaker, SA NOWAR managed to mobilise some 700 people on March 21. SA lost the debate about having "political" speakers and so there were no SA, Greens or Democrat speakers on the platform.

However, SA mobilised 12 comrades, and about 45 new SA contacts, several of whom indicated they were interested in helping out with the election campaign and/or joining. Hundreds of flyers, recruitment leaflets and Gender Agendas were distributed. And thanks to the corflutes, SA was very visible.

Others, including the Greens, the Democrats and the ALP were not visible. UTLC secretary Janet Giles and AEU vice-president Chris Waugh who were invited to speak about attacks on Iraqi workers and unionists, declined. The issue was however taken up by academic, David Palmer, who was well received.

Following the rally, NOWAR sponsored a packed out public meeting with Andrew Wilkie and a panel consisting of David Palmer, Ruth Russell (who had been to Iraq and a Democrat member) and SA comrade Renfrey Clarke. It was chaired by Greens state MP Kris Hanna.

The Greens and Democrat members failed to make use of the opportunity to present their positions or solutions, leaving it open for Renfrey Clarke to give an inspiring and detailed presentation which prompted sustained applause, and drew many supportive comments afterwards.

A notable aspect was a considerable firming of the position that the only way to achieve a viable solution in Iraq was to end the occupation and withdraw the troops. There was still differences over whether there was a role for the UN, but even those supportive of such a role were much more critical of the UN than previously.

Hobart

Again, SA played a central role in getting the 250-strong rally to happen. SA comrades Alex Bainbridge chaired and Kamala Emanuel spoke on behalf of SA. Bob Brown and Claire O'Halloran (UN Youth Association) and Peter Jones of the Quaker Peace and Justice Committee also spoke. Both Brown and Emanuel made explicit calls on the Labor opposition to commit to withdrawing all Australian troops from Iraq if they won to good applause. Our profile was good, as was the UNAA and the Greens.

Perth

SA activists also played a central role organising the NoWar Alliance rally. Comrades Ian Jamieson spoke for SA, Wade Macdonald spoke for NoWar, and Nikki Ulasowski chaired the rally. Some 400 people turned out, a good result considering the anti-war movement split last year, and the WA Peace Network did not support March 20. We had a big SA stall, joined one new member and made a number of new contacts.

Bankstown Council elections: Putting the Socialist Alliance on the map

By Aaron Benedek and Raul Bassi (Canterbury-Bankstown branch)

Background

The area of south-west Sydney is formed mainly by Canterbury, Bankstown, Lakemba and Campsie, but extends up to Villawood and Regents Park. Since we relocated our Socialist Alliance branch here (from Burwood) about two years ago we have been working over the whole area but concentrating primarily on Bankstown and Lakemba.

The social composition of the south-west is about 50% Anglo origin, mostly older residents, with a bit of a siege mentality - which is related to the other 50% of more recent migrant origin. This half of the population is formed by about 50% Arab background, 40% Asian background (with a big majority Vietnamese) and about 10% of mixed origin.

Our insertion into the south-west area began with the development of the anti-war movement. Our first electoral campaign was the state elections of March '03, where we received 2% of the vote, largely attributable to the strong anti-war sentiment at the time.

Branch plan

After a review of our activity for most of 2003 we elaborated a plan to build up our branch and become part of the political life of the south-west.

The first step was to identify the major issues confronting the community. One obvious problem was the growing anti-Arab/anti-Islamic racism following the launch of the so-called "war on terror", the Anglo-invasion of Afghanistan and the impending invasion of Iraq. This racism was promoted, for different reasons, by Bob Carr's state ALP government and John Howard's federal Liberal government.

The first to be affected by this racist assault were the young people, constantly harassed by the police. The Carr government's intention to establish a police squad targeting "Middle Eastern crime" was also a big issue for the youth.

Having identified the issue, the second step was to confront this racist offensive. In November last year we proposed a public meeting hosted by the Canterbury-Bankstown Peace Group on the issue of racism. This meeting took place, and more than 60 people expressed their opposition to the racist offensive.

We later decided to use the local council and federal elections to continue the anti-racist struggle. The local council election was recognised as a real opportunity to strengthen our branch and also acted as a test-run for the upcoming federal election.

We identified the east ward of Bankstown (in the federal seat of Blaxland) as our main area for electoral work, whilst also deciding to run a Mayoral candidate in Canterbury (the Mayor is directly elected in the Canterbury council), primarily to help us develop our political work in and around the suburb of Lakemba. Our candidate for Blaxland (Raul Bassi) was the same as the head of our Bankstown east ward council ticket.

Whilst taking the elections seriously, we knew that our challenge would be to participate without losing sight of other major campaign openings, such as anti-war demonstrations and public forums, work on the University of Western Sydney (Bankstown campus), etc.

Election Campaign

We divided our campaign into two parts. First, we called for a united anti-racist ticket in both councils. We put up posters, distributed leaflets, sent letters to local branches/members of political parties such as the Greens and the ALP, in addition to the NSW Teachers Federation, the Canterbury-Bankstown Peace Group and Muslim organisations (Lebanese Muslim Association, Muslim Women Association, Islamic press and the Muslim welfare organisation Mission of Hope).

We received a generally positive response but, for different reasons, nobody was ready to start the process of electoral collaboration - the political organisations because of their narrow electoral interests and the Islamic Groups because (a) they are not ready to confront the NSW state government (their main provider of funds) and (b) they consider some of our policies too radical.

Due to the lack of concrete response, we decided to run as Socialist Alliance with an anti-racist program, opposing any anti-Arab "Middle-Eastern crime" police squad, supporting youth rights, in defence of the local University and TAFE, demanding council rates based on earnings not property values, supporting the local environment (demanding the council supply bins), free child-care services and community control over development, budget and council decisions.

All points were based on a call that the community get together and fight for their implementation.

Our participation

In a branch of around 30 financial members (some of them based in the old area of Burwood) we ended up mobilising more than 50 people in the campaign.

We letter-boxed more than 50% of the ward. Stalls were held all around the area. Including the how to vote cards, we distributed about 31,000 leaflets, plus thousands of anti-war leaflets advertising public forums by John Pilger and Tariq Ali and the March 20 rally demanding "Troops out of Iraq". We also distributed statements supporting the NSW train drivers and condemning the NSW ALP's dismantling of public transport, and rallied in defence of the Redfern indigenous people, popularising the Aboriginal resistance amongst young people in the south-west.

If we count the corflutes, we put up almost 1,200 posters, and next to every electoral poster there was an anti-war rally poster. There was also a small victory against the council who tried to prosecute us for this activity but failed.

We tried the local press several times with no luck until the last week, when two articles were published, importantly with a remark about us being the outspoken opposition to racism.

On election day (March 27) we covered 11 of the 13 voting booths (2 were too small) in Bankstown and 4 in Canterbury. 41 people worked for us at the booths, 31 members (17 active and 14 relatively inactive) and 10 were not then members of Socialist Alliance.

Our members were wearing "Free Palestine" T-shirts, building the Palestinian demonstration the next day (following the assassination of Yassin in Gaza) and asking people to help fight racism.

All up we received 499 votes (2.2%) in Bankstown and 610 in Canterbury (almost 1%). In Bankstown there was no Greens candidate, however anecdotal evidence from booths around Bankstown suggests that the Socialist Alliance didn't attract the Greens' vote in their absence.

(NOTE: SA received a similar vote as in the state election, which is not insignificant when you consider that the anti-war movement is qualitatively less active than in March 2003.)

Conclusions

1. We have put Socialist Alliance firmly on the map in the south-west. People know who we are and we, in turn, have made advances in getting to know our territory.

2. We have strengthened the branch. Our meetings are now almost double in size. New people have taken on major responsibility in the branch; a post-election film night attracted almost 20 new faces; people are calling us, impressed by what we stood for in the elections; we've increased our membership by 30%; and last but not least we have built a strong collaborative team in the branch and a new, stronger coordinating committee.

3. We made more than 30 new contacts on polling day and there has been a big jump in the sales of *Green Left Weekly* in the area.

4. With our propaganda, even with some mistakes, we reached a lot of people, mainly activists or potential activists.

5. We learnt a lot in relation to our propaganda - we didn't do enough to put our material in Arabic and we are not yet talking to the local Asian population who are mainly workers.
6. We were the only anti-racist party in the election; the real opposition to racism and war.

My Life As A Polling Booth Representative

By Austin Whitten (Sydney Central branch)

I wasn't looking forward to working a shift at a polling booth for the Sydney municipal election. My previous experience, at the last NSW state election, wasn't all that enjoyable. The polling station was in an old Italian neighbourhood, Leichhardt, with a Labor incumbent and a strong Green Party challenger who almost succeeded in winning. The booth was dominated by reps from the two major parties and the Greens. Signs for other candidates were around, mostly without a representative present. There were two of us from Socialist Alliance.

I had been told that issues were rarely brought up by the other parties at the booths and the voters didn't seem to expect it. Mostly I remember people walking by me, eyes straight forward, except for a few who threw an epithet or two, usually with the word "commie" in it, and hard stares my way. The Liberal rep spoke Italian and was the most successful in engaging with the older Italians.

I ended up talking with a rep for Labor, an old ALP hand who told me he came from a solid Labor family background and that he had been doing what he was doing since he was 10 years old. From a political standpoint, we were in complete agreement, even when the conversation was deeply critical of the Carr government and the Crean leadership.

He told me he should have broken away from the ALP a long time ago but it would have been difficult, causing a split in the family. "That is one of the reasons the ALP is hanging on", he said, "but it won't last. My kids are not interested. The kids are gone." I sensed he also liked belonging to a party in power.

Finding it difficult to be engaged in a political process where political issues are mostly shied away from, I avoided the polling booth roster at the Sydney Central branch for the municipal election, hoping that flyering my assigned patch fulfilled my electoral duties, but caved in when asked the direct question at the branch meeting on the eve of the elections, "So which booth are you going to be at, Austin? You DO want to participate DON'T you?"

When I explained that I liked to engage with people politically and that I didn't think I was the right person for the job, our in-charge-of-the roster person said something like, "Ah, we have just the polling booth for you, in your own neighbourhood, Newtown."

I was out right after dawn on the day, getting up extra early as it was my day to poster for our SA fundraiser film showing the following week and I needed to have it finished before setting up the polling booth stand by 8am. Several people I met on the street greeted me, assuming I was putting up last-minute election posters and smiled when I handed them a flyer instead for a film screening. Biking by the mission on King Street where the polling booth was located an hour before opening, I saw the ALP had already set up their booth, staking out a choice position near the door with a clothesline from one end of the sidewalk in front of the mission to the other festooned with ALP posters.

Back home, I told Patricia, my wife and fellow SA rep at the booth, that we had to hurry if we wanted to get a good spot as the ALP had staked out what seemed to be the entire area. We arrived just before eight, I unloaded the polling booth kit that had been assembled at the branch and went to park the car. When I returned, Patricia was looking a little rattled. She told me she had been confronted by an aggressive person from the ALP who said she wanted to verify that the SA Sydney Central branch had really preferenced Clover Moore over the ALP and went on, after being dissatisfied that it had, to berate us for "selling out the working class for a Tory party".

The obnoxious ALPer was nowhere to be seen and Patricia and I finished setting up the stand. Big posters for Michael Lee, the ALP mayoral candidate, hung directly over our table, actually two wooden tables from our house butted together, as the branch ran out of card tables. We at least had the best-looking tables at the booth! I asked one of the ALP reps if they would take down the posters hanging over us and he replied, "No way", so I hung ours over the top of Mr. Lee.

When we finished, I stepped back to look at our accomplishments. SA definitely was not shy on issues. There were signs for stopping the Iraq occupation, for Medicare not warfare, for the millions not the millionaires and in favour of better teachers' pay. But what about the local, municipal issues? No signs. I went back to work, re-arranging signs, putting the anti-war signs in the back of the booth, moving the sign supporting teachers to the front - at least it was related to local issues, schools - and banished the 'millionaires' sign to invisibility.

Newtown is slowly being 'gentrified'. Some people are sitting on near-million or half-million dollar properties, mortgaged up to their eyeballs in many cases of course, overworked wage slaves with the ever-present threat of having to default on the mortgage, caused by increasing property rates, but who may feel uncomfortable seeing signs socking it to the 'millionaires'. Maybe the slogan needs to be rethought out. Tommy Sheridan, writing in "Imagine", prefers talking about the 'elites', the two or three percent of the population who control our lives, as being the real class enemy. A million isn't worth as much as it used to be and we now count people in the billions. Maybe we need to "revalue" our signs - "for the billions, not the billionaires!"

In my makeover of our stand, I succeeded in severing the clothesline with my Swiss Army knife scissors whilst removing a sign and all of a sudden there were dozens of Michael Lees laying face-up staring accusingly at me. The ALPer I talked to previously bustled up and added his frosty stare, stating there were too many posters hanging on the

clothesline, whilst we worked to tie the two strands of line together. I assured him it was my trusty Swiss Army knife scissors that had done the trick.

Our first efforts to tie the line didn't tension it sufficiently and voters had to genuflect under a picture of Michael Lee to get to the door to vote which I thought was rather comical but the ALPer wasn't amused and a further retying effort was undertaken.

Certainly this booth was a contrast to the last one I was at. It was dominated by the independents and by the Green Party. The Labor reps were looking stressed and the Liberal reps were looking 'paid'. There were a lot of fresh faces, especially in the Clover Moore camp, and they were quite willing to talk. I covered one side of the polling area and Patricia staked out the other. I handed out flyers to the film screening to people leaving the booth. Many protested they had already voted. I told them it was a reward for voting, being invited to see a good film. The idea came from an SAer who told me voters are smothered with attention when they arrive and ignored when they leave so he always tries to engage with them as they walk out - not always easy to do, I discovered, but many laughed when they saw what I handed them (there were many new faces at the film showing the following week!).

During a pause, after the early morning rush and before the mid-morning one, we met at the tables where Patricia reported being accosted a second time by the belligerent ALPer who berated her a second time for our preferencing choices. This time, the person was at the ALP stand so I went over and delivered a brief, pointed explanation of the branch preferencing choices.

In my mind, the chief reason for putting the ALP after the Greens and Clover Moore was the anger felt by many on the left over the betrayal and abandonment by the ALP of its working class supporters. As such, it is traitorous, unreliable, dishonest and capable of more harm than an out and out right-wing party. I said that if it was a military situation, their leaders would be taken out and shot. "Then you feel Socialist Alliance should have preferenced the Liberals over Labor?" she shot back. No, "only Labor preferences the Liberals", was the obvious response considering what Leichhardt Labor had done, to everyone's shock, and a factor in the Sydney Central preferencing decision.

A second ALPer came in as reinforcement for the "discussion". Their main argument for remaining in the ALP was that they are able to take on and successfully accomplish grass-roots projects that they would not be able to do within a party that has no representation in government, like SA. They both decided "I didn't know anything" and broke off the encounter. Later, as we were packing up the stall at the end of the day, in a conversation with the second ALPer who proved to be more reasonable, I acknowledged the difficulty of walking away from projects where one can make a difference to one of relative powerlessness, but that in these situations, an exit strategy and a planned time for leaving seemed to be the best course of action.

The Denis Hallidays and the Andrew Wilkies have been faced with similar choices. Working honourably within a dishonourable institution has the effect of making it seem the institution possesses values it really does not. Again, as I had when talking with the ALP member at the last election, I sensed there was a basic desire to belong to a party in power. Power is intoxicating, and corrupting.

Encounters with the Greens, Clover Moore's group and Independent reps were more fulfilling. A Green rep reported that the obnoxious ALPer had acted similarly with them and she asked what they hoped to accomplish by acting in this manner. In a conversation with another Green rep, the absurdity of the preferential voting system was discussed, where voters faced a gauntlet line of people forcing pieces of paper at them, telling them how to vote. The Green rep extolled the wisdom of having a proportional voting system in its place. I made a note to raise this at branch, to see if we can kick-start a project to work in tandem with the Greens and other independents to campaign for proportional voting at a time when support for the major parties is falling away.

Several conversations with members of the Clover camp were very interesting, where idealism and naiveté were equally on display. It was worth the price of admission, witnessing the first whilst being given a rare opportunity to address the latter. I felt they were listening. The first encounter started off with a smiling, self-assured Clover enthusiast who asked me why I was trying to sell such a hopeless cause, socialism. "It's an old idea, past it's use-by date and the word is poison."

I asked him what he proposed to replace it with and what word he preferred, saying that offering no alternative was not really a valid option unless he wanted to spend his whole life working frantically for flavour-of-the-month reformers like Clover who, if she does everything possible to live up to her promises, will have to settle for compromise, become tainted in the process, her use-by date will pass, a backlash will form and the reactionaries will be voted back in.

The point was illustrated the next day when the Sun Herald reported on a letter sent by the billionaire head of Meriton before the election who, sensing the outcome, wrote to Clover saying he was "looking forward to working with you". Reform politicians haven't a chance against developers and big business. The power is too great. From personal experience, in Toronto under reform regimes in city hall, real estate developers were able to achieve whatever they wanted to. One shouldn't expect to make deals in bed with a developer and emerge a virgin.

If the Clover rep really wanted to change things, I told him, he needed to work for a party that addressed the reasons why things were the way they are instead of for band-aid solutions. We will never achieve sustainable solutions under the current system, which would have to change drastically in order to accommodate sustainability in anything except profits. The result would obviously not be capitalism but he was free to call it whatever he wanted if he found it difficult using the s-word.

My Clover enthusiast listened and in the end, seemed less self-assured, more thoughtful and not smiling as much. Another conversation with someone from the Clover camp echoed the picture I received from my first polling booth experience. After talking a while with a young rep, she told me she was feeling guilty working for Clover as her family

were devout ALPers and she felt like a traitor. I told her the story from the other loyal Labor family member and how his children had all opted out of the party. She said it made her feel better about what she was doing.

Left ALPers exhort us to support them in order to turn the party around. How can this happen when the leadership represents policies that only look attractive to followers and children of Attila the Hun? And who expects a leadership that is accustomed to hobnobbing with the powerful to suddenly flip back around to its working class supporters? So what is the mechanism for a counterrevolution? The writing is on the wall.

Corporate media's embrace of Clover Moore certainly appears compromising. The polling booth experience may provide some insight and perspective on why they did it. The Green Party reps were very impressive at the booth, appearing organised and focused - a real alternative party. One couldn't help but think what a power they would have been if the people and resources that backed Clover had instead united with the Greens. Was this the real reason the media backed Clover, to avoid a Greens landslide, perhaps the lesser of two evils in their eyes, someone who they feel they can more readily "do business with" but more surely, effectively splintering the reformers? Most likely.

The hoopla over preferencing a non-working class, non-socialist "village trade" group over a party that represents the working class - in claim only - is unfathomable when not a peep is heard about preferencing the other non-working class, non-socialist "village trade" party, the Greens. Unless of course, we should have preferenced Labor over the Greens, a decision that would have been as notorious as the ALP preferencing the Liberals. Some unknown person or group postered a large number of poles in Newtown after the election with signs pointedly asking why Labor did this.

In summary, afterwards I was glad I had been rostered for polling booth duty and I especially felt good about Sydney Central putting Labor at the bottom of its preferences list. If for no other reason, it psychologically identified SA with the growing camp of people who are searching for alternatives in Sydney and for whom SA can offer guidance, bringing established wisdom and longer-sighted goals for achieving permanent, significant changes, not just ephemeral, compromised ones.

Although there certainly were local municipal issues that we addressed somewhat - the amalgamation of South Sydney, housing, rates - we were definitely light on the ground with signage and in substance. A visitor from the Scottish Socialist Party attended our last public branch meeting and he told me the SSP had the same problem at first, focused mainly on international and national issues. We certainly have room for improvement. The more successful SA candidates had long-standing presences in the community.

I will probably sign up for polling booth duty for the next election. There is little opportunity to talk politics or social issues with the voters but where else can you engage with people from different political camps, talk politics with them and see a spectrum of what's good, what's bad and in one instance, what's ugly?

Socialist Alliance's City of Sydney preference decision

By the Sydney Central Branch Committee

In the March 27 NSW Local Government elections, the Sydney Central SA branch decided to contest wards in the Leichhardt City Council, and after some early investigation, we decided to also contest the positions of Councillor and Mayor in the City Of Sydney.

Our decision to contest the City of Sydney was made on the following grounds:

1. The announcement of the forced amalgamation of South Sydney into the City of Sydney council; and the widespread opposition to this move;

2. The strength of the campaigning work Socialist Alliance was undertaking at the time in solidarity with the residents of Redfern Block in the aftermath of TJ Hickey's death. This campaign has two aspects to it: one for justice and the truth surrounding TJ's death, and the deaths and mistreatment of other Aboriginal youth at the hands of police; and as well as a campaign against the stated agenda of both ALP Premier Bob Carr and opposition leader John Brogden in relation to the dismantling of the Block, and its redevelopment as part of an expanded CBD. Both these issues have a longstanding historical basis within the community within which the Socialist Alliance Sydney Central Branch is located; and

3. In order to build our profile in Sydney Central in the lead up to the Federal Election, as it overlaps with the Federal seat of Sydney.

The aim of our campaign was to raise SA's profile in the City of Sydney, and as a means to provide a public framework to continue our solidarity campaign with the residents of Redfern and the former South Sydney Council.

A few key comrades in the branch were very involved in The Block campaign, and the branch took several initiatives, including:

- Providing on the ground support to Aboriginal activists leading the campaign, including help with publicity and logistics for rallies and marches taking place;
- Having an SA presence, including holding SA stalls at all key political and local events (where we received a very positive response from local residents);
- Initiating a public meeting at South's Leagues Club with Lyall Munro, Ray Jackson, Rihab Charida and Darcy Byrne, which was chaired by Susan Price, the pre-selected candidate for Mayor and Councillor of City of Sydney.
- On the eve of the election the SA branch also organised a screening of "Cop It Sweet" at the newly opened Redfern Community Centre, which attracted about 40-50 people, including many local Aboriginal young people and other residents from within Redfern and others who came from as far away as Wollongong for the screening.

Socialist Alliance had received a welcoming response from the community every time we had a profile at events, and comrades Nobby Braumann and Brianna Pike won enormous respect from campaign leaders on behalf of SA as a result of their efforts.

Our discussion on preferences took place within this political context and occurred for the first time at a branch meeting on March 2, where we debated preferences for both Leichhardt and Sydney City.

The City of Sydney preference proposal was that we give our 1st preference to the Greens. A motion was put to then place Clover Moore ahead of the ALP Candidate Michael Lee. (ie. 1 - Socialist Alliance; 2 - Greens; 3 - Moore; 4 - ALP).

The debate which followed centred on:

- The issues in NSW which formed the political backdrop to the election, including the issue of TJ Hickey's death, and the possible redevelopment of the Block in Redfern (where Moore had given support, contrasted with Carr and Brogden's media statements on the issue), and the ALP's role in the forced council amalgamation.
- Also raised were the ALP/Moore records on industrial relations and workers' issues, including the issue of Workers Compensation legislation and the record of the ALP state government on the issue.

Concern was raised at that meeting around whether SA would have a difficult time explaining to some people we work with our decision, given that Moore was not seen as a "workers' candidate".

The motion to preference the Greens, followed by Moore and then the ALP was passed by a majority (one comrade voted against and one abstained). Because the branch meeting had already decided (in regard to preferencing in Leichhardt) that should additional information come to hand, which made the case for a change, then it was reaffirmed that the branch committee was empowered to vary the decision on preferences, if need be.

As the deadline for lodging How To Votes was confirmed as falling prior to our next Branch Committee meeting, we lodged several variations for preferences in order to make sure our material was registered with the SEO in time and to cover ourselves in the event of a change of decision. This also meant that we gave ourselves the luxury of another branch meeting and two additional branch committee meetings prior to the deadline for printing HTVs before polling day.

At the following Branch Committee meeting further discussion occurred around the issue of whether to place Clover ahead of the ALP. No motion was moved, but we had further discussion around the relative merits of the ALP and Moore. The committee decided not to take a decision at that meeting as we needed to spend more time gathering information. We made the decision to raise the issue at the forthcoming branch meeting again and that if anyone wanted to raise a motion for debate to alter the decision they could do so, otherwise if there was no motion put to have the discussion at the branch meeting, we would convene a special open meeting of the branch committee on May 20 after the rally, to consider the matter then.

At the subsequent branch meeting the matter was in fact raised and there was further debate over the issue, however the majority decision (only two comrades voting against) was that our decision to put Moore ahead of Lee would stand.

Natalie Gould (ALP) and Ken Davis (SA) both approached comrades at the March 20 rally to challenge our decision to preference Clover Moore ahead of the ALP. Several comrades were also challenged by ALP member Bob Gould over the issue at the demo, and the issue was raised by Bob Gould and others on the Greenleft discussion e-list.

As Susan Price had not been present at the branch meeting due to commitments at two candidate meetings, she spoke with Larry Galbraith, Clover Moore's political adviser on the Monday following, prior to our final branch committee meeting before the election, as well as with an organiser with the USU (McLeahy) who organises council employees in the former South Sydney Council. The following is Susan's summary of the discussions:

On protection of council employees:

NB: NSW Parliament passed legislation in the aftermath of the forced council amalgamation, which set a three year moratorium on restructuring of council employment arrangements. Any council elected is now bound to abide by this law.

Galbraith reported that Clover Moore's position would be to refuse to engage in any secret negotiations or deals over council employees during the moratorium. He also said it was impossible to absolutely guarantee every single job after 2007, but stressed the general principles under which a Clover council would approach the issue of worker's rights - namely that if there were to be any changes to employment or council restructuring that it would "only happen after proper consultation with current employees in the period following".

Galbraith also told me that there was a good deal of suspicion on the issue outsourcing of council labour from within Clover Moore's team, specifically from Robyn Kemmis a former Deputy Vice Chancellor of UTS, who had argued against outsourcing at UTS and in favour of preserving day labour for security guards.

According to Galbraith, and confirmed by McLeahy, Moore had not yet had direct discussions with the USU at the time, but was keen to do this before election day.

McLeahy told me that the ALP and Greens had had discussions with the USU and were both very supportive, and the ALP had been the most vocal on the issue. He reported that Tony Pooley had made sure the previous General Manager of South Sydney Council gave a clear and precise statement to former South Sydney Council employees that there would be no voluntary or forced redundancies as a result of the amalgamation. He said while less vocal, the Greens had also been supportive (Lee Rhiannon in particular) of the USU and its members.

On the possibility of an alliance with the Liberals:

Galbraith said in his mind an ALP/Liberal alliance was more likely on Council, given their previous record on Leichhardt Council and that Moore would not be entering into an alliance with the Liberals. He also said on their decision to not give preferences to any of the major parties (Moore's HTV leaflet stated 1. Clover, 2. Green, 3. Democrats), that they want to help the Greens to get elected and would rather see Greens on Council than ALP, Liberals or Peter Collins.

Susan reported the above to the Branch Committee meeting on Tuesday March 22, as well as information she had gathered on the internet concerning Clover Moore's support for the LHMU members at the Hilton and Millenium Hotels, her support for the Teachers Strike in 1996 and her position in regard to the Workers Compensation Bill in 2001 (where not only was she the sole member of the Legislative Assembly to vote against it, but she tried unsuccessfully on two occasions to move a motion to block the bill). It was also reported that under the Greiner Government in NSW Moore had voted for Greiner's Industrial Relations Bill.

We had a useful discussion around our decision and the outcome was that we did not have sufficient cause to alter the decision of the previous Branch Meeting. The committee also reaffirmed that regardless of our decision on preferences, this would not alter the branch's orientation to working with progressive activists who are still members or supporters of the ALP.

Election results

The result of the election was further testament to the Branch's position, with Moore receiving 47% of the votes compared to Lee's 23%. The electorate sent a clear message to the ALP in these elections. The Greens received 10%, and got one councillor elected, and narrowly missed getting a second councillor (Jenny Leong) elected. This result reflected their success across many electorates in Sydney and regional areas of NSW, including strong industrial towns such as Maitland. Tony Pooley, former South Sydney Council Mayor, was the last councillor elected.

The City of Sydney Council now has Clover Moore as Mayor, plus councillors John McInerny, Robyn Kemmis, Marcelle Hoff (a member of Friends of Pyrmont Point) and Phillip Black from her team, one Green councillor (Chris Harris), three ALP councillors - Michael Lee, Tony Pooley and Verity Firth; and one Liberal - Shayne Mallard.

NB: Comrades should note that the ALP gave preferences to the Liberals in Leichhardt City, and the ALP split their preferences between Peter Collins, Matt Laffan and Dixie Coulton (all conservative independents) in the City of Sydney.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Disclosure of funding from development companies to the ALP in NSW.

Source: AEC website

[Shows that the ALP in NSW received at a minimum, \$754,611.79 in electoral campaign funding from property developers in the year 2002-2003 (approximately .21% of their overall electoral funding)].

Australian Labor Party (N.S.W. Branch) - NSW

Declared Total Receipts: \$16,608,186.00

Receipts where \$10,000 or more was received:

Name	Address	Type of Receipt	Value
Abigroup Ltd (NSW)	PO Box 195 PYMBLE NSW 2073	Unspecified	\$13,636.36
Australand	Level 3, 1C Homebush Bay Drive RHODES NSW 2138	Unspecified	\$30,000.00
Australand	Level 3, 1C Homebush Bay Drive RHODES NSW 2138	Unspecified	\$33,000.00
Australand Holdings Ltd	Locked Bag 2106 NORTH RYDE NSW 1670	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Australand Holdings Ltd	Locked Bag 2106 NORTH RYDE NSW 1670	Unspecified	\$25,000.00
Australian Constructors Association Limited	Level 4, 51 Walker Street NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060	Unspecified	\$15,600.00
Baulderstone Hornibrook	40 Miller St NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Baulderstone Hornibrook Pty Ltd (NSW)	PO Box 1687 NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Frank Gasparin Property Development	248A Melbourne St NORTH ADELAIDE SA 5006	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Harrington Properties Pty Ltd	Level 4, 1111 Harrington Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$13,636.36
Holdmark Developers Pty Ltd	Concorde West Office, 2/2-28 Victor CONCORD WEST NSW 2138	Unspecified	\$15,000.00
Holdmark Developers Pty Ltd	Concorde West Office, 2/2-28 Victor CONCORD WEST NSW 2138	Unspecified	\$17,500.00
Johnson Property Group	258 Old Northern Road CASTLE HILL NSW 2154	Unspecified	\$13,636.36

Leighton Holdings Ltd	PO Box 1002 CROWS NEST NSW 1585	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Leighton Holdings Ltd	PO Box 1002 CROWS NEST NSW 1585	Unspecified	\$25,000.00
Lend Lease Services Ltd	264 George Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Lend Lease Services Ltd	264 George Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$13,636.36
M & R Civil Pty Ltd	84-88 Victoria Road DRUMMOYNE NSW 2047	Unspecified	\$15,000.00
Mars Property Group	Level 1, 209 Castlereagh Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Meriton Apartments Pty Ltd	Level 5, 267-277 Castlereagh Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Meriton Apartments Pty Ltd	Level 5, 267-277 Castlereagh Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$13,636.36
Meriton Apartments Pty Ltd	Level 5, 267-277 Castlereagh Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$100,000.00
Mirvac Group	4/40 Miller Street NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Mirvac Group	4/40 Miller Street NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060	Unspecified	\$13,636.36
Mirvac Group	4/40 Miller Street NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060	Unspecified	\$30,000.00
Mirvac Projects Pty Ltd	Level 4, 40 Miller Street NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Multiplex Constructions Pty Ltd	GPO Box 172 SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Multiplex Constructions Pty Ltd	1 Kent Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Multiplex Constructions Pty Ltd	1 Kent Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$30,000.00
Multiplex Constructions Pty Ltd	1 Kent Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$33,000.00
Paynter Dixon Constructions Pty Ltd	320 Liverpool Road ASHFIELD NSW 2131	Unspecified	\$28,090.91
Property Council of Australia Ltd	Level 26 Australia Square, 264-278 George Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$44,330.00
Stockland Trust Group (constructors) Pty Ltd	Level 16 157 Liverpool Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$16,500.00
Stockland Trust Group (constructors) Pty Ltd	Level 16 157 Liverpool Street SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$17,500.00
Thiess Contractors Pty Ltd	Locked Bag 2009 SOUTH BRISBANE QLD 4101	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Thiess Pty Ltd	179 Grey Street SOUTH BANK QLD 4101	Unspecified	\$13,636.36
Transfield Holdings Pty Ltd	Level 6, 30 Alfred St MILSONS POINT NSW 2061	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Transfield Pty Ltd	Level 36 Gateway, 1 Macquarie Place SYDNEY NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$13,636.36
Walsh Bay Redevelopment	Level 2, 20 Windmill Point MILLERS POINT NSW 2000	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Westfield Holdings Limited	Level 24, 100 Williams Street SYDNEY NSW 2011	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
Westfield Holdings Limited	GPO Box 4004 SYDNEY GPO PRIVATE BOXES NSW 2001	Unspecified	\$10,000.00
TOTAL			\$754,611.79

[1] Susan did not have time to research every donor, so just picked out company names which were recognisable as being in the development and construction industry. Australand, which donated a total of about \$98,000.00 to the NSW ALP is the company rumoured to have purchased the old CUB site for redevelopment.

Appendix 2

Independent MP backs hotel workers

Source LaborNet

Date: 9 March 2003

A key state MP is not staying neutral in a dispute between the Kings Cross Millennium Hotel and its workforce. The Local MP for Bligh, Clover Moore, has come out in the corner of the 150 hotel workers who are about to lose their jobs.

"She is publicly expressing her support for the hotel union members," LHMU Hotel Union Assistant Secretary, Mark Boyd said.

"Clover Moore is calling for the company to act decently, and responsibly, in making a deal over retrenchment pay and workers' entitlements so that we do not see an escalation of this labour dispute.

"These workers reckon Clover is fantastic. It is not the first time that Ms Moore has stood up and spoken out for hotel workers," Mark Boyd said.

"Last year during the Hilton Hotel dispute - without any prompting from us - she stood up in State Parliament and lambasted the Hilton Hotel managers for refusing to sit down and make a deal over redundancy pay."

Hotel workers stop work meeting

Hotel Union members will hold a stop work meeting tomorrow morning (March 10) at The Crest Hotel, across from the Millennium, to hear a report on the current state of play in negotiations between the management and the union - and they'll decide then what to do next.

Most of these workers are part-time, migrant women workers and are among the lowest-paid workers in Sydney - earning around \$12 an hour. Because more than a dozen hotels are shutting down around the city few of them can expect to quickly pick up a new job after the shutdown.

The Millennium Hotel - which is best-known for the 1960's heritage listed Coca-Cola sign which dominates the view over William St - sits on the border of Ms Moore's Bligh electorate and the Port Jackson electorate of the Minister for Tourism, Sandra Nori.

"We've contacted Ms Nori and we are hopeful she too won't stay neutral, she'll come out and support the workforce, some of whom are her voters.

"We want the politicians - include the local council who we are also writing to - to tell the Millennium to act as responsible corporate citizens and treat their workers with respect.

"If the hotel management is already boasting to property and local media of the many millions they are about to make, by shutting down the hotel and refurbishing them as swish apartments, they can also afford to share some of this windfall with the workforce.

"They can give our members a retrenchment deal which is equal to what all other NSW workers covered by State Awards would receive. We are not asking for any more."

NSW Award workers get 16 weeks retrenchment pay but these hotel workers, because they are covered by Federal Awards receive only 8 weeks pay.

The ACTU is putting a case to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission arguing that Federal Award workers should be treated the same as NSW Award workers and so get 16 weeks retrenchment pay.

The LHMU proudly represents around 130,000 hard working women and men throughout Australia.

Appendix 3

Source: LHMU website

Local councils asked to help defend hotel workers' retrenchment rights

27 March 2003

Key local councils will be asked to take a more pro-active in defending the rights of Sydney hotel workers to receive a decent severance pay out over the next few months.

The LHMU Hotel Union has decided to write to Council Mayors and Labor, Green and Independent councillors calling on them to insist that hotel companies planning to shutdown hotels and convert them into swanky apartments should agree to a 16 week retrenchment package.

"We're hoping that the Lord Mayor of Sydney and the Mayor of South Sydney City Council will meet a delegation of hotel workers in the near future so they can get a personal understanding of the consequences of council decisions to give developers the OK to shutdown hotels and turn them into apartments," LHMU Hotel Union NSW Assistant Secretary, Mark Boyd said.

New local council campaign to defend hotel workers

The new municipal campaign comes after the Sydney Millennium Hotel workers held a crisis meeting this week angry because the hotel shuts down on Monday but their employer has not been prepared to sit down and bargain in good faith about a decent retrenchment deal.

"There are about a dozen major residential hotels in the City of Sydney and South Sydney council areas where hotel union members are fearful of the constant rumours of shutdowns.

"We are going to ask councils to work much more closely with us to see if we can insist on better treatment of hotel workers during the shutdown process."

The 150 cleaners, housekeepers, front-of-office and restaurant staff at the Millennium Hotel in Kings Cross where Kylie Minogue stays when she is in Sydney had been fighting for an improved severance deal.

"While the world famous heritage-listed Coca-Cola sign on the side of this building is being treated with special care - the hotel management has used bulldozer tactics to run over their workforce.

Multinational hotel chains massive profits

"This UK-based international hotel chain reported to shareholders earlier this month that they had seen a massive 23 per cent rise in full-year net profit to approximately \$120 million in 2002," LHMU Hotel Union NSW Assistant Secretary, Mark Boyd, said.

"But at the same time they were not prepared to ensure that their loyal Sydney workforce got a decent severance deal.

"Union members are angry that some of these extraordinary profits are not being shared around to provide a more generous retrenchment deal.

"We are particularly concerned that the top Sydney executives of this hotel chain should not receive massive golden handshakes in severance deals (as a thankyou based on this profit report) while the ordinary workforce - our members - are paid a pittance in severance," Mark Boyd said.

The deal LHMU Hotel Union members were offered by the Millennium Hotel was less than that given to Sydney Hilton Hotel workers late last year.

"Our members have voted, reluctantly, to accept an offer which meant the great majority of them will be getting a severance deal less than what union members at the Sydney Hilton won after their industrial campaign.

"The Hilton Hotel workers also know that their hotel will re-open later this year and, as part of the union win, they are all being offered work when the doors re-open.

"For our members at the Millennium the story isn't the same - the London-based management should have been more generous than the Hilton company."

Appendix 4

Source: LHMU website

Key community leaders support hotel workers

The LHMU Hotel Union received the support of key community leaders in this campaign including the President of the ACTU, Sharan Burrow, the NSW Minister for Industrial Relations, John Della Bosca, the local Independent, Clover Moore and the Mayor of South Sydney, Tony Pooley.

"Improving retrenchment pay for federal award workers - such as this group of hotel workers - is a number one issue for Australian unions," Mark Boyd said.

"This is a dispute which had the full support of the ACTU because of the Howard Government's eight-week cap on severance pay, which is clearly inadequate.

"Our statistics show that the average period of unemployment for redundant workers is 22 weeks.

"With the War on Iraq, and already more than a dozen hotels shutting down around the city, it is unlikely most of these workers will pick up a new job after the shutdown."

The LHMU Hotel Union believes these workers should have received the 16 weeks redundancy pay which most Sydney workers receive because they are covered by the more generous NSW State Award system.

An ACTU Test Case to be heard in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in May is seeking to increase severance entitlements for federal award workers (including casuals) with more than six years service from the current eight weeks to 16 weeks pay, in line with New South Wales standards.

Appendix 5

[In answer to Bob Gould's question "Where was Clover Moore on Iraq?"]

Source: FOE Website

November 4, 2001

57 Organisations, Parliamentarians, Say No To War

Australian Peace Committee, People For Nuclear Disarmament W.A., Friends Of The Earth Australia

57 Organizations and Parliamentarians have <http://www.foe.org.au/mr/mr_4_11_01.htm#letter#letter> written to the Prime Minister John Howard and the leader of the opposition Kim Beazley, rejecting a military response to the September 11 attacks.

The letter has been signed by a wide variety of peace groups, environment groups, church organisations, Moslem organisations, and trade unions.

Signatories include the United Nations Association of Australia, the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, (MAPW), Women's Electoral Lobby, (WEL), National Union of Students, the Australian-Arabic Council, the Islamic Council of NSW, the Catholic Coalition for Justice and Peace and the Australian Education Union.(AEU).

According to those who coordinated the letter:

"The wide support for this letter shows that there is in fact no consensus amongst the Australian community in favor of war. An increasing number of people are convinced that bombing red cross warehouses, villages, and residential areas in Afghanistan is not the way to combat terrorism.

Finally, more and more people are deeply concerned over the possibility of a spreading conflict in which there are further terrorist attacks on the US and possibly Australia and in which more and more people die."

Letter:

Dear Prime Minister Howard and Leader of the Opposition Kim Beazley,

The undersigned groups condemn unreservedly all forms of terrorism, and all acts of violence that place either political, financial or religious objectives over human life.

We are writing to you to express our extreme concern that US-led retaliation for the horrific attack on the World Trade Centre, will worsen the terrorism problem beyond measure. It could lead to a worsening spiral of ever-increasing violence, in which the use of biological and nuclear weapons looms as a terrifying possibility.

In view of the commencement of hostilities, this concern is even more vital.

We wish to emphasise strongly that the measures currently envisaged to combat terrorism - in particular attacks against nations that rightly or wrongly are said to harbor terrorists, and specifically Afghanistan - will make the problem of terrorism worse not better.

Military action will inevitably involve massive civilian casualties - casualties amongst those who have had least to do with the events of Sept. 11th. Such casualties will only advance the cause of terrorism. What is required instead on the part of the US and its allies of which Australia is one, is mature, and possibly painful, but absolutely necessary, reflection on the deeper reasons for which the US has attracted such deep hostility.

What is required is a change in US foreign policy away from global dominance as an overriding goal. Instead, the maintenance of a just international legal structure, and even more importantly, addressing the underlying inequities experienced by less affluent and less powerful groups and nations would remove many of the motives for terrorism.

Trying to eliminate terrorism without taking these steps will not work. Australia as a close ally of the US should be playing a vital role in encouraging such a realistic examination of the bases and direction of US global policy. Responding to unjustifiable terror with unjustifiable terror, or merely without treating the underlying causes of terrorism, will merely maintain and amplify the cycle. An escalation to nuclear or biological warfare could well be the result of such policies.

Australia should be urging the US:

- 1) To use moderation and restraint in its response to the Sept. 11th attacks.
- 2) To avoid absolutely the targeting of civilian populations.
- 3) To use wherever possible, international judicial institutions and the United Nations structure to bring justice to those responsible for the attacks.
- 4) To urge the immediate establishment of the proposed International Criminal Court.

Such a course is in conformity with Article VI of the ANZUS treaty, according to which: "This treaty does not affect and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations of the parties under the charter of the United Nations or the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security".

We would urge the government to consider, and to urge upon the US, the method used to deal with the Lockerbie bombing as a possible way in which to respond to these events. The adoption of the Lockerbie model of a completely neutral court would facilitate movement toward a world order based on the rule of law, and ensure that those who died did not do so in vain.

In the light of the recent attacks, Australia and the US should ratify their support for the UN International Criminal Court, and this should be the means by which terrorist actions are dealt with on an ongoing basis.

We reiterate that should open ended and indiscriminate military force be the response to these events, the only winners will be the terrorists themselves.

We urge you to impress these points on the US administration, and we urge Australia not to give the US administration an open-ended invitation to do anything they see fit in response to what has taken place.

Signed: [Signatories included "Clover Moore MP (Independent) Bligh, NSW."]

Appendix 6

Source NSW Parliament Website

28 November 2001

Workers Compensation Legislation Further Amendment Bill

Third Reading

Mr AMERY: I move: That this bill be now read a third time.

Ms MOORE: I move: That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead "this bill be disposed of".

I have moved the amendment because of the undemocratic handling of this very important legislation=97its introduction into the House yesterday afternoon and the intention to pass it through all stages last night. In doing so the Government has shown contempt for the parliamentary process.

I again remind the Premier of his ongoing commitment to parliamentary reform when he signed the charter of reform during the Fiftieth Parliament; that reform ensured accountability, scrutiny and transparency in the development of legislation.

This legislation has not lain on the table for 28 days, which it should have, as the Leader of the House knows. It is landmark legislation, but there has been no legislation committee, and no community or professional consultation. The legislation has not even been before this House for the minimum of five days; it was here for just three hours before it was rammed through this House.

I agree with the honourable member for Gosford, who said last night that this was a flagrant breach of parliamentary procedure. This is another tragic day for parliamentary democracy and a double tragedy because it is dealing with workers basic rights. We are dealing with legislation that not only I have concern about but also the community has concern about.

The Labor Council is concerned that the legislation contains serious flaws. The New South Wales Bar Association concludes that the most seriously injured workers are likely to be the most financially prejudiced by this proposed legislation. The Law Society pointed out that this legislation is unfair and harsh.

I was able to get those comments in just three hours while this legislation was before the House. The legislation contains provisions that seek to remove injured workers of their common law rights. The commencement of the legislation yesterday made it apply retrospectively, which is unfair and harsh on those injured workers who have not yet claimed existing rights.

I am particularly concerned that this retrospective application of the legislation is not in line with the recommendations of the Sheahan inquiry and will achieve limited benefit that in no way justifies the removal of existing workers rights.

I support the call by the Law Society, the Australian Association of Surgeons, and Injuries Australia for this legislation to be referred to a committee.

It appears that this legislation will cripple the common law rights of injured workers and effectively abolish them. The threshold for access remains very high, even at 15 per cent impairment. Available damages, even for those seriously injured workers who meet the threshold, have been radically cut to economic loss for inability to work only, thus removing non-economic loss and compensation for medical expenses, future care and treatment expenses, domestic assistance and injury management programs.

This legislation should be disposed of because it is a shameful abandonment of the rights of injured workers. It is driven by cost savings, not by workers rights, and it has not had the proper consultation and scrutiny. There has been no transparency about this process and that is an indictment on this Parliament and on this Government.

Mr AMERY: The Government rejects the amendment moved by the honourable member for Bligh. It is true that the legislation went through this House yesterday in various stages, but I point out that all honourable members were given an opportunity to speak, no gag was applied. Everyone spoke who wanted to speak.

The Government gave honourable members an opportunity to speak, we went through the second reading debate, there was no gag, and there was no vote against the second reading by the Opposition. To be factual, the Opposition moved two amendments, which the Government rejected and the Committee divided on them. The Opposition has fundamentally agreed to the legislation, realising, I would hope, although there are some qualifications, that not everyone thinks that this legislation contains popular provisions. But it had to be introduced to address the serious financial position of the workers compensation scheme.

Ms Moore: Three hours for landmark legislation!

Mr AMERY: In response to the interjection by the honourable member for Bligh, while the legislation went through all stages in one day ...

Ms Moore: Three hours.

Mr AMERY: ...in three hours, or whatever it was, it should be recognised that this is not some new legislation that was dumped on Parliament yesterday. This legislation has received the most public debate that any new bill has received. Last night we had an argument about the level of consultation, and the Hon. John Della Bosca should be congratulated on the painstaking way in which he worked with various groups while trying to gain resolution to the problems.

Also there has been wider public debate and big demonstrations outside Parliament House.

I am sure that no legislation has had a broader, wider or longer public debate than this one has had. This legislation is a finetuning of a number of amendments that resulted from that public consultation.

Yes, the legislation went through all stages in a few hours yesterday. Taken on its own that may be seen by the honourable member for Bligh as unreasonable, but that is not the only component to this wide-ranging and long public debate about this legislation. The Government has probably moved as far as it can to make sure that legislation is in place that will achieve the outcomes everyone wants; that is, a cheaper, fairer system and more benefits to workers.

I recognise that the Law Society is not too happy about it, and we can all understand where that is coming from. The legislation will provide a more competitive scheme by attracting development from other States. The Government rejects the amendment and asks the House to support the legislation.

Appendix 7

Source: Green Left Weekly

May 1, 1996

NSW teachers take united action

By Chris Spindler

SYDNEY - In a historic day for teacher unions, some 15,000 TAFE teachers, Teachers Federation and Independent Education Union members held a spirited rally outside Parliament House on April 23, the day of their 24-hour strike. It was the first time all secondary education unions took united action. The rally also resolved to fight "as long as it takes" to win their claims.

The strike was called as part of a campaign for a fully funded 12% pay increase. The teachers argue there should be no trade-offs because the 12% is only a partial catch-up for 25% in lost wages over the past 20 years.

The Carr Labor government has offered 7.1% funded by the government, and a further 4.9% through productivity increases and trade-offs.

These trade-offs would result in fewer teachers, longer working hours, more weeks per year worked and larger class sizes. Teachers claim that education standards for pupils and teachers' working conditions would be adversely affected.

The government wants teachers to work an extra hour per week, and an extra week per year in TAFE. This would cost 350 teaching positions. In schools, longer working hours, a 50% cut in sick leave, work in holidays, extra classes and covering for sick teachers form part of the government's proposed trade-offs.

Denis Fitzgerald, president of the NSW Teachers Federation, received a huge cheer when he said that teachers had no more to give. The federation would "work with members to keep the fight going for as long as it takes; we're in it for the long haul".

This fighting sentiment was echoed by Geoff Turnbull from the TAFE Teachers Association, who said, "Blame for the current dispute must lie with the bloody-minded and arrogant Carr government. Action such as today is what will get us salary justice.

"Teachers should have no confidence in the arbitration system as an independent umpire. There is no justice in the bosses' court." Turnbull said teachers were "savaged" in the arbitration court in 1991, where the employer (the government) got more than it asked for.

Teachers anger has been brewing for many years, as speakers at the rally made clear. Brenda Seymour, industrial officer with the NSW Teachers Federation, said that the state government's economic rationalist approach had not changed from former premier Nick Greiner to Bob Carr. "Monetary terms rule the inputs and outcomes in education", she said.

Seymour said that between 1991 and 1995 TAFE enrolments had increased by 11,834 and graduates had increased by 58,264, while teacher numbers have either decreased or remained the same. A similar process has happened in schools, with 42,000 year 11 students in 1980 compared to this year's figure of 80,515.

In 1975, education represented 32% of the state budget; today that figure is only 26%. Fitzgerald said that a mere 1% increase in the budget allocation to education would pay for the teachers' pay rise.

Before the 24-hour strike, education minister John Aquilina pleaded with and threatened teachers in a vain effort to avert the action. He even sent a personalised letter to all teachers in a bid to change their minds. At the rally, it was pointed out that this mail-out cost the same as a year's wage for a full-time teacher.

However, Aquilina's barrage against the teachers failed to sway public support for them. A Newspan conducted just before the strike action revealed that teachers had unprecedented support across the state and among all age groups.

This was also confirmed at the rally as support was shown by parent organisations, other education unions in the ACT, South Australia and Tasmania, the South Coast Trades and Labour Council and independent state parliamentarians Clover Moore and Peter McDonald. The Teachers Federation refused to allow parliamentarians from the Labor or Liberal parties to speak at the rally.

Expansion NOT repackage: an Alliance paper of the Alliance by the Alliance

By Alan Woodcraft (Fremantle branch)

For February 15th 2003 anti-Iraq war protest the NOWaR alliance in Perth paid \$5000, five thousand, to the *West Australian* for a half-page advertisement. This was tucked away on page 49, and no news item was present. For 20th March 2004 the NOWaR alliance decided to save their money.

The *West Australian* is owned largely by the Banks and other right-wing institutions who are chief among the warmongers. This is the same with most of the Press, and the media at large.

While thinking about media work for the coming federal election campaign, it occurred to me that we would be 'engaging' the media, in a similar way to how a rank and file union organisation engages the union officials. Only when a majority of trade union members have been won to a position, contrary to the interest of the officials, will the officials endorse it. The officials will tail the members, if the rank and file are successful.

I agree this is not whole story, what I'm trying to say is that the interests of the Alliance and the long-term interests of the mainstream media are contradictory. It is thus a form of class struggle, and that's why I talk about 'engagement'. The media will only respond, most of the time, only when they have to. We have to PRESS the press.

Moving on to the political situation, a polarisation in which many people are generalising, with Labor not offering an alternative. Thus a potentially massive audience for the Socialist Alliance, but as the rise of the Greens indicates, people are not jumping to revolutionary conclusions.

Yes the same formulation again, because its vital, people are breaking from Labor but not reformism. The Alliance needs to engage with this audience. A potentially truly massive number, up in the millions. Our platform is superb.

We obviously need our own media.

The Alliance needs its own paper, and something similar to the Scottish Socialist Voice, something which is able to connect immediately, and with not much mental effort. The issue which exposes the three Billionaire parasites on its front page, photos and text saying we can't afford to pay the nursery nurses, its appropriate. Most Working people don't have the time of day to plough through large amounts of text.

The argument that I want to make is that we need to build the Left, we need what we have at the moment the GLW the SW etc. as well but we need more, an Alliance paper that organically develops out of the struggle that the Alliance is conducting.

Attempting to transform the GLW is a quick fix solution that does not address the central task of building a larger left.

In the 1930's in Britain and elsewhere there were hundreds of left-wing newspapers, and theatre companies. The situation at the moment has that potential. Capitalism is in a deep bind, that's why a lunatic is president in America, and a liar is Prime Minister here, etc.

We don't want a reformulated GLW, which attempts to simultaneously keep its existing readership and connect to a completely politically dissimilar audience, a hybrid which will compromise both audiences. The SW has a specific task, and in Britain where the anti war movement is massive this task is more obviously necessary. To maintain revolutionary organisation to be able to intervene in a classic united front way, revolutionaries working along side reformists in struggle. The Alliance is not a revolutionary organisation and would be unable to perform this organisational task.

To finish, as we become more election focused the need for a paper that directly communicates with an election audience becomes more acute. As the polarisation becomes more acute the left will need its own Daily. Existing organisations within the Alliance need their own papers to organise around, without them they will ultimately collapse. The Alliance needs to be a broad left and it needs to evolve its own organiser, its own paper which has mass appeal, and is a centre piece for the development of a much, much larger left.

Growing support for "A paper of the Alliance, for the Alliance"

By David Glanz (Socialist Alliance National Co-convenor and candidate for Wills)

Melbourne South-East branch has joined Wills branch in carrying the following motion:

"We live in an epoch of economic, social and environmental crisis, and imperialist war. Traditionally, many working people have looked to the Labor Party for their defence. Today, the ALP's growing inability to meet the aspirations of its supporters makes the building of a strong socialist alternative necessary and urgent.

The coming federal election, combined with our regular campaigning work, will be an important step towards demonstrating that the Socialist Alliance is such a credible alternative. Showing that the Left is able to put aside petty differences and unite, while accepting the diversity of opinion and debate that exists, is the essence of our broad multi-tendency socialist party.

The Socialist Alliance will need to use a variety of publications to get its message across, including leaflets, broadsheets and *Seeing Red*. We welcome the support of affiliates' publications, including *Green Left Weekly* and *Socialist Worker*.

However, we believe that none of the affiliates' publications is currently able to play the role of Socialist Alliance paper. Each comes with its own distinctive political profile and style. The Socialist Alliance needs a paper of the Alliance, for the Alliance.

Green Left Weekly has offered more space to the Socialist Alliance. But ownership and day-to-day control will remain with the DSP. The DSP has made it clear that it will not entertain a change of name as things stand.

If *GLW* were to provide the basis for a future Socialist Alliance paper, it would need to go through a process of collectively agreed change.

That is why the Socialist Alliance, as a first step, should elect an editorial board at the May conference which would:

1. Write, commission and edit SA material to be available for publication in the newspapers or magazines of *all* affiliates.

2. Focus on linking our activist work with our federal election campaign.

3. Meet at least fortnightly to do this.

We also believe that the SA National Executive should implement the 2003 conference resolution stating that the NE "produce a draft plan for [a regular] publication covering format, frequency, editorial board, name, funding and any other relevant issues", to assist this process."

A range of Socialist Alliance members have added their support to the motion since it was published in *Alliance Voices* (Vol. 4, No. 1). They include:

Name	Branch	Position
Maureen Murphy	Wills	National executive member
Carlene Wilson	Wills	National executive member
Ken Davis	Sydney East	National executive member
Alison Stewart	Brisbane South	Qld senate candidate
Josephine Cox	Melbourne SE	Candidate for Hotham
Anne Picot	Sydney Central	SA <i>GLW</i> editorial board member
Greg Noon	Brisbane South	Qld state executive member
Murray Claringbold	Melbourne SE	branch executive member
Phil Chilton	Perth	2001 senate candidate
Ray Jackson	Sydney Central	
Ashley Lavelle	Brisbane SW	
Jonathan Collerson	Brisbane South	
Tom Barnes	Wills	
Michael Waterman	Marrickville	
Chris Rose	Wills	
Susan Manton	Melbourne North-East	

Hidayet Ceylan	Wills
Coral Johnson	Geelong
Andrew Hateley	Wills
Liam Davies	Melbourne Central
Julie McDonald	Wills
Melanie Lazarow	Wills
John Tully	Melbourne West
Kevin Watkins	Perth
Sharyn Foley	Melbourne West
Russell Miles	Melbourne West
Michael Valle	Melbourne SE
Peter Van Velzen	Melbourne SE
Bruce Connal	Perth
Mehdi Shirkosh	Sydney Central
Kylie Witt	Sydney East
Heidi Spillane	Sydney East
John Cleary	Newcastle
Lisa Farrance	Melbourne West
Katharine Neil	Melbourne Central
Phil Sandford	Sydney Parramatta
Michael Schembri	Sydney East
Merlene White	Perth
Jane D'arcy Burke	Perth
Siobhan Allen	Perth
Carol Williams	Melbourne SE
Sandra Cockfield	Melbourne SE
Miranda Phelan	Melbourne SE

Those who have already supported the Wills resolution include (name, branch, position):

David Glanz, Wills, National co-convenor, member of the *Seeing Red* editorial board, candidate for Wills; Riki Lane, Wills, National executive member, national co-convenor 2001-2003; Alison Thorne, Wills, National executive member; Greg Adler, Marrickville, National executive member; Brian Webb, Sydney East, National executive member, national election working group co-convenor; Juliet Edeson, Brisbane SW, Qld co-convenor; Kieran Latty, Sydney Central, NSW co-convenor; Alan Woodcraft, Fremantle, WA co-convenor; Michael Reidie, Melbourne NE, Vic co-convenor 2003; Phil Andrews, Melbourne SE, Contributing editor, *Seeing Red*; Judy McVey, Wills Branch convenor; Bill Tully, Canberra, Branch executive member; Ben Halliday, Canberra Branch executive member; Sarah Thorne, Wills, Vic state executive member 2003; Peter Murray, Wills, Vic state executive member; Luke Deer, Marrickville, National anti-war working group co-convenor; Tom Orsag, Wills, Vic co-convenor; Paul Roberts, Melbourne SE Branch convenor, Vic state executive member; Bridget Ellery, Geelong, State election candidate for Corio; Adrian Skerritt, Brisbane SW, State election candidate for Inala; Tom Freeman, Wills Branch executive member; Brett Cardinal, Brisbane SW; Melissa White, Brisbane Central; Wade McDonald, Perth; Bob Carnegie, Brisbane Central; James Mulgrew, Brisbane Central; Mike Grewcock, Marrickville; Heather Eldridge, Brisbane South; Rachel Sambrano, Brisbane SW; Jarvis Ryan, Sydney Central; Stephen Martin, Brisbane SW; Fidan Kucuktepe, Melbourne West; Peter Hannaford, Wills; Tony Dewberry, Wills; Peter Carter, Wills; Tessa Theocharous, Wills; Patrick McLiesh, Melbourne NE; Hamish McPherson, Wills; James Supple, Wills; Marcus Banks, Wills; Craig Hall, Wills; Debbie Brennan, Wills.

To add your name or for more information, email dglanz@optusnet.com.au or ring David Glanz on 0418 316 310.

Socialist Alliance demands justice for Indigenous Australians

By Ray Jackson (Sydney Central branch) and Alison Thorne (Wills branch)

At the 2003 Socialist Alliance National Conference the Freedom Socialist Party proposed a policy on Indigenous Self Determination as a component of the document we developed to take the Socialist Alliance policy development process forward.

The last 12 month has seen the Socialist Alliance play an important role in the struggle for justice for Indigenous Australians. The National Executive supported the proposal from the Freedom Socialist Party that the Alliance actively back the stolen wages campaign. This resulted in an article about this struggle in a Socialist Alliance broadsheet and several branches distributing stolen wages postcards. Several other affiliates also took up the stolen wages campaign running prominent articles in their own press. The centre piece of Socialist Alliance's work in solidarity with grass roots efforts to win back money withheld over many decades by the Queensland State Government and other Australian Governments was the Queensland state elections where our candidates made this campaign a prominent issue and forged important alliances.

Socialist Alliance also sprang into action mobilising in solidarity with the Aboriginal community of Redfern after the tragic death of the young man from

Kamilaroi resulting from an accident during a police chase. Successful Socialist Alliance public meetings and media work in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane helped spread our analysis that the subsequent riot was a police provocation to distract attention from the chase and death in custody. These meetings focused on the historic significance of The Block in Redfern and explored solutions capable of delivering justice for the Redfern community - socialist solutions.

It is in this context that we are putting forward this policy draft for discussion, debate and vote at the National Conference. While we were disappointed that the draft we submitted last year was not discussed, we are

optimistic that delegates to the 2004 conference will see the importance of Socialist Alliance having a more comprehensive Indigenous policy for candidates and other comrades to use during the Federal election campaign and beyond.

The draft we are putting forward below is a slightly revised and expanded version of what we submitted to the 2003 national Conference.

Our proposal is that the following be adopted as Socialist Alliance policy.

Indigenous Self-Determination

The territory of Australia was invaded by the British in 1788. Since then, European authorities have staged a genocidal campaign against the Indigenous

Nations of this continent. Socialist Alliance notes that none of the land stolen from its original owners was ever ceded and considers that there can be no justice in Australia without a just settlement for Indigenous people. Socialist Alliance unconditionally recognises the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations and acknowledges the racist repression that continues to destroy their communities and denies them basic services.

- Recognise Indigenous Nations - negotiate a treaty.
- Compensate the Stolen Generations.
- Repeal the Native Title Act and abolish all racist land laws allowing full control for traditional purposes.
- Stop racist sentencing. Immediate implementation of the 339 Royal Commission recommendations from the 1991 Report into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- Access to services for all Indigenous communities, equivalent to all other Australian communities.
- End genocide by neglect - full health care for Indigenous peoples.
- Abolish work for the dole - employ all workers in Community Development Employment Programs on award wages. Pay back the decades of stolen wages in full.
- Defend and extend Indigenous programming on the ABC, SBS and community broadcasters; an end to the racist and destructive portrayal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities in some sections of the media.
- Indigenous Control of all Indigenous affairs.

Election campaign discussions with the Socialist Party

By Jody Betzien (Melbourne Central branch convenor)

The correspondence between the Socialist Party (SP) and the Melbourne Central branch of the Socialist Alliance (SA) below has been published in Alliance Voices for the information of all members. All of the letters issued by the SA branch were discussed and adopted at a branch meeting.

While the discussions pertain to negotiations about running a candidate in the federal seat of Melbourne, they have broader ramifications for the Alliance as a whole and for the building of socialist unity. This brief introduction will try to put the discussions in context for those unfamiliar with the SP and convey the content of informal discussions.

Prior to pre-selecting a candidate, Melbourne Central branch resolved to communicate to the SP that we were discussing running in the seat. The SP is a relatively small party that has remained outside the SA since its formation. They have previously run in the seat. Our intention was to gauge whether they also intended to contest the seat, as they have in the past, and to explore whether the possibility of a joint campaign existed.

We sent a letter to the SP along these lines on January 31st, 2004. Having received no reply by February 16th we called Steven Jolly of the SP to organise a meeting. Bryan Sketchley and myself attended the meeting.

At the meeting we expressed a desire to discuss a possible joint campaign and our concern about the possibility of two socialist candidates running in the same seat. Steven stated that the SP had not discussed our letter or running in the election. He went on to state that the SP believed that the rise of Latham created unfavorable conditions for socialists in the election and played down the likelihood of the SP standing. The meeting resolved only to continue dialogue.

Our next branch meeting, on February 18th, resolved to pre-select a candidate as scheduled but to delay a public announcement and left open the possibility of withdrawing our candidate. This decision was made to allow time for further dialogue with the SP and to explore what possibilities for a joint campaign may exist. We wrote to the SP informing them of this decision.

The SP responded quickly with a letter sent out on a number of public email lists. Their letter contains a number of serious misrepresentations. First, they stated that we had pre-selected but failed to mention that this had not been publicly announced and was being delayed pending further discussion. Second, they claimed to have letter-boxed 20,000 "pre-election" leaflets. These leaflets made absolutely no mention of the election. They were simply general SP recruitment leaflets. They were pre-election only in a temporal sense.

While their letter contains an aggressive case against SA standing and for the SP, it contains no proposal or support for a joint campaign. Despite making statements about socialist unity in elections, the extent of their proposal for unity appears to be a "non-aggression pact" whereby electoral seats are allocated to one socialist group or another.

Importantly, the letter contains no clear statement of the SP's intention to run a candidate nor an indication of who their candidate may be. Rather than have our campaign shelved waiting for the SP make their intention clear we resolved to launch our campaign. Should the SP clarify their intention we are open to discussion and proposals. To date we have had no response, formal or informal, to our last letter to the SP.

Correspondence

First letter to Socialist Party from Socialist Alliance

31 January 2004

To the Socialist Party

I am writing on behalf of the Melbourne Central branch of the Socialist Alliance in relation to the coming federal elections. Melbourne Central branch is in the process of discussing running a candidate in the seat of Melbourne.

Since our formation in the SA has made significant steps in developing a united voice for socialism in Australia. In addition to joining hundreds of people not previously involved in a socialist organisation, we have deepened the joint work of socialists in the unions, against the war and for refugee rights. The result of SA initiative has been an amplification of the socialist message among working class Australians.

In the coming federal election we will be fielding candidates in electorates across the country from Perth to Darwin to Tasmania. In Victoria we have already pre-selected candidates in the seats of Wills, Batman, Corio, Gellibrand and Hotham.

We are aware that the Socialist Party has run in the seat of Melbourne in past elections. In the interests of comradely collaboration and discussion Melbourne Central branch would like to invite the Socialist Party to discuss the issue of the socialist campaign in the seat of Melbourne.

Comradely regards

Jody Betzien (for Melbourne Central SA)

Second letter to Socialist Party from Socialist Alliance

19th February 2004

To the Socialist Party,

The Melbourne Central branch of the Socialist Alliance has discussed the question of the coming Federal Elections. This discussion occurred in the light of the initial informal discussion held between Steven Jolly, Jody Betzien and Bryan Sketchley.

The branch has affirmed that we believe it is of importance that a socialist candidate stands in the seat of Melbourne. The inner city area covered by the seat has long been a center for socialist and progressive activism. The seat has also registered some of the highest votes for left and progressive candidates. Given this we regard it of importance that a socialist candidate articulates socialist ideas to those looking to the left of the Greens and the ALP.

We recognize that the rise of the Greens limits the possibility of high votes for socialist candidates. However while we strive to achieve the highest vote possible in elections, our focus is one of using the process to gain a hearing for socialist ideas and recruit to the socialist movement. It is on this basis that we judge our success in an election campaign.

Our branch meeting held on the 18th February was scheduled to discuss the question of running in the seat and for pre-selection. Our constitution requires one month's notice before pre-selection. The branch decided to hold the scheduled pre-selection but resolved to delay a public announcement of our intention to contest the seat to enable the SP to indicate intention to run also. We have pre-selected Zoe Kenny. Zoe is the current Melbourne Resistance organiser and was a key leader of the Books Not Bombs demonstrations against war.

Should the SP intend to run we would welcome discussion around conducting a joint campaign. This could range from agreement to run a single candidate under a common banner, to joint meetings and rallies. The Socialist Alliance would consider withdrawal of our candidate based on these discussions.

We are aware of the need to begin building the election campaign as soon as possible to ensure an effective campaign. With this in mind we envisage considering your response at the next branch meeting schedule for the 3rd of March.

Comradely regards

Jody Betzien

For the Melbourne Central Branch

Letter to Socialist Alliance from Socialist Party

26/2/2004

Dear Socialist Alliance comrades,

We have now received two emails from Jody Betzien in the name of SA, Melbourne Federal Electorate branch. The first one (31st January) announced the fact that SA was to stand in the seat of Melbourne and the second email (19th February) named the SA candidate for the seat.

As comrades may remember, in the last Federal election SA stood aside to let the Socialist Party stand in this seat. Since 1999 we have gained at times respectable results for the socialists. For example, the 12% received by Stephen Jolly in the State election in 1999 in the seat of Richmond, which makes up half of this Federal seat. Two years ago the

SP's Denise Dudley won over 30% in a council by-election won by the Greens - this was the Green's first Council victory in this part of Melbourne and a few months later they in effect won control of Yarra City Council in the full council election. As the Greens readily admit, they only won control due to the preferences of the three Socialist Party candidates we stood in that election. We have also received good results in other elections, including the last Melbourne City Council election (where SA stood and came behind us).

These results have been rooted in a decade of work in this part of Melbourne eg 365-day Richmond School occupation, Alexander Parade campaign, Community Campaign for Heroin Reform, Medicare campaign etc.

In the past few months the SP-initiated Unite campaign has been undertaking intense work in the electorate on the issue of fighting the exploitation of casual workers.

We have also just finished letter-boxing 20,000 pre-election SP leaflets in the area.

Therefore we believed we had a good case to stand again and looked forward to discussing the issue with SA.

However if SA were to stand a candidate of high profile with the ability to mobilise thousands of workers, we would stand aside. In the US our comrades participated in the Ralph Nader Presidential campaign in 2000, and he wasn't even a socialist.

However this is not case in this electorate. Furthermore we believe the preemptive announcement by this branch of SA is not the best way or most comradely way to proceed.

This election sees a resurgent ALP Opposition that will eat into the Green vote (temporarily) and of course into the socialist vote. Short of a Tampa-style diversion we believe it is likely Labor will win the election, possibly in a landslide. After this occurs, of course, the gap between the expectations of workers, unions, and ALP members and the reactionary programme of Latham will provide tremendous political opportunities for socialists - and the Greens as well.

We have steeled all our members and supporters to expect a low vote, possibly our lowest ever vote, in this Federal election. This will be a temporary occurrence for the reasons explained.

We believe that under a right-wing Latham Government there will be renewed support for our slogan of unions breaking with Labor and working with community groups and the Left to create a new workers' party.

Despite our differences with SA (see our web site for background) we are in favour of maximum socialist unity in elections as we believe do the vast majority of SA members.

Therefore for SA, in this election especially, to decide to stand in a new seat where another socialist group (SP) has stood before is therefore a big step to make unless there are very good reasons (eg SA producing a candidate capable of mobilising thousands of workers; collapse of the other socialist group in the area etc). None of these things have occurred.

Two socialist candidates in Melbourne will not be a positive start to the Left's federal election campaign. Most thinking workers and youth who follow these events will see SA's move as aggressive and unnecessary and see the process they have followed (an announcement prior to a discussion and not the other way around) as flawed.

Two candidates, especially if SA ends up with a tiny vote, will not help SA build its forces or influence or prestige in the area - let alone maximise the socialist vote.

We appeal with SA nationally to discuss this issue and meet with us at any time and place of your convenience.

In Solidarity

Socialist Party

Third letter to Socialist Party from Socialist Alliance

To the Socialist Party

Dear Comrades,

Thank you for your letter of February 27, replying to Socialist Alliance's recent correspondence to you (January 31 and February 19) on the issue of fielding a socialist candidate for the Seat of Melbourne in the forthcoming federal elections.

We recognise and understand many of the points that you make, regarding Labor under Latham, the Greens, and the need for maximum socialist unity in facing the working class in elections. We also recognise the various achievements of your organisation and others both electorally and otherwise in the local area.

We would like to reiterate that we believe it is important that a socialist campaign be run in the seat of Melbourne. Despite the possibility of a low vote that you refer to in your correspondence, it is important for the future of socialist politics in the seat for a socialist candidate to be fielded. It is for this reason that we have pre-selected a candidate, Zoe Kenny, for the Seat of Melbourne.

However, as you are aware, the Socialist Alliance's Melbourne Central branch decided not to announce our candidate publicly pending further discussions with the Socialist Party. Indeed your reply to our second letter to you, which you posted on a number of email lists, will be the first that many people have heard of the matter.

We would welcome collaboration with the Socialist Party in fielding a single socialist candidate in the Seat of Melbourne. From the founding of the Socialist Alliance in 2001, there has been an open invitation to the Socialist Party to affiliate to SA, which you have so far declined. In the 2002 Victorian state elections, we offered our endorsement for your candidate for Fitzroy (Stephen Jolly), which would have identified him as a socialist on the ballot paper. This you also declined.

We note that the 20,000 'pre-election' leaflets you refer to in your letter to us makes no mention of a Socialist Party candidate in the Seat of Melbourne, or anywhere else. Neither does your letter to us declare a candidate or even your intention to run.

We wish to restate that we do not exclude the possibility of withdrawing the pre-selected Socialist Alliance candidate in the interests of socialist unity. Should the Socialist Party decide to run a candidate in the Seat of Melbourne we would welcome discussions aimed at ensuring that there is a single socialist candidate whom we could both support, despite our other differences.

We welcome the possibility for comradely dialogue with the Socialist Party, and hope that this is a beginning of greater joint work in all matters. Should the Socialist Party decide not to field a candidate, your support for the Socialist Alliance candidate would be very welcome.

As matters stand, we are aware of only one declared socialist candidate for the Seat of Melbourne - the Socialist Alliance's Zoe Kenny. Should this change, we would welcome the chance to discuss the matter further.

Once again, our thanks for your comradely collaboration. We hope this will lead to greater socialist unity in Australia.

In Solidarity

Melbourne Central Socialist Alliance

Report on overseas trip, February 6-2, 2004

By John Percy (Sydney Central branch)

The main motivation for the DSP deciding that I should make this trip was so that I could attend and observe two main events, the US International Socialist Organisation Convention in Chicago Feb 6-, and the Fourth International's International Council meeting in Amsterdam Feb 20-25. It was useful attending both, but the trip was even more productive, with useful discussions and meetings with socialist activists in Toronto, New York, London, and Glasgow. It proved very useful to discuss on behalf of the Socialist Alliance as well.

Chicago, US ISO Convention

The DSP decided to attend the US ISO Convention after receiving quite a few emails inviting us, and noticing many examples last year of the ISO's willingness to reach out and collaborate nationally and internationally.

Ahmed Shawki's International Work report on the last day confirmed and formalised this positive approach. It was a very good report, and I asked him for the text to reprint in *Links* magazine. He agreed, it will be available in several weeks, and probably carried in their magazine *International Socialist Review* as well. (The latest *ISR* already carries the trade union report presented by Lee Sustar.) Perhaps they will also print the related document presented in their pre-conference discussion, "How are revolutionary parties built?".

Some brief key points: Shawki began by noting the recent objective political changes, the collapse of Stalinism, the degeneration of social-democracy. It's leaving open space for the left, but there's a lot of wreckage left behind. There are new organisations developing, for example ATTAC. With the decline of the old left, there's the beginnings of a new left, the Global Justice Movement, the Social Forums.

Our international work is important, he said. We have a responsibility. Firstly, a responsibility of solidarity with the broad social movements. (eg. in the case of the Indonesian arrests, we acted quickly.) Secondly, we have to stand on our own two feet and think for ourselves, in collaboration with other revolutionary organisations. In country after country, we're working in collaboration with other parties to build a socialist alternative.

He said the left is recomposing internationally. That's our own experience; that's the way we build a revolutionary party. Our contribution has to be to struggle for a revolutionary orientation in the USA, and our task is to collaborate, and rebuild the revolutionary left internationally. In Mumbai at the meeting of left parties, it was significant that Maoist organisations sat in the same room. We've matured as an organisation. We're not interested in splitting the IST to make IST Mk2.

Sharon Smith gave the Organisational Perspectives report. In her summary she pointed out that with the crisis of liberalism, our task is to build an alternative to it, to build a broad left, begin to build a united left. Branch building and mass movement work are interrelated - there's a dialectical relationship between our Marxist study groups and our interventions.

Sharon Smith also gave the report on "Iraq Occupation, Antiwar Work, and Palestine". This report and other contributions stressed the importance of including the question of Palestine in the antiwar movement.

Katherine Dwyer gave the report on "An Assessment of the Global Justice Movement". They had a positive intervention at Mumbai, and plan to be involved in the Social Forums getting organised in a number of US cities.

Greetings were presented to the convention from:

- Azorca, from the PSTU Brazil
- John Percy, DSP Australia
- Leanne Jenvee, Socialist Alternative Australia
- Roberto Barreto, from a Puerto Rican group
- Laurent, from the French LCR, and the Fourth International
- Joanna Misnik, Solidarity

They're on a campaign to increase the circulation of their weekly *Socialist Worker* to five papers per member. They reported a very healthy circulation of *International Socialist Review* - printing 11,000, 6,000 sold in bookstores, 1500 in branches, and 1200 subscriptions. Their publishing house Haymarket Books also has a very ambitious and interesting list of 20-25 titles planned for 2004.

The convention focused on a healthy involvement in both building the movements and building their branches. The convention was confirmation that they've grown further and have an open approach nationally and internationally.

They have their yearly educational conference coming up on June 17-20 in Chicago, and I'm sure Australian comrades from the Socialist Alliance would be most welcome to attend.

Toronto, Socialist Project

I was hosted by Ernie Tate and Jess Mackenzie, long-time Trotskyist activists who are involved in the recently formed Socialist Project regroupment effort. Ernie and Jess had visited Sydney last year.

They organised a Socialist Project public meeting while I was there, where I spoke on the Australian left and building the Socialist Alliance. (It was held at the Transanzac club; established by rugby playing expatriates many decades ago!) Other speakers were Raghu Krishnan from the New Socialist Group on the European left and the LCR, Jess on the Scottish Socialist Party, Michelle Robidoux from the ISO on Respect in England, and Greg Albo, York Uni academic, chaired. 0 people attended - most currents of the Toronto left seem to have turned up.

The main areas briefly covered in my talk were:

- DSP History
- Socialist Alliance
- Perspective for a united multi-tendency socialist party
- International collaboration
- Leninism for today

Leo Panitch, the editor of Socialist Register, and key person in the Socialist Project, was at the forum, and I was able to get to know him and others in his circle such as Sam Gindin and Greg Albo. Leo agreed to do a forum in Sydney for the Socialist Alliance (in April).

New York, Workers World

In New York I stayed with and renewed relations with former US SWP members Gus Horowitz, Suzanne Haig, and Fred Feldman, and filled them in on our political activities in Australia and developments on the Asian left in the last decade

One of my goals in passing through New York was to make contact with the Workers World Party, and see how they were developing politically. I had made initial approaches for newspaper exchanges last year, and then informed them in January that I would be travelling via New York. I met with Deirdre Griswold (daughter of their group's founder, Sam Marcy), Sara Flounders and John Catinolotto, at the Workers World office, and later went round to the International Action Centre office a few blocks away.

I had been a bit hopeful that since Workers World had been doing good work in the antiwar movement for quite a few years, that this might have impacted on them, made them less narrow and sectarian. Also, I expected that they would have been recruiting fairly successfully. Unfortunately, neither was the case. They were all very friendly and hospitable but they are still quite dogmatic, and a very difficult group to join. They haven't had much of an influx of new members, and don't have a very lively or democratic internal life. Their international contact is actually quite modest - all the old and official CPs maintain contact with the CPUSA.

The IAC is used for all the front work, including ANSWER. WW has a prominent presence. A number of front organisations or affiliates of the IAC have desks, or cubicles, around the edge of the main room. A video project group has the mezzanine.

London, Socialist Resistance, ISG and Socialist Workers Party

I stayed with DSP comrades who are currently working in London, and have set up Australians Against the War, and work in Socialist Resistance.

I arranged separate meetings with Alex Callinicos from the SWP; Paul Wilcox, a full timer for the ISG and Socialist Resistance; Phil Hearse, Socialist Resistance.

Socialist Resistance organised a public meeting when they knew I would be London, and also arranged for Francois Vercammen, a European organiser of the Fourth International, to come over from Belgium for it. Karen O'Toole from Socialist Resistance also spoke. Only 25 attended, but it was a useful and interesting discussion. The points I covered were similar to the Toronto meeting.

Glasgow, SSP

In Glasgow I stayed with a DSP comrade who has been working with the Scottish Socialist Party for several years. I had meetings with the SSP national secretary Allen Green, the SSP trade union director Richie Venton, and a short, fortuitous meeting with Tommy Sheridan, who came in to inspect the new office they bought and moved in to two weeks previously. I was able to give Tommy a personal invitation to come to Australia to speak at the Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference 2005 (March 25-2) and he was very interested.

Amsterdam, FI International Council meeting

There were two big political issues we knew would have to be discussed at the Fourth International's IC meeting - Brazil and the PT government, and the PRC's role in the European left. There were good discussions, but no resolutions. Both issues pose major ongoing problems for comrades in Brazil and Italy (and Europe) and we should follow the continuing discussions. (Many of the documents and articles will appear in International Viewpoint.)

I was able to intervene in a number of the discussions - on the international situation, on the World Social Forum and the meeting of left parties in Mumbai, and also on Europe, giving information about developments with the Socialist Alliance, and comparing our experiences with the experience of other unity efforts in Europe.

The IC as a whole and most individuals present signed a statement of solidarity with the indigenous community in Redfern that I'd prepared, and emailed back for the demonstration and meeting.

A general impression of the meeting was that it seemed less exclusive than previous meetings, and I felt much more inclined to intervene. Possibly it reflected the ongoing impact of efforts to build united parties and alliances by many comrades in the Fourth International, and the presence at the meeting of a number of observers from parties coming from other traditions, or involved in unitary efforts.

Results

As a result of the trip many of the groups, parties and alliances that the Socialist Alliance has started to develop contact and collaboration with were given reports of our progress, and an outline of our tasks in the months ahead. Solidarity and future communication and collaboration would have taken a step forward. We can build on such contact to organise more collaboration between Socialist Alliance and comrades from a range of socialist traditions.

One of my tasks on the trip was to promote the distribution of Links magazine, and solicit support and contributions for future issues. Quite a number of articles were promised from individuals or groups who haven't previously contributed.

I also noted the increasing readership of *Green Left Weekly* around the world via its web site. Most comrades I spoke to read *GLW* on the web, and many groups said they used it in preparing their party's publications in their own country.

I was also able to issue invitations to a large number of individuals and groups to attend and speak at the APSC 2005. Hopefully we'll get follow up confirming many of these as speakers, and be able to arrange more tours and public meetings by the Socialist Alliance.

Dissenting Voices

By Austin Whitten (Sydney Central branch and Socialist Alliance-Green Left Weekly Editorial Board member)

A cursory survey of past Alliance Voices/Discussion Bulletins seems to confirm the current impression that contributions to Voices are more and more taking on the nature of criticisms - of other branches' decisions, of National Conveners/National Executive decisions, of other affiliates and even of the wording in NC/NE press releases!

For a vivid example, one can look back to one year ago, to the first April 2003 issue, still called a Discussion Bulletin, before the Voices handle was added, where one finds mostly discussions, not carpings. The name change seems to have triggered a content change as well. Part of this may be due to us appointing Voices as a vehicle for material that is deemed not to be suitable for *Green Left Weekly*, but mostly it seems to derive from a slide into internal backbiting. I used to look forward to the Discussion Bulletins. Now, I dread each new edition, wondering what blather will have to be responded to, sapping time and energy from our many common causes. Voices seems to be morphing into a chat room, from a journal for discussion papers.

I find it particularly frustrating as one of the tasks of the SA-*GLW* editorial board was to canvas all of the affiliates, inviting contributions to *GLW*, some of whom have not found the time to contribute, only to discover long critical articles from them in Voices.

I think we need to at least ring-fence this process by placing material that is critical of decisions made and actions carried out by other SA comrades, branches or affiliates in a separate section. I am suggesting it be called "Dissenting Voices". It will accomplish two things:

- (1) to identify the material for what it is, in order not to confuse it with on-going discussions - to allow it to be viewed for what it is. If a decision has been made, then material that is critical of the decision is a dissent. If a decision is still to come, then material relating to it is a discussion;
- (2) to highlight who is contributing this material as it tends to come from a limited number of sources.

If criticisms are identified as such and placed in a separate section, it gives the other side more of an option to either reply to it or to choose to let it be recognised for what it is and not feel that it has to be answered.

Ideally, this small restructuring of Voices will result in a decrease in material that criticises other comrades. Tariq Ali, writing in the first issue of *Seeing Red*, has identified the pitfalls that we need to be watchful of:

"The Socialist Alliance in Britain was essentially formed looking inwards, with the larger Trotskyist group (the Socialist Workers Party) constantly distracted by the yappings of tinier sects at their heels. At a number of meetings I was pretty depressed by the calibre of Socialist Alliance candidates who were essentially party hacks speaking in a very alienating language. It's not their fault. That's how they have been trained to "defend the line", but in terms of impact, it's been minimal."

SA comrades are mostly in agreement on what we believe in, what we would like to accomplish and how we want to go about accomplishing it, with a few dissents, falling mostly into the latter category. Surely our internal publication

should ideally reflect the same ratio of agreement and dissent. I believe that having a separate section for the latter will help to promote that ratio, saving us time and effort to get on with the business at hand.

2004 National Conference details

Public meeting and conference launch

“Uniting to fight war & neo-liberalism: the socialist alternative”

Speakers:

Mike Treen, Foreign Affairs spokesperson, New Zealand Alliance
Chris Cain, WA State Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia
Sam Watson, Aboriginal activist & Queensland Senate candidate
Susan Price, Trade union activist & candidate for Sydney
David Glanz, SA national co-convenor & candidate for Wills

Friday, May 7, 7.30pm

Trades Hall, 54 Victoria St, Carlton

Third National Conference

Saturday-Sunday, May 8-9, 9am-6pm

Flemington Community Centre, 15 Mount Alexander Rd, Flemington

\$10/\$5 per day (non-delegates)

Child-care and food available

Sessions (interim agenda) -

Saturday:

- * Australian political situation, building the movements and the federal election campaign
- * The state of the trade unions and SA's union work
- * Publishing plans: Seeing Red magazine, a newspaper for SA
- * International solidarity work

Sunday:

- * National leadership report and Constitution changes
- * Building the Socialist Alliance branches
- * Socialist policies and platform

Rally to defend Craig Johnston

Monday, May 10, 9.15am

On the day former Victorian Secretary of the AMWU and Workers First leader Craig Johnston faces court, a protest outside the County Court, William St, Melbourne

