

# DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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## DOCUMENTS

# Letter to DSP National Executive from ISO National Executive

*By David Glanz, ISO National Executive*

April 27, 2003

To: DSP national executive

From: ISO national executive

Dear comrades,

We are writing in response to your letter to the Socialist Alliance national executive dated March 19. We apologise for not having replied earlier, but the war has obviously been a focus for all of us in recent weeks.

Although your letter formally supercedes Dick Nichols' letter of February 18, we would like to take this opportunity to belatedly reply to your request for an indication of what conditions would be needed for the DSP to become an internal tendency of the Alliance.

We are opposed to affiliates becoming internal tendencies of the Alliance. The position of the International Socialist Organisation is that to discuss this or that condition is to misunderstand the tasks facing us. As we argue more fully in the perspectives document submitted by David Glanz to the Alliance conference, the Alliance is not a product of a timeless strategy of regroupment, but a response to a particular conjuncture—namely the crisis in social democracy.

This means we are hostile to using the Alliance as a site of revolutionary regroupment. At the same time, and contrary to what may appear common sense, we do not think that a shift to a “multi-tendency socialist party” would broaden the appeal and effectiveness of the Alliance, but rather would narrow it.

The thousands of erstwhile Labor supporters now looking to left-wing alternatives at the ballot box are less likely to be drawn around or into the Alliance if it is recast as yet another small left activist party, even if it is larger than both of our organisations combined.

The Alliance must remain open and welcoming to reformist workers and students. It must have its own independent existence and not be a rebadged version of the existing far left. Neither should it be reduced to an opportunity for affiliates to sell publications.

The position of the ISO is that, at the same time as participating in the Alliance, we continue to stand for the building of an independent revolutionary party. Such a party, while inevitably smaller than any “multi-tendency socialist party” would have the advantage of theoretical clarity and the unity in action which flows from sharing a common political framework.

We are sure you understand this need. While the DSP has spent much of the past two decades seeking

realignments and regroupment on the left, you yourselves have had to draw the line—a line not imposed by some sectarian agenda but by developments in the world and the struggle.

As Jim Percy said to your 13th conference in January 1990 regarding fusion talks with the Socialist Party of Australia (since renamed the Communist Party of Australia): “[W]hatever other problems we encountered in the unity process, the positions taken by the SPA on events this year (sic), and particularly the events of June 4 and following in Beijing, are unacceptable to our party.”

In other words, you rightly could not fuse with a party which defended the massacre in Tienanmen Square. Some questions cannot be fudged or finessed.

However, we in no way see the building of a public revolutionary organisation as counterposed to the Socialist Alliance project. On the contrary, we see the Alliance as a place where revolutionaries and non-revolutionaries can come together in joint activity around questions of concern to the broad left—not least to those breaking from loyalty to Labor.

To return to our original point, we think an Alliance which gives special attention to contesting elections at all levels can become the home for many of those disgusted with Labor's shift to the right but who seek to uphold socialist and working-class values.

This does not mean, as some of your members continue to allege, that the ISO believes the Alliance should be passive between elections. On the contrary, we initiated the proposal for a campaign against the Howard war budget precisely because we understand the need for the Alliance to take up questions like defence of Medicare, education and welfare. We support Alliance networking and solidarity work in the unions, such as the public meetings and seminars in defence of Craig Johnson and in opposition to the Cole royal commission. We support the Alliance hosting interesting and accessible public forums.

We shall be moving resolutions on all these questions at the Alliance conference.

We know there will be a debate at the conference on the kind of Alliance we need and we welcome this. This debate should continue for as long as members find it useful or necessary. We shall be arguing for a perspective for building the Alliance in line with this letter and our document to the Alliance members. ■

## The ISO's work in the Socialist Alliance

*[The following motion was passed by a meeting of the ISO National Committee on April 26, 2003.]*

The crisis in social democracy continues to deepen, underlined by an ALP leadership battle virtually devoid of politics. Hundreds of thousands of former Labor

supporters are prepared to vote to the left in defence of the values they still hold but Crean and Beazley have abandoned.

The Greens have been the major beneficiary of this process to date. But the Greens' weakness on questions

relating to class means there remains even now an important minority open to a socialist, pro-working class alternative.

This is what makes the Socialist Alliance project of continuing relevance.

The International Socialist Organisation shall continue to fight for its conception of the Alliance as a united front between revolutionaries and reformists. We are opposed to the Alliance being a site of revolutionary regroupment, as the Democratic Socialist Party sees it. We also think that a shift to a multi-tendency socialist party would narrow the appeal of the Alliance, cutting it off from many of those moving away from Labor.

A central element of our vision for the Alliance project is providing a broad left alternative at elections in defence of union rights, public services, free education, Medicare, etc, and against imperialist war, scapegoating of refugees, etc.

This position is spelled out in more depth in the perspectives document written under David Glanz's name for the Alliance conference.

The immediate priority that flows from this is to continue to build the Alliance campaign against Howard's war budget—a clear example of where the Alliance can strengthen the left by taking up issues affecting working class people such as health, education and welfare.

The national committee welcomes the fact that there are now regular national phone caucuses of ISO members active in the Alliance. The NC agrees to set up a sub-committee from this meeting to work on drafting motions and amendments for the Alliance conference.

The NC also understands that a substantial number of non-affiliated members of the Alliance will be agitating at its conference for a decision in principle to begin shifting the Alliance towards a multi-tendency socialist party.

Our delegates to the conference will put a motion expressing our position. In the event that we lose the debate, this will take us into a new situation, one which will need further review by the next NC meeting. ■

## List of signatories for Open Letter ("Developing the common socialist voice") at April 28, 2003

*[Names in italics are those added to the list since the publication of Discussion Bulletin Volume 3, Number 4.]*

**Adelaide Branch:** David Lockwood, David Scrimgeour

**Bankstown Branch:** Jepke Goudsmit, Graham Jones, Raul Bassi, Ben Gock, Bernie Rosen, *Desar Bassi, Leigh Howlett*

**Brisbane District:** Dave Riley, David Lafferty, Fay Waddington, Mark Cronin, *Bernie Neville, Sam Watson, Haeng-Cho Halls, Robert Austin, Peter Riedlinger, Anita Muhlhaus*

**Canberra Branch:** Alastair Greig, Lesley Hayes, Paul Kringas, Ian Shepherd, Humphrey McQueen, Bill Tully, Mick de Lange, Narendra Mohan Kommalpati, Rob Hurle, Clare Martin, Ben Smith, Jyoti Ida-Dury, Sami Omar, Lionel Bopage, Sue McKay, Anne Barrington, John van der Velden

**Darwin Branch:** Ray Hayes

**Eastern Sydney Branch:** Kerry Klinner, Noel Hazzard, *Maureen Frances*

**Hobart Branch:** *Rob White*

**Illawarra Branch:** Len Pickering, Maureen Pickering, Joanne King, Sophie Williams, Dane Warren, *Christina Sacco, Joanne King, Mark Hilder*

**Launceston Branch:** Alan Hasdell, Barry Hicks, Vicki Walker, Sally Wiltshire

**Lismore Branch:** Andrew Watson, Lyn Stewart; Perry Libeau, *Jim Knight, Alan Peattie, Barbara Elliott, Doug Burt, Neville Cain, Eric Watson*

**Marrickville Branch:** Mitch Bond, John Reynolds

**Melbourne North East Branch:** Lalitha Chelliah, *Louise Walker, Robert Cecala*

**Melbourne Western Suburbs Branch:** Craig Johnston

**Parramatta Branch:** Katrina Heckendorf, Alastair Dickinson, Allison Maxwell

**Perth Branch:** Kiraz Janicke, Chris Cain, Edith Leonard, Archie Leonard, Roger Raven, *Marcus Whisson, Les Wynne, Annemarie Whisson, Rene Smeets, Stuart Sherlock, Daniel Watson, Margie Svejkska, Peter Wilkie*

**Seat of Melbourne Branch:** Alejandro Rodriguez

**Sydney Central Branch:** Melinda Smith, Jamal Darwand, Rex McLeod, Adrian Wright, Al Westwood, Austin Witton, Patricia Saddler, Darcy Byrne

**Sydney Northside Branch:** Juanita Feldbauer, Michael Morphett, Graham Moore

**Toowoomba (at large):** Alan Bradley

**Wills:** Maureen Murphy, Simon Millar, *Lucy Beaton*

*If any non-aligned comrade wishes to add their name to this letter, or has any questions about it, please get in touch with Michael Morphett at (02) 99812349 or John van der Velden at (02) 6247 8813 or [jvelden@pcug.org.au](mailto:jvelden@pcug.org.au). ■*

## DISCUSSION

# The Socialist Alliance—building on our strengths

Draft perspectives document for the second national Socialist Alliance conference,  
Melbourne, May 10-11, 2003

*By David Glanz, National Co-convenor*

### Executive summary

- The continuing crisis in social democracy means hundreds of thousands of Labor supporters are prepared to vote to the left in defence of the values they support but Crean and Beazley have abandoned.
- The Greens have been the major beneficiary of this process to date. But the Greens' weakness on questions relating to class means there remains even now an important minority open to a socialist, pro-working class alternative.
- This is what makes the Socialist Alliance project of continuing importance.
- The Alliance is most likely to succeed in involving erstwhile Labor supporters if it operates as a united front—a place where the existing far left and reformists can work together around common aims and objectives.
- A central element of this project is providing a broad socialist alternative at elections in defence of union rights, public services, free education, Medicare, etc, and against imperialist war, scapegoating of refugees, etc.
- We have seen that unaffiliated members and supporters of the Alliance have involved themselves most at election times. Moves to turn the Alliance into a site of revolutionary regroupment, or into another left activist party (i.e., a multi-tendency socialist party), risk cutting us from our central audience. The Alliance must have its own independent existence, and not simply replicate the existing far left or become a vehicle for the sale of affiliates' publications.
- A focus on elections does not mean passivity in between.
- An immediate priority for the Alliance is the campaign against Howard's war budget—a clear example of where the Alliance can strengthen the anti-war movement, the working class and the left by taking up issues affecting working class people such as health, education and welfare.
- We also need to build on our demonstrated strengths in union networking and solidarity, and in providing forums for public discussion and debate on the big questions facing working class and student activists.

### Pluses and minuses

Two years on, the Socialist Alliance has achievements of which we can be proud.

1. Quite simply, we exist. Against the cynics and gainsayers' expectations we have proven that the broad left can collaborate on a major project over a sustained period.
2. We have won the active support of hundreds and the passive support of thousands—including those who joined to assist our electoral registration in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, and those who have voted for our candidates. We have now retained at least five deposits

in municipal elections, with the highest vote so far of 6.5 per cent. Our vote in the Victorian state election was double what we won in the 2001 federal election. We have outvoted the Australian Democrats on occasion and, in Darwin at least, the Greens.

3. We have provided a space for the broad left to put forward alternatives to the prevailing orthodoxy. So, for instance, in Melbourne the Socialist Alliance has hosted two large and representative meetings—one with Palestinian ambassador Ali Kazak, the other in defence of the Workers First group in the AMWU and the CFMEU. The Humphrey McQueen speaking tour attracted interest on some campuses.

4. We have begun the process of creating or strengthening left networks in some unions. The union seminars held last year attracted a broad cross-section of militants, in particular in Sydney and Perth. In Melbourne, the Socialist Alliance solidarity committee has begun organising monthly discussion forums around unionism and politics and has issued its first bulletin. Crucially, we have provided public support and practical solidarity for the Workers First group inside the AMWU when so many others in the movement went quiet, or worse.

5. We have taken principled stands on the key issues of the day—imperialist war, refugees, the federal budget, etc—which have aided the movements, raised the profile of the socialist case and facilitated cooperation across the left.

On the other side of the ledger are some important weaknesses. The majority of those who joined to help branches win electoral registration have not become or continued as financial members. Some branches have lapsed into long periods of passivity or have become cosy talkshops for established activists. Some of our votes have been poor, not least our upper house vote in NSW of just 5368.

Nonetheless, the first two years have given us a record on which we can build. This document is an attempt to point a way ahead. But first we have to answer the central question—what kind of Socialist Alliance are we trying to build, and why?

### Politics in Australia today

#### Labor

The crisis in the ALP is the central factor which made possible the launch of the Socialist Alliance in 2001. The process was speeded by the emergence of anti-capitalism after Seattle in 1999, and by the increase in political polarisation around questions such as refugees and the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

But the crucial element of the equation has been the progressive weakening of the ALP's base. For several years now, an unprecedented 20 per cent of voters have been prepared to vote for minor parties or independents.

In the Cunningham by-election, for example, not only did the Greens win, but the union independent achieved some 10 per cent of the vote.

The crisis in the ALP continues to deepen. The leadership stoush sums it up: there is Simon Crean, who was at various points both pro and anti-war; Mark Latham, who thinks Labor stands for wealth accumulation; Kim Beazley, who is a fervent militarist; or Kevin Rudd, a right-wing Christian activist.

The reason the ALP continues to thrash in disarray is that none of the contenders has a genuine alternative to the Liberals' agenda of neo-liberalism and support for the US alliance—certainly not one that meets the needs of Labor's traditional working class base.

Labor has turned on its supporters many times before—the Scullin government cut wages across the board by 10 per cent in the wake of the 1929 Wall Street crash; the Chifley government sent troops into the mines as strike-breakers in 1949; the Cain state government smashed the BLF in Victoria; and the Hawke government smashed the pilots' union.

But in the past, Labor governments have also responded to pressure from below by delivering reforms at times when the economy was growing, reforms such as holiday pay, the 40-hour week, Medicare or free tertiary education.

What makes the ALP today more tragic than its predecessors is that it dares not offer any more than a warmed-up over version of the Liberals' economic rationalism, even though annual economic growth has been three per cent or more for nearly a decade.

The pressure of the world market—of capitalist globalisation—means Labor cannot campaign over the issues so dear to the hearts of its traditional supporters. Instead the ALP offers the politics of gesture—verbal defence of Medicare *and* the \$2.5 billion subsidy to private health, verbal defence of public education *and* millions to elite schools, verbal opposition to AWAs *and* defence of the bulk of the Workplace Relations Act.

This approach has disillusioned many Labor supporters. Kim Beazley's surrender to racism over the *Tampa* incident and Simon Crean's contemptible attitude to the war have been the final straws for even longstanding party members. We don't know how many members Labor has lost, but many of us can list local ALP members who have resigned.

It would be foolish to write off Labor's potential to repackage itself under a new leader, or to respond opportunistically to an upsurge in political or economic struggle—look at the way Gerhard Schroeder in Germany won an election by switching to an anti-war position. It would also be foolish to underestimate the long-term loyalty many Labor supporters show despite the bitter experiences, not least because the ALP runs all states and territories and is the only viable alternative federal government.

Frustration over Labor's abandonment of its traditional agenda does not automatically lead to socialist or activist conclusions.

*But the clear fact is that hundreds of thousands of erstwhile Labor supporters are embittered to the point that they are now prepared to vote for a left/radical*

*alternative. This is the key potential audience for the Socialist Alliance and shows every sign of growing.*

That is why it is mistaken to pose the Socialist Alliance project as a regroupment of existing revolutionary groups, or as a launch pad for a "multi-tendency socialist party" which would contain such groups and independent, long-term socialist activists.

What those who are breaking from loyalty with Labor are looking for is a vehicle for those values which they still cherish—socialist and working class values of equality, free access to public health and education, union rights, resistance to oppression, and so on.

They are potentially heading our way because Labor no longer articulates these values. This is a historic opportunity for the left, offering a very large potential audience of people to work alongside, debate with and move into action.

*The experience of One Nation shows that if the left does not offer an alternative, the right can fill the vacuum. Pauline Hanson's recent electoral failures show that the right is on the back foot and that we should take the opportunity that this offers.*

But breaking with Labor is not the same as becoming a left activist. In the first instance, most of these people are looking for a party which takes "official politics", ie elections, seriously.

Many of them have turned in the first instance to the Greens. But an important minority are suspicious of the Greens (and for good reason, as I explain below) and open to a socialist alternative to Labor.

A small number are ready to make the direct move to socialist organisation and activism—the kind of people the Socialist Alliance affiliates have traditionally recruited and continue to do so. But the overwhelming majority have a much more mixed level of consciousness. Some are anti-war but anti-refugee, others are for Medicare but feel no choice but to take out private health insurance for their families, others are militant unionists but are weak on the politics of gender.

This helps explain two things about the Socialist Alliance experience to date.

6. Most people who have joined Socialist Alliance are either not interested in regular (i.e., monthly, let alone fortnightly) meetings and activity. With some, it is because they want to do no more than add their name and pay their dues—as they might have done with the ALP or Greens. With others, it is because they are already activists in another sphere (unions, campuses or community groups) and while glad to associate with the Socialist Alliance, are not intending to re-order their priorities in the near future.

7. There are a number of Socialist Alliance activities that *do* interest such members—and we have decisive empirical evidence to that effect. As indicated in the introduction, those activities are elections, union solidarity and networking, and well-prepared, broad public meetings.

To take just elections in a little detail—every branch has participated in an election at least once, and in some cases up to four times in the past two years; on each and every occasion the reports have been of unprecedented participation and interest by newer and generally unaffiliated members.

In the Victorian state election, some 70 non-affiliated members participated on the day, and more in the run-up. In the NSW state elections, at least similar numbers of non-affiliated members and supporters participated last month.

*The conclusion from this is that the Socialist Alliance needs to be, and is most successful, when it operates as a party not only for the existing far left, but for those who are breaking with loyalty to Labor while still holding reformist ideas.*

That tells us something about:

- *Its program*—it needs to focus on questions around which the left is united. So the Socialist Alliance is a socialist, not a Marxist, party.
- *Its approach to Labor*—it needs to find ways of working alongside Labor branches and supporters all the better to win new members over. The same general approach applies, of course, to working with the Greens. It may prove easier to work alongside the Greens, but our experience is that disaffected Labor supporters are more likely to join us.
- *Its priorities*—elections are a central (but not, of course, exclusive) part of its activity. In campaigning between elections, the Alliance needs to take up questions that relate back to that primary, working class audience—hence the importance of our current campaign against the federal budget.
- *Its routine*—it needs to be accessible to people new to organised politics and who have union, work and family commitments. Well-prepared monthly meetings with speakers or videos or debate tend to attract new faces.

## The Greens

The most frequent argument raised against the approach outlined above is that the Greens have “taken our space”. Certainly, the Greens are on the rise; they have reached a critical mass as an electoral force. The first thing to say is that this is good news for socialists—it adds to the space available for radical alternatives, such as our own.

But if we look at the Green phenomenon in a little more detail two things emerge, both connected to class. One is that the Greens pull a section of their vote from people who are highly unlikely to ever consider voting Socialist Alliance. The other is that the Greens are weaker on questions that touch on working class and union life.

In both the Victorian and NSW state elections the Greens did best in a “bullseye” around the metropolitan centre. So in NSW, the Greens won 28.9 per cent in Port Jackson and 27.7 per cent in Marrickville, but they also picked up 16.5 per cent in the Liberal seat of Vaucluse and 15 per cent in North Shore.

Traditional working class areas returned respectable but poorer results. In Bankstown the Green vote was 6.3 per cent, in Blacktown 4.0, in Cabramatta 2.6, Granville 5.0, Maroubra 7.8, Mount Druitt 3.6, Smithfield 4.7, Wyong 4.4.

The slump in the Democrat vote contributed to the Greens’ rise—in the Liberal seats, the increase in the Green vote was almost entirely attributable to this collapse.

The Greens do best in suburbs with a higher proportion of students and white collar workers. They do worst in “traditional” working class suburbs.

*This means the Greens are winning a proportion of their support among small-L liberals, especially in conservative areas. These supporters are not choosing between Greens and socialists, but between Greens and Democrats/ALP/Liberal.*

We cannot simply look at the total Green vote and assume that these would have gone to the Socialist Alliance if we were better resourced/had campaigned differently/or had been established earlier.

Why are the Greens having problems breaking out into the working class suburbs? The main problem facing them is their orientation to class-related questions.

The *Australian Candidate Study 2001*, which examined the views of candidates in that year’s federal election, gives some interesting pointers.

The Greens are, on what might be called political and social justice issues, generally to the left of the other parties.

Candidates were asked to place themselves on a political spectrum where zero was furthest left and 10 furthest right. No Green candidate put themselves further right than 5, and 87 per cent put themselves between zero and 3 (compared to 64 per cent of ALP candidates).

Asked whether big business has too much power, 76.5 per cent of Greens strongly agreed (ALP 29.5 per cent) and 20.4 per cent agreed (ALP 46.6 per cent).

On whether wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary working people, 57.1 per cent of Greens strongly agreed and 31.6 per cent agreed (ALP 29.5 and 52.3).

However, there were a number of questions on which the Greens were weaker than the ALP—questions that related most directly to class.

So on union activity the figures were: (ALP) very active 59.2 per cent, somewhat active 31.6, not active 9.2; (Greens) very active 22.2, somewhat active 33.3, not active 44.4. By comparison, 50 per cent of One Nation candidates described themselves as active in their union.

Asked if high tax made people less willing to work hard, the figures were: (ALP) strongly agree 3.4 per cent, agree 14.8; (Greens) strongly agree 4.1, agree 22.4.

On the question of unions having too much power, the figures were: strongly agree, ALP zero, Greens 1 per cent; agree, ALP 3.4 per cent, Greens 5.1 per cent; neutral, ALP 3.4 per cent, Greens 20.4 per cent; disagree, ALP 93.2 per cent, Greens 73 per cent.

On anti-union legislation, 7.1 per cent of Greens agreed with the need for stricter laws and 65 per cent disagreed. Some 87.5 per cent of ALP candidates disagreed.

Candidates were asked to rank issues in order of relative importance. The environment was easily the most important issue for Green candidates, followed by refugees.

Labor candidates, however, rated a series of issues central to working class families as much more important than did the Greens—education, the GST (this was the post-GST election), health and Medicare, and unemployment. Only on worker entitlements were the Greens more concerned than Labor.

*These figures go a long way towards explaining why a layer of working class and union activists feel “instinctively” uncomfortable with the Greens.*

They also indicate that the space continues to exist for the Socialist Alliance to make headway among disaffected Labor supporters, despite the rise of the Greens—hence the importance of the Alliance initiative over the coming war Budget.

*The Greens will cramp Socialist Alliance’s style for some time to come, but they do not wipe out our relevance nor occupy the totality of our potential political space.*

## Taking steps forward in 2003-04

The International Socialist Organisation, which I represent on the Socialist Alliance national executive, has been understood by some comrades to be arguing that the Alliance should function solely as an electoral organisation, essentially lapsing into dormancy between polls. This is not true, as those who have read closely our written contributions over the past two years will know.

On the ground, we have played a role in organising meetings, events and campaigns—on the Afghan and Iraqi wars, for union rights, against the federal budget.

A socialist party that sees elections as a key focus needs to be active between, to build its membership, its profile, its branches and its prestige.

We need more of our members feeling that our meetings are relevant and welcoming. That means every branch needs to elect officers with responsibilities for specific tasks so that general meetings make decisions on priorities without having to be bogged down in technicalities.

We need well-advertised and well-prepared video showings, guest speakers and/or debates that are of interest to those beyond the orbit of the existing affiliates.

We need to ensure that we have placards, information stalls and banners at all rallies and demonstrations—local and city centre.

We need to use the local media more, through letters to the editor, and media releases.

We need local stalls that are not paper selling exercises for affiliates, but genuine attempts to campaign

around the questions of the day and to provide information on the Alliance and to recruit.

We need to aim for occasional district-wide meetings with speakers of a calibre that can pull (in the biggest centres) hundreds, rather than dozens of people from the non-aligned union and left circles.

The Alliance may be facing a federal election within months. That will be a major priority and focus for our work if it happens. But we also need to take a series of initiatives regardless.

The ISO will be moving a number of motions at conference. They flow from the logic of the argument expressed above, and will include:

- A general perspective for the Alliance, based on the executive summary above.
- A perspective for our approach to Labor members, branches and supporters, including city-wide forums on the crisis in the ALP with platforms including ALP members critical of the Crean/Beazley agenda.
- A continuing and intensifying focus on the Howard war budget, which will be a factor in national political life for a considerable time. We need to build on the meetings, protests and pickets already initiated by Alliance branches, working with unions, student unions, welfare groups, Greens and Labor. The incoming national executive should commission a national poster in defence of Medicare.
- A broad-based lobby by unionists of the August 2003 ACTU congress in Melbourne in solidarity with the CFMEU. This initiative should seek to involve union activists and officials in planning and in running the event. Preparation should include major, broad-based city-wide public meetings in defence of militant unionism.
- The case for placing a major priority on electoral work, with an indication of how Alliance branches should best organise to build their numbers and profile.

In all these areas of work, we shall be emphasising the importance of the Alliance working alongside other organisations in a united front fashion, building networks of solidarity and raising the profile of the Alliance as vehicle for broadening and strengthening the broad socialist left. ■

## Going Local

*By Dave Riley (Brisbane district)*

One thing that attracted me to the potential of the Socialist Alliance, was its application as a vehicle to colonize the suburbs. In my experience the New Left forces that developed out of the seventies radicalisation in Australia, have tended to remain cocooned in inner urban left ghettos.

This happened for very good reasons, but the sense and substance of this trend has been bypassed by new urban phenomena. Cities have become less centralized as the dormitory suburban sprawl extends further and further from the Central Business District (CBD). Retail trade is now being extended geographically through a network of privatised public spaces and not through

ribbon commercial development along public thoroughfares.

Fewer and fewer people come into the city centres as more and more live their lives of work and study in suburban locales.

While the inner urban lifestyle of the socialist left has a certain *avant-garde* appeal and ergonomic logic, it hardly addresses this core shift in demographics that has occurred these last thirty years. I don’t think it can. Many of the *accoutrements* that pass muster as being socialist are simply too exotic for the suburbs.

In Brisbane all these factors seem to kick in stronger than elsewhere. The south-east Queensland sprawl, that now extends from Fraser Island to Byron Bay, is a

product of very recent urban development. In the eighties and early nineties people were settling here from the southern states at the rate of 250 per week. Current figures suggest that that wave has receded to an average of 100.

Such growth has been played out using the most modern of capitalist investment strategies. The built environment is being altered and fiddled with at an extraordinary and concentrated pace.

How does any political formation relate to this? Where do you do your politics? How do you organise? Where do you start? I think these are key questions for the Socialist Alliance.

## Examples from the past

I was a member of the Victorian branch of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in the late sixties. Following on from the post war housing boom the CPA organised itself through a series of suburban branches. Branch life ticked over through a mix of campaigns locally or more broadly relevant. I was surprised when I joined the party how active the “reds” were in the same locality I had been born and raised 40 minutes drive from the CBD. Such that when I changed jobs—to a suburb nearby—the highlight of my first week was when one of my comrades came up and announced his affiliation.

Later on I was active in the early wave of the consolidation of the Victorian ALP Socialist Left (SL). This too was an interesting experience. The SL in my federal electorate set up parallel structures for caucusing and socializing, which patterned out—like the CPA—by using members homes. ALP meetings were always pretty boring but the early years of the SL fostered a local network of key trade union and solidarity activists right there in your own neighborhood.

## Recent experience

For the past six years I have been doing a lot of work in my local community on the north side of Brisbane. This wasn't political work at all—in the sense of activism. It has primarily been under the heading of “community cultural development” and earning an occasional income. I've networked extensively and have become well known in my patch. The experience has been very interesting because I have been able to explore many of the local relationships and study the politics of urban Brisbane. Often this has been in partnership with local ALP politicians; and sometimes I have been working with the corporate edge of the Brisbane City Council.

Here all three tiers of government are run by the ALP. We live in a social democratic paradise as the latest corporate strategy kicks in after the community consultation process runs out. But the ALP hold over this region is very weak. It is rule by default while the local pollies play up to any number of community groups who they think may matter on polling day. Ultimately, the ALP's reserve strength rests of a calculated use of sinecure and patronage. Outside each election—council, state or federal—no other political current exists.

This seemingly empty political space is indicative of a lot of things. My interest is to find a way for the Socialist Alliance to occupy its share of it.

## How do we do work in the suburbs?

So how does the Socialist Alliance do work in the suburbs? The answer is simple: we don't know—because we are still learning.

During the lead up to and invasion of Iraq four of us fostered a couple of local peace groups into existence. That was a great networking tool as we reached out and actively linked up with two dozen others on the north side. We also tried a few things that had never been done locally before in the way of pickets and such. We tried to adapt the normal tools of the left to the local built environment, despite the fact that most of the public space is privatised. I traded in my local community credits for some good anti-war press and we managed to take up the lead as the main spokesperson for the antiwar movement. Basically we were transmitting core movement politics and finding ways to disseminate them locally.

These gains will not be consolidated until we can chart a local branch. While we were doing our darndest against the war, the Greens established two new branches in the local area without investing much into anti war activities. Basically they traded on a patented colour. However, a local branch anywhere is the only way to build upon Socialist Alliance “hotspots” and seriously address the issue of ALP hegemony while also relating actively to the Green presence.

There are some local issues that we can take up but our key task will inevitably be one of taking the politics of the Alliance locally. That's the only way we are going to mark our territory. Folk get caught up about “local issues” as though they are the *raison d'être* of urban activism. That's not always true. Urban campaigns can be very NIMBYfied—some almost exclusively, such that they become reactionary.

## Getting going

To establish ourselves in this area or any local area is going to take a few years –and it has to be done relentlessly outside any election campaign we may run. But while we wait we still have the broader work of the Alliance to do—all the day to day stuff that can create a rich local branch life.

One day we'll get a manual out—*Socialist Alliance Branch Building DIY*—but in the meantime we need to pool our experiences and consider the very real differences each locale presents. Contrary to all the community based rhetoric we have been treated to for the past thirty years, there has been a conscious campaign to take politics out of suburban life and tolerate it only in the central precincts. Folk bought up on the socialist literature of the thirties won't be able to comprehend the odd mix of sterility and complex community relations that now exist in these new urban environments. We need to address issues of geography because that has a lot to do with access. But just as keenly we have to transcend the milieu for fear of falling victim to it. This is not like the past, nor is it like the romanticized vision the Greens have been proselytizing. “Community, sense thereof” is not in itself a political tool.

The Socialist Alliance needs to develop its own urban program by first asking itself what do we want to achieve? All the main capital cities have at least one

suburb where lifestyle politics and activism have been played out for at least thirty years. We have to ask ourselves is that what want? Are we in the business of creating two, three...many Glebes, West Ends or Carltons or are we trying to lay down a politics that is different?

In Brisbane we have only just begun the task of answering that question in an environment that is difficult to relate to. Nonetheless, we work within a structure that is more municipal than most. The Brisbane City Council (BCC) and neighboring councils in South-East Queensland are huge concerns. The BCC as an entity is on par with the state of Tasmania and council

politics is big time politics in Queensland. Every region goes to the local government polls on the same day every three years.

We do know from past campaigns of the left nationally that it is easier to make an electoral impression at the local level. But it is arrogant politics to think we can do that without consolidating a core regional presence that rests on a keen activism year in year out. So any programmatic or platform projections we develop must rest on our actual experiences, otherwise it becomes shallow phrase-mongering.

But hey! In Brisbane and elsewhere around the country we are under way. ■

## Sydney Central: success in elections and beyond

*By Paul Benedek (Central Sydney branch)*

Our electoral result in the seat of Port Jackson was around 1.21 per cent of the vote, or around 550 consciously socialist votes.

This was a modest but solid result, considering: (a) the Democratic Socialists (one of the Alliance affiliates) running last time received 0.77 per cent (310 votes) (b) The Greens, with a possibility of winning, would automatically have received many of the progressive votes (as they did in Cunningham). The Greens received around 29 per cent of the vote, resulting in around 43 per cent two-party preferred, an excellent result although unfortunately not knocking off the ALP's Sandra Nori.

While the vote is an important indicator and test, as socialists we recognise how the parliamentary system is stacked against those who rock the system, and towards those with money and corporate connections. So for us, the vote is not the *key* thing.

Some important facts for us, and interesting anecdotes are:

- We joined several members to Socialist Alliance through the campaign, including from our letterboxing, our meetings, and as a result of our active anti-war campaigning. People we have joined are active—helping on stalls or polling booths or at rallies. At a recent stall, a woman asked for joiner forms for herself and her husband, having seen the Alliance in action at a recent candidate forum. We joined around 15 people during the campaign, from high school students, to militant trade unionists, to a guy who wrote on his membership: “I’m 84 years old, and was jailed in 1939 when refusing to take the oath of allegiance”!
- We mobilised 54 people on 21 booths (only missing five of the smallest booths), including several people for whom this was their first Socialist Alliance activity. Only the ALP, Liberals and Greens had more people out on the day (we outmobilised Unity, the Democrats and the Fishing Party).
- We were the driving force in local rallies of 700 and 350 in Leichhardt and Balmain, speaking from the platform at both rallies. On polling day, Socialist Alliance led the way in building Sunday’s anti-war rally.
- At least two Greens poll workers said they voted for Socialist Alliance first (before the Greens). Other voters said things like: “I’m voting for you (Socialist Alliance)

because you came out in support of the refugees before the Greens”.

- A local reverend, Don Wright, who spoke at the Leichhardt anti-war rally, rang us to announce that he’d voted for Socialist Alliance, and admired our campaigning!
- Dr Karl Kruzelnitski (the 2JJJ science guru) said he voted for us, and had a long chat to Socialist Alliance!

We sold around 100-plus anti-war badges, 40-plus anti-war stickers, a couple of Socialist Alliance anti-war t-shirts, handed out 4-5000 leaflets for the rally the next day and got heaps of names for the “Make Howard face the people” petition

The other parties varied greatly. Of note the ALP had many poll workers that were antagonistic towards us, though a few others helped hand out the rally leaflets. The Greens also varied—some were quite left and saw a sort of Greens/Socialist Alliance progressive alliance, whilst others totally focussed on electoralism and warned people against writing “No war” on the ballot lest they ruin their vote!!!! (A virtual dictionary definition of electoralism—the vote is sacred!)

But what could we have done better? The media, including local press, ignored us almost completely, even though we led significant rallies and were prominent on the streets - we need angles to push into the media. The campaign van, done up in Socialist Alliance and anti-war posters, which set the streets of Port Jackson alight with political sloganeering on election day (!) should ride the streets much earlier, making our presence known.

Overall, the election campaign was very successful for Sydney Central Socialist Alliance. We have put Socialist Alliance on the map in the Port Jackson area, in Glebe, Leichhardt, Balmain and Rozelle. We have Socialist Alliance leading the local anti-war campaign. We have joined people to the alliance, and involved them in our work. We have held lively, informative meetings that have doubled as political education and organising people into action.

We have held excellent film night, headed by Alliance members Austin and Patricia, which have profiled our politics in an accessible way to many people. We have had 120-plus people at two separate screenings of Michael Moore’s *Roger and Me* and *The Big One*.

These evening raised around \$1000 each time for our campaign. Our other major fundraiser has been Socialist Alliance anti-war t-shirts, which have both raised funds and ensured profile for the Alliance, as you see our shirts at the most unlikely of places (i.e., the local fruit market!).

So the Alliance is alive and kicking in this area, but now we need to build on our successes to take it further:

- Try to speak to the 600 who voted for us—find them through campaigns, stalls, contacting etc, and involve them;
- Push the local anti-war group forward;
- Continue well-publicised, topical forums, with speakers from ourselves but also guest speakers; linked in with the political film nights;

- Prepare for an important national conference of Socialist Alliance which will help set perspectives for where the alliance is going;

This success has come in a relatively short space of time, with Sydney Central Socialist Alliance branch only reconstituted in the latter part of last year (having previously been folded into Marrickville Socialist Alliance). The basic lesson is that with positive, political drive and the involvement of the many inspiring people who are around the alliance, we can become an integral, leading part of activist politics, and a beacon to all those who think we can do better than this rotten capitalist system. ■

## RESOLUTIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTIONS FOR THE SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE

### **Preamble to draft statement and resolution from Non-Aligned Caucus to Socialist Alliance National Conference**

*This draft statement has been prepared for the consideration of all non-aligned signatories to the Open Letter to Socialist Alliance Members and affiliates. (Discussion Bulletin Volume 3 Number 3, April, 2003). It is also for the information of the Alliance membership as a whole as part of the lead up to the second national conference of the Alliance in Melbourne, May 9-11.*

*There will be a non-aligned conference caucus of signatories on Friday, May 9, after the public meeting to launch the conference (about 9.00pm), and at the same venue. All signatories to the Open Letter who are attending the conference are requested to attend. This caucus will consider and vote on this draft statement and any amendments that have been lodged in writing (or email) with caucus conveners by 5:00pm, Tuesday, May 6. No new amendments will be received after that time. The caucus meeting will only consider (and amend) the written amendments received by this deadline.*

*Conference caucus will also vote on the slate of caucus candidates for national executive (see statement*

*below). The caucus will operate by simple majority vote. Members (including delegates) attending are not bound by caucus decisions. Delegates who are signatories to the Open Letter and who participate in caucus are representatives of their branches, not caucus, and are free to vote as they see fit.*

*Signatories are urged to be prudent and practical with their proposed amendments and keep their focus on the core issues. The caucus will continue to meet throughout the conference to consider matters of importance that arise.*

*If any comrade wishes to add their name to the Open Letter, or has proposed amendments to the Draft Conference Statement and Resolution below (signatories only), or has any questions about it, please get in touch with caucus conveners Michael Morphet at 02 9981 2349 or micmor@tpg.com.au, or John van der Velden at 02 6247 8813 or jvelden@pcug.org.au. ■*

### **For a common socialist voice: draft statement and resolution from Non-aligned Caucus to Socialist Alliance National Conference, Melbourne, May 9-11, 2003**

Comrades,

This draft conference statement and resolution has been prepared and endorsed by us on behalf of signatories to the Open Letter to Socialist Alliance from non-aligned members. This letter has been circulating through the Alliance distribution network since 29 March 2003, and can be found in the April *Discussion Bulletin*, Volume 3 Number 3. At this point in time [28 April 2003], 100 non-aligned members have endorsed the Open Letter.

The non-aligned initiative arose out of grave concerns by members for the future of the Alliance, generated in particular by the debate between affiliates over whether we should move from being a predominately electoral alliance to a single, multi-tendency socialist party. We wanted, and need to have, our voices heard in this debate on par with those of the affiliates. Non-aligned are over 50 per cent of the membership of the Alliance, and with all due respect to the foundation groups, we are now also central to its future.

The Open Letter, as an expression of member aspirations and concerns, makes seven core points:

1. We want the Alliance to become a single, multi-tendency socialist party.

It is the reason we joined the Alliance project, and embodies the most urgent desire across wide sections of the socialist and progressive working class milieu for effective unity in the struggle against the capitalist system.

2. We want to progress this move right now, starting with this conference.

The time is ripe politically, with the expanding imperialist war in the Middle East, declining working class support for the ALP and its pro-capitalist agenda, and the break to the left reflected in a surge in Green support. The time is also ripe organisationally, in fact over-ripe. Members have been feeling a frustration and an inertia starting to settle into the Alliance. Uncertainty over what we are as an organisation, and lack of full commitment from affiliates, is preventing us from maximising political opportunities. There have been achievements, but so much more could of been achieved had this been already settled. We need to resolve this now.

3. A commitment from affiliates to building the Socialist Alliance through integration needs to be demonstrated, in word and in deed.

We recognise the pace of integration may be uneven across affiliates. Nevertheless, the commitment must be tangible from each individual affiliate, in particular with respect to accepting accelerated integration from other affiliates. We welcome any pre-conference statements from affiliates outlining their intention to pursue this goal of integration as a matter of priority, and the convergence with the aspirations of the non-aligned membership it represents.

4. Our multi-tendency socialist party should be as broad as possible.

All who consider themselves socialist, of whatever stripe, should be welcome in our ranks. But it has to be a distinctly Socialist party. We are not simply an anti-capitalist opposition party. We are for the replacement of capitalism with socialism. This gives our Alliance an intrinsic transformational dynamic. It clearly separates us from other parties, particularly the Greens. It also provides us with the solid foundation to build united fronts and coalitions within the working class and anti-capitalist movement, and win new layers to our side.

5. We accept and welcome a strong revolutionary socialist stream as an integral part of our vision of a broad Socialist party.

All the foundation affiliates are based in this tradition, and a substantial number of non-aligned members as well. The very presence and integration of the revolutionary affiliates as tendencies ensures the continuation and vitality of this tradition in all its diversity. We need and want their theoretical and political experience, perspectives and resources to grow the Alliance and help plot the road ahead. We want all the affiliates to integrate, not just some. The unique perspective each brings will, of course, not always find its way into the majority platform, strategy and tactics of the party. We all need to be patient and constructive in our respective contributions, and in our listening to what others are saying, and accept the majority outcome. The constructive engagement of differences will strengthen and deepen the intellectual and political capacity of the party and enable it to move forward with an effective unity.

6. We need strong democratic structures to accommodate diversity.

Diversity is not just where we are now but also where we want to be in the future. We want socialists and socialist organisations currently outside the Alliance to join us down the track. The door is always open. Some existing differences will melt away as we move forward and new ones will emerge. Lack of democracy is the oxygen for dummy spits and dummy splits. All tendencies and individual members need to be able to have an active voice within the party, its decision-making bodies and committees, as well as being able to project their voice outside the party to the wider working class and progressive social movements. But with democracy and active voice comes obligation and responsibility. We cannot and must not allow ourselves to become a talk shop. Nor can we allow the will of the majority to be paralyzed or undermined by action on minority positions. Socialist democracy is also active unity on the majority course. We want to have a consensus-building activist culture but we should not be run by consensus. Majority vote on all decision-making bodies must prevail. Above all, socialists are about translating ideas into action, and action into outcomes, that bring us closer to our common goal.

7. We need a common socialist voice: in our platform, in a national paper, and in our campaigns.

Disunity is more than a weakness. It is a gift to the ruling class and a dagger into the heart of the working class. We should be exposing and exploiting the disunities and weaknesses of the ruling class and its petty-bourgeois support strata, not seeking to promote

and validate our own. Our movement has had a long history and it has been a bitter struggle against a strong opponent. There have been many gains, fluctuating fortunes, some serious losses, and more mistakes than we care to admit. Collectively we have learned a lot, often the hard way, and we are carrying some baggage from that long struggle that we need to confront and shed. The seemingly intractable disunity of our movement as a whole reflects that. We have turned in on ourselves and in some respects lost sight of what our mission really is. Sectarian division and empty phrase-mongering is not going to get it done. Ninety-five per cent of the working class is barely aware of our existence and, of the 5 per cent that are, 95 per cent of them don't understand the differences between us. We have serious work to do: Regroup our forces, turn ourselves outward as a unifying bloc for our diverse class, and make socialism vs. capitalism the central agenda.

During the conference, the non-aligned caucus will be putting forward a slate of 11 non-aligned signatories to the Open Letter as candidates for National Executive: minimally one from each State and Territory (ideally, an additional one each from NSW and Victoria). We will propose that this represents approximately half the positions on the executive, with the balance consisting of affiliate representation.

This proposal is based on several considerations, with a view to overcoming the current logjam in the affiliate debate within the Alliance. A non-aligned caucus of 11 executive positions will equate to a balance of voting power on the executive. As signatories to the Open Letter, and commitment to its core seven points in this caucus resolution, the non-aligned executive caucus can provide a structural safeguard to all affiliate concerns reflected in this debate. Moreover, it provides a mediating oversight to the unity process.

Affiliates who are able to accelerate their integration can be assured that their dissolution into the Alliance and commitment of resources will not be compromised, exploited or frustrated by lack of will, or political ill will, by other affiliates. We will move forward on the seven points and make determined progress to meet the objectives set out.

Affiliates who need more time in the process of full integration and/or who have concerns over domination and lack of voice can be assured their constitutional tendency rights will be protected in practice. The non-aligned caucus has a shared interest and concern in having those same rights protected for the non-aligned membership as a whole. We are committed to all seven points, not just those applying to one party, integration and a common voice.

National representation in the non-aligned executive caucus insures that any regional and branch issues that may emerge between affiliates through the unity process can be quickly addressed. Problems need to be effectively mediated and resolved before they become intractable and undermine Alliance work.

By extension, we also propose to have 2 members of the non-aligned executive caucus serve as National Conveners, in a body expanded to accommodate the transition process.

The non-aligned caucus proposes that these seven points be adopted by conference at the outset. This will set the parameters for the remaining conference process to work out the structural framework that gives effect to the seven points. We have two days to get it sorted. Then let's get to work!

In Unity,

Humphrey McQueen, Canberra branch: Delegate

Sue McKay, Canberra branch: Delegate

Chris Cain, Perth/Fremantle branch: Delegate and Executive Candidate

David Scrimgeour, Adelaide branch: Executive Candidate

Maureen Murphy, Wills branch: Executive Candidate

Simon Millar, Wills branch: Executive Candidate

Dave Riley, Brisbane Branch: Executive Candidate

Michael Morphett, Sydney Northside branch: Delegate and Executive Candidate

Ray Hayes, Northern Territory branch: Executive candidate

John van der Velden, Canberra branch: Delegate and Executive Candidate

**Moved:** *That conference endorses these 7 points:*

1. *We want the Alliance to become a single, multi-tendency socialist party.*

2. *We want to progress this move right now, starting with this conference.*

3. *A commitment from affiliates to building the Socialist Alliance through integration needs to be demonstrated, in word and in deed.*

4. *Our multi-tendency socialist party should be as broad as possible.*

5. *We accept and welcome a strong revolutionary socialist stream as an integral part of our vision of a broad Socialist party.*

6. *We need strong democratic structures to accommodate diversity.*

7. *We need a common socialist voice: in our platform, in a national paper, and in our campaigns.*

**Moved:** *Conference asks that affiliates outline their proposals and requirements for integration into a multi-tendency socialist party within the framework of the seven points. ■*

## Constitutional amendments moved by National Executive

*The following draft amendments to the Constitution of the Socialist Alliance were adopted at the April 24 hook-up of the National Executive.*

A. 5.1. Delete the sentence "**Membership fees...per year**".

B. 6.1. Replace "**by an annual National Conference or by Special Conference**" with "**by a National Conference which shall normally be held annually but at least every two years, or by Special Conference**".

C. 6.4. Replace "**For 2001-2 the National Officeholders shall be three National Conveners**" with "**The National Officeholders shall be five National Conveners, at least two of whom shall not belong to an affiliate organisation.**"

D. 6.5. Replace all of 6.5 with the following:

*"The National Executive shall initially be composed of 21 members and be elected according to the following formula:*

- *Two representatives from each of the larger affiliates;*
- *One representative from each of the smaller affiliates;*
- *Eleven unaffiliated Alliance members who shall have a majority on the National Executive (at least 11*

*members) and shall include at least one from each state and territory;*

- *If a non-affiliated member cannot be found to represent a particular state or territory a casual vacancy shall exist and shall be filled through election at a state- or territory-wide meeting or the relevant state/territory executive;*

- *Between conferences, if necessary, proxies to the National Executive may be (i) appointed by the affiliated group, in the case of a representative of an affiliated group, or (ii) in the case of a representative of a state or territory be elected by a state- or territory-wide meeting or the relevant state/territory executive. If in case (ii) no unaffiliated member can be found to act as proxy a member of an affiliated may be elected, who shall have voice but not vote at meetings of the National Executive.*

- *Any new affiliates joining the Socialist Alliance after the Second National Conference shall be accorded representation on the National Executive, at the invitation of the National Executive."*

E. 6.6. Delete dot point three "**Nominations of slates shall be open from the beginning of the conference and close at the end of lunchtime, August 5, 2001.**"

F. Add new clause 7.3. and renumber all subsequent clauses in Section 7.

*"7.3 The National Treasurer shall be appointed by the incoming National Executive after each National Conference."*

## Conference authorisation for breach of constitution

*The April 24 hook-up of the National Executive agreed to move the following draft resolution at the beginning to the Second National Conference.*

*That the Second National Conference be asked to authorise the breach of constitution involved in not holding an annual conference in 2002.*

## **ORGANISATION OF SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

*The following draft resolutions covering the organisation of the Second National Conference were adopted by the April 24 National Executive hook-up*

### **Draft standing orders for presentation to conference**

1. *Presiding committee:* That there be a presiding committee of six, to be composed of David Glanz, Carlene Wilson, Michael Morphett, Riki Lane, Alison Thorne and Dick Nichols;
2. *Voting.* Voting on reports, resolutions and amendment to be by show of delegate cards. Voting on resolutions and amendments to take place as soon as debate on the resolutions and amendments in question has ended;
3. *Majority required.* Decisions to be by simple majority;
4. *Procedure for selecting speakers.* Delegates to have voice and vote. Non-delegate members to have voice. The speaking order to be formed of delegates and non-delegates, but session chairs shall ensure that all delegates who wish to speak get the opportunity to do so. The chair to take speakers in groups of five and aim to ensure balanced representation by gender, delegation and affiliates. Any delegate or non-delegate who has not spoken in the debate to have precedence over any delegate or non-delegate who has already spoken;
5. *Conduct of debate.* After two speakers have spoken in favour of a resolution or amendment the next speaker to be a speaker against. If there is no such speaker, debate to lapse and the vote taken. Movers not to have right of reply;
6. *Speaking limit.* The speaking limit to be four minutes and speakers to be advised when they have spoken for three minutes. Speakers may ask the conference for extensions;
7. *Procedural motions and dissent in ruling of the chair.* In the case of procedural motions and dissent in the chair's rulings only one speaker to be allowed for and against. Procedural motions do not require a seconder;
8. *Motion to gag debate.* The motion to gag debate to be put without debate;
9. *Treatment and presentation of resolutions and amendments.* Movers of amendments to be entitled to amalgamate and modify amendments at any time until the vote on the matter under debate is taken. All resolutions and amendments to be submitted to the conference presiding committee so as to be able to be projected on screen for delegates.

### **Other motions covering organisation of conference**

#### **Replacement delegates**

If a delegate is to be absent for a session or part of a session he or she to be eligible to nominate a replacement delegate, who must be a member of the same branch, affiliate or state/territory as the delegate he or she is replacing.

#### **Status and responsibilities of conference delegates**

The following rules to apply

1. Local groups not to be entitled to mandate delegates to conference.
2. No delegate to be able to exercise more than his or her vote.
3. Delegates not to be entitled to vote in absentia

#### **Reporters to conference**

The National Executive to elect reporters to conference on all listed agenda items. Any delegates who wish to move amendments to any resolution moved by the National Executive shall be granted the necessary time to do so.

#### **Chairing**

That the conference presiding committee in coordination with the Melbourne conference organising committee be responsible for providing chairs for each conference session.

#### **Changes to conference agenda**

That the existing conference agenda be amended to allow for solidarity greetings from the FSP (US), Socialist Alliance in England, Scottish Socialist Party and any sympathetic Greens.

#### **Childcare**

That the Alliance hire professional childcare workers for the duration of the conference.

#### **Literature tables and invitation to left and progressive groups**

That left and progressive organisations sympathetic to, interested in or observers of the work of the Alliance be invited to set up literature tables in the conference foyer. That tendencies hostile to the work of the Alliance not be granted such access.

#### **Security**

That a security team and roster be set up by the Melbourne organising committee.

#### **Media spokespeople**

That the media spokespeople initially be comrades Alison Thorne, Lisa Macdonald and the national conveners.

#### **Order of agenda**

That the vote on perspectives documents be taken at the end of the first session. ■

