

# INTERNAL DISCUSSION BULLETIN

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# Section A: Federal Election Campaign Feedback and Analysis On the Socialist Alliance Election Result

By Michael Morphett

I think the result was very encouraging, especially considering the newness of the party, lack of registration etc. The one per cent to 1.4 per cent can easily be doubled and more at the next election which may be sooner than many of us anticipate, given the composition of the new senate. Double dissolution has been mentioned already, the Democrats' propensity for caving in and dealing notwithstanding.

The predictable turn of the ALP post election to more middle and right-wing policy and outlook augurs well for the growth of the Alliance. Electoral success and progress is essential and vital for educating the public towards the point of view that Socialism is a plausible, reasonable and respectable alternative.

I see the main requirements for this to happen being:

1. Unity! Unity! Unity! If the Left fragments into warring factions then the Left is easily dismissed as the Looney Left by mainstream, as it has been over past decades.

2. The development of a Socialist model that is intellectually defensible, takes note of and avoids the mistakes of the past and logically answers the obvious criticisms and questions. These would include: under Socialism how do we guarantee the independence of the judiciary and the media? If we don't want a one party state what will be the role of the opposition? Could it ever form government?

To achieve a national electoral result of 3 per cent to 4 per cent is not an easy task. This means that you would be having a significant impact on public consciousness. This can only be achieved through a lot of hard work and persistence.

Take the environment movement for example. The Greens are simply the political wing of the movement, now having a degree of success after 30 years of concerted effort by the movement as a whole. These efforts range all the way from forest radical activists sabotaging logging gear to premiers Wran and Carr being cultivated and taken on bushwalking and camping trips by the Total Environment Centre.

Similarly, the Alliance could be seen as the political wing of the Left movement.

I think the Alliance needs to stay flexible to best use the abilities of its members and the tendencies of its constituent groups, but the Left, the Alliance, needs very much to see itself as a whole, working in diverse ways towards a common goal. Unity is imperative and also quite easily possible. Look at the ALP, they hate each other more than they hate anyone else but maintain unity at the public level. Unity does not mean agreement in all things but general consensus and respect for each others views. Difference of opinion is a plus not a minus.

Socialism relies on self sacrifice and mutual co-operation. We must demonstrate these principals in our affairs. The broad Left is watching the Alliance with interest, not least to see if we can stick together. The ex-communists, left union officials and members etc will come to us bit by bit as we continue to grow and cohere.

What impact are we having? I point comrades to Miranda Devine's recent piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In it there are veiled references to the Alliance being sinister manipulators of pacifists and do-gooders and that we support the terrorists. She describes Melbourne S11 as being a successful demonstration. They weren't saying that at the time, were they!

An old saying has it that the truth goes through three stages; first ridicule, second vigorous opposition and third acceptance as being self evident. We seem to be in stage two having graduated from being the Looney Left. We've got them worried! Congratulations! Expect more flak!

**The way forward—more of what we have been doing. Journalism, leafletting, general propagandising, campaigning around issues, forging union and working class links, fighting elections, radicalising youth and students. ANY AND ALL MEANS NECESSARY.**

[Michael Morphett is the New South Wales representative on the National Executive.]



# Socialist Alliance after the 2001 Federal election

By Riki Lane and Janet Burstall for Workers Liberty

## 1. What the Socialist Alliance vote shows about the Socialist Alliance

The Socialist Alliance's vote of around 10,000 nationally (about the number of people who went to S11), and 1-1.4 per cent in most House of Representatives electorates (an increase on previous DSP results) is an achievement but not as good as we had hoped for. It is a base to build from, but there is a huge building job to be done to create a socialist organisation, a force based in the working class, that is in a position to mobilise a mass struggle for socialism.

Our vote, considered along with the Green vote, shows where opposition to Howard and Labor is strongest. The Greens vote of around 15 per cent in the seats of Sydney and Melbourne are the most extreme examples of strong concentration of radical opposition, contrasted to very low Socialist Alliance/Green votes and a stronger than average swing to the Coalition in the outer Western suburbs working class electorates of Sydney.

### The Socialist Alliance vote in relation to the Greens

The Greens picked up the radical vote for many reasons beyond our influence, they have been around longer, and they have MPs with resources to campaign and gain publicity.

The Greens political approach is essentially radical, but above or beyond class and therefore inherently accepts capitalism. In Wills (and possibly elsewhere), the Greens basically ignored the working class parts of the seat, and only outpolled Socialist Alliance 2:1 in those areas, while in the trendy Brunswick part, they outpolled us 12:1. They did quite well in the rich parts of the seat. Their membership is quite diverse: e.g. Gurm Sekhon in Melbourne, who recently won a council by-election, regards himself as a Marxist. Their policies on many issues are similar to those of Socialist Alliance (For example, NUS Queer department gave them a better mark than Socialist Alliance). They have excellent policies on working class issues like 45D and E, Workplace Relations Act right to strike etc, and are prominent on workers' picket lines and at left demonstrations.

The Socialist Alliance platform based on a good shopping list of policies (true Labor and some extras) did not adequately distinguish Socialist Alliance from the Greens. In the absence of a push by Socialist Alliance for the need for working class representation and socialist solutions, voting Green looked a more sensible and pragmatic choice to many left voters.

### The Labor vote

Labor got a low first preference vote, but the final two party preferred swing from Labor was only around 1.5 per cent, and worse than that in some areas

considered Labor heartland. This was the election that Labor should not have lost. Howard had done so many unpopular things: the GST, private school funding, subsidised private health insurance, refusal to say "Sorry", failure to guarantee sacked workers entitlements let alone to save jobs in a climate of mass sackings, etc. Regardless of, and well before the Tampa and the war on terrorism, Beazley was not offering any inspirational alternative to Howard. He didn't enunciate a list of policy alternatives (but then a policy list is not inspiring) let alone an alternative perspective. It just looked as though he couldn't lose against such an unpopular government. In a sense, nothing much has changed in the terms of two-party preferred voting—Howard didn't get a landslide, Labor wasn't decimated, and Labor's policies were business as usual.

However the national decline in the Labor vote and the loss of a third successive Federal election are provoking calls from within the unions and the ALP for a reassessment of Labor's policies, direction and structure, especially the 60:40 union link and the effect of factions.

## 2. Where now for the Socialist Alliance?

We should firstly commit ourselves to building on the groundwork we have laid. We will continue the Socialist Alliance project.

We need to extend and develop our own forces and level of political agreement through continuing joint work in action campaigns, electoral campaigns and discussion and policy development.

It will take a serious examination of priorities simply to maintain some of the Socialist Alliance branches now that the focus of the federal election is over. They need to be centres of actual organising and political discussion. This means constructively joining solidarity work with unions and working class community campaigns and initiating street action in anti-capitalist, anti-war or refugee support.

It means having branches with a real internal life will attract people to come to meetings. They need regular monthly meetings, discussion forums, meetings of striking workers, etc.

Our overall aim in doing this must be to work to overcome our isolation from working class communities and redouble efforts to relate to organised rank-and-file workers.

We need to face in two directions – towards the ALP left and their working class (especially union) base, and towards the Greens and their base in the social movements. We should try to recruit ALP members to Socialist Alliance and encourage them to take up the fight inside the ALP for political

representation of the working class. We need to engage the Greens in debate and joint work. Socialist Alliance needs to relate to the unconvinced, to be part of the working class movement, not just focus on building campaigns based on support for an idea or policy item supported by the converted, the ones who voted Green.

Practically this means:

1. We need to develop a relationship with the Greens, to draw the Marxists and socialists, and supporters of class struggle in the Greens to work with us to develop common perspectives and agreement, that could lay the basis for future regroupment of forces.
2. We need to relate to the reassessment in the ALP with the aim of helping to cohere Labor supporters around a working-class socialist perspective which includes democratic transformation of the labour movement, that also could lay a basis for future regroupment.
3. We should continue to pursue unity efforts with other smaller left forces such as the SP and PLP.
4. We assess all elections, local, state and federal as an opportunity to stand candidates.
5. We emphasise organising solidarity with grass roots union and community campaigns.
6. We continue to build the anti-war, refugee support and anti-capitalist movements.
7. We organise policy development forums and political discussions.

### 3. Rationale and political approaches on 1, 2 and 4.

#### 1. The Greens

Our platform does not clearly spell out the difference between socialist and Green politics. If we are going to relate constructively to the Greens, especially to socialists within the Greens, then we must be able to be clear and open about what difference a socialist perspective would make.

We need to identify the key political issues to debate with the Greens, or at least the left wing Greens, such as: what is real democracy; what is capitalism; and can it save the environment; the history of green bans and worker-community-green alliances; can the unions and the Greens co-operate?

We should actively seek Green participation and comment in union and working-class community solidarity campaigns and union involvement in environment protection campaigns.

An underlying issue in the election and in the anti-capitalist movement is the nature and limitations of parliamentary democracy, bourgeois democracy. It is not democratic, for many reasons that we well know. The radical vote is motivated partly by mistrust of the

whole status quo. The anti-capitalist movement is united by mistrust of the process of decision-making nationally and internationally.

As socialists we have something special to bring to this concern, something which the Greens cannot bring—the idea of working class democracy. This means: no privileges and recallability of elected representatives; workers control of production; a working class plan built from the demands that are raised in workers struggles; democratic control of production by producers and consumers which is the only way of stopping the drive for profit from dominating our lives and destroying the environment.

#### 2. The ALP

Internal divisions about the Labor Party could hamstring the Socialist Alliance. But we should relate to the reassessment in the ALP with the aim of helping to cohere Labor supporters, especially in the unions, around an analysis of the reasons for Labor's failure to represent working class interests, and a position on what changes are needed within the whole labour movement to make it able to represent working class interests without deference to capital. "Factions" are being blamed, but not explained.

The two key elements that we should be arguing for are:

1. Maximum democracy within the labour movement with key points being no perks and privileges, right of recall, rank-and-file policy debates and election of union representatives at all levels, including to ALP conferences;
2. Redistributive economic policies, for union freedom, as well as for refugee and indigenous rights. Above all, the unions need a policy for jobs based on public ownership, workers control of whole industries. But the union leaders have no policies on jobs, beyond economic nationalism and reliance on government creating favourable conditions for profit. This undermines their ability to also argue for genuinely redistributive policies.

It *does* matter—this upcoming reassessment in the ALP. Political struggles within the ALP and the unions have a direct bearing on the prospects for building a mass socialist organisation.

No-one in the Socialist Alliance would even consider saying this about the Liberals—we don't even expect to recruit individuals from the Liberal Party, but we do expect to recruit them from Labor.

Socialists recognise the *collective* nature of political participation and consciousness. We want to recruit individuals from the ALP and hope to do so in significant numbers. But it is a mistake right now to urge individual ALP members to jump ship and abandon access to a political debate, however short-lived it might be. It makes more sense at this time of political reassessment in the ALP to be patient and offer political perspectives for *collective* developments

in the ALP and the unions (in relation to the ALP) around agreement with key aspects of a program for working class struggle and socialism.

Our approach should be that we seek to recruit ALP members to Socialist Alliance, and encourage them to take up the fight inside the ALP for political representation of the working class. We have no bar on dual membership: let the ALP bureaucrats expel people if they dare.

### 1. Elections at state and local levels

Continuing election campaigns at council and state level have the possibility of learning from the federal experience and deepening connections with community organisations and unions. Developing links with the Greens and others in those campaigns offers possibilities of influencing the Greens towards a more class-based politics. It continues the pressure on all parts of Socialist Alliance to make our politics actually have some grip to workers and to make Socialist Alliance an actual living presence in its branches.

We can look positively to building broader electoral coalitions that involve Socialist Alliance, other left groups like SP and PLP, Greens, ALP left, unions, community campaigns etc. Socialist Alliance will need to ensure that class politics are prominent in these coalitions—this will be essential to involving workers, especially left unionists and Labor left members and supporters.

### In conclusion

Our *raison d'être* is to fight for working class representation in politics. Our continuing work should be guided by an emphasis on class as the basis of our politics, an orientation to working class communities, unions, and for a working class government. This will orient us in our approaches to other forces, and ensure that the socialist politics we are fighting for are not confused with the radical politics of other groups, especially the Greens.

## Where to now for the Socialist Alliance?

### Interview with Dick Nichols

*In the November 10 federal election the Socialist Alliance averaged 1 per cent in the 15 House of Representatives seats in which it stood candidates.*

*How good is this result? What does it mean when the Greens nearly doubled their vote from 2.4 per cent to 4.7 per cent? What does it mean in the context of a third defeat in a row for the ALP?*

These are some of the questions *Green Left Weekly's* ALISON DELLIT put to Dick Nichols, a member of the national executive of the Democratic Socialist Party and one of the alliance's three national conveners. Here he puts the DSP view on the achievements and tasks of the alliance.

**Was 1 per cent for the Socialist Alliance really a good result in the context of a shift to the left that largely went to the Greens?**

Yes, it was. This was an election where the bureaucratic electoral cards were stacked against the alliance because its application for registration as a party for electoral purposes was frozen as soon as John Howard called the election. The alliance's candidates therefore appeared on the ballot paper without any party identification. We can therefore be confident that practically all the votes that went to the alliance were conscious votes for our socialist alternative.

**But if you assess 1 per cent as a good result, what would have been a poor result?**

We would have been worried if the alliance vote had fallen behind the traditional left vote. But despite not being registered, our vote generally rose — especially in the most working class and migrant electorates. And in the Senate, where lack of

registration is really crippling for a party that can't be present on every polling booth, tickets led by our indigenous candidates Sam Watson and June Mills did well in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

This result is undeniably due to the consistent work that the Socialist Alliance has been doing both in the movement against the "war on terrorism" and in support of the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

### How was the Socialist Alliance vote achieved?

Through the quality of our candidates — committed activists and fighters for working people's rights — and through the very hard work of more than 1000 members and supporters who helped build the alliance's election campaign up to and on polling day. That's another feature of the alliance's first election campaign — it involved many more members and supporters than belong to the founding affiliates. It confirmed that the Socialist Alliance is winning the loyalty and commitment of hundreds of socialists who weren't convinced to join any of the founding parties.

### What were the main features of polling day?

Two aspects stood out. The first was the utter shame of so many ALP members and supporters at Kim Beazley's "me too" approach on the war and refugees. For many older ALP members who remember the 1975 Kerr coup, the thought that Malcolm Fraser now has a more decent position on the refugee issue than Beazley was simply humiliating. Many ALP booth workers told us they were going to give their first vote to the Greens or the Socialist Alliance, which is actually forbidden by ALP rules.

The second was the determination of many people to vote for the Greens as the most obvious way of opposing the two-party consensus for war and racist

scapegoating. Many voters insisted on only taking the Greens how-to-vote.

### **How do you view the doubling of the Greens vote?**

The rise in the Greens vote is a big step forward for progressive politics. Hundreds of thousands voted for the Greens as a way of saying no to the war, racism and, more broadly, neo-liberal globalisation. The surge in the Greens vote means that opposition to the neo-liberal agenda can speak out louder. The fact is that Bob Brown will probably be joined in the Senate by two or three other Greens. This could take us back to the days when WA Green senators Christobel Chamarette and Dee Margetts caused scandals simply by refusing to compromise on questions of principle.

The Socialist Alliance should aim for closer collaboration with the Greens both “on the ground” and in suggesting initiatives for parliament. Collaboration already began in the election campaign itself, where the Socialist Alliance and Greens candidates put out joint statements against the war in a number of lower house seats and in the Senate for the Northern Territory. The alliance needs to further develop such “red-green” dialogue and collaboration.

### **What should that dialogue be about?**

In general terms, it should be about how best to consolidate the shift to the left represented by the strong reaction against the Coalition-ALP consensus for neo-liberalism, racism and war. It should involve collaboration to build the movements of resistance as well as discussion of policy.

This dialogue is needed because there’s a certain gap between the protest movements and the Greens, whose main centre of attention remains parliament. It’s also necessary because the movement against the war and the general movement against neo-liberal globalisation still has to get a clearer view of where the Greens stand in practice on many issues. That requires ongoing dialogue.

On a more fundamental plane, “red-green” dialogue is essential to clarify whether the Greens broad principles of social justice, sustainability and peace really can be won under some form of capitalism. We, of course, don’t think so. Many Greens members agree with us on this, but while they may identify themselves as anti-capitalist, they do not have a clearly formulated conception of what the alternative is to capitalism.

### **What relations should the Socialist Alliance now look to develop with the ALP left?**

During the election campaign the Socialist Alliance candidates put out an “open letter” to ALP members urging them to remember the best traditions of their party and oppose the “war on terrorism” the way Jim Cairns and thousands of other ALP members opposed the Vietnam War. That letter certainly struck a chord, because it rapidly went around ALP networks.

The Socialist Alliance should look to deepen collaboration with everyone in the ALP who wants to fight against the war, for a humane refugee policy and against the terrible impact the coming recession is going to have on working people. But it should do that in the clear understanding that any improvement in ALP policy on these issues will only result from strengthening mass movements of resistance to Howard’s policies.

At the same time the alliance, and alliance unionists in particular, should be promoting the discussion of what steps now need to be taken along the road to forming a mass working-class party in this country. It’s clear that there will be no miraculous left shift by the ALP under Simon Crean’s leadership, and that the millions of dollars given by unions to the Labor Party for this election was just money poured down the drain.

With the economy sliding into recession, the question of an independent political voice for workers is becoming increasingly urgent and the Socialist Alliance has to be at the forefront of arguing for it.

### **What should the Socialist Alliance do next?**

In our view, the Socialist Alliance’s work is basically one of consolidation. It will now get federal electoral registration, and registration should immediately be pursued in the states and territories. It should continue its work in the anti-war and refugee rights movements. It should be at the forefront of defending the militant unions, as in the case of the “Skilled Six”, and against the attacks being prepared by Howard and Abbott. It should now relaunch its phase of policy elaboration, which was decided on at its founding conference but was suspended by the election campaign.

The alliance should also redouble its efforts to attract the left organisations that remain outside its ranks. The very process of having nine organisations form the alliance and then collaborate on a common project has been enormously valuable for the Australian left. It has been the precondition for drawing into radical political activity hundreds of socialists who would otherwise probably have remained inactive. It has enabled stronger collaboration with migrant left and socialist organisations. Most importantly of all, it has given the socialist message a higher profile.

So we should all redouble our efforts to strengthen the Socialist Alliance. We can be certain of one thing — the more influential it is in the unions and other social movements, the greater will be the chance of converting the leftward shift shown at this election into a more lasting opposition to neo-liberalism and capitalism.

From *Green Left Weekly*, November 21, 2001.

# 'The Greens is an activist party'

## *Interview with Pamela Curr (Victorian Greens)*

**One of the few bright spots of the federal elections was the strong showing of the Greens, and one of their best performances was by Pamela Curr, the coordinator of the anti-sweatshop group Fairwear and a highly respected activist, who polled 15.8 per cent of the vote in the seat of Melbourne.**

Curr spoke to *Green Left Weekly's* SARAH PEART about her result and the future of the Greens.

**You got the highest ever vote for a Greens candidate in the House of Representatives. What do you think were the factors that led to this result?**

I think it shows, particularly in the seat of Melbourne, that a large number of people really do care about the refugee issue.

I stood very firmly on the refugee issue and against the war. My first leaflet that went out was all about the refugees and about refuting some of the myths that are perpetuated by the mainstream political parties.

The result also illustrated that there are a lot of people out there who are questioning the bipartisan stance on a whole range of issues between Liberal and Labor. There is no doubt that part of the increased Greens vote is from disaffected Labor voters who were saying "look, I have never voted anything but Labor — not this time".

The bipartisan position is clear on a range of issues. On the issue of education — the government is busily funding private education to the detriment of public education. Labor was going to kick in a bit more money but not that much more.

In terms of education the Greens outlined a comprehensive policy putting \$4 billion into education that would bring Australia's education spending up to the OECD average. Education is essential for the economy and the social capital that it builds in the community.

**Can you outline the Greens policy on the issue of refugees?**

The Greens policy is totally different to the major parties bipartisan position. The Greens talk about refugees coming to reception centres, not detention centres. We talk about them being assessed and being supported to enter the community. We talk about the closure of the desert detention centres — an end to this inhumane policy.

The reception centres would be places where refugees would go and where their identity and health and a number of other assessments would be carried out. They would then be released into the community or they would be assisted in these reception centres

where they could stay until they had found places to live. This would all be assisted by government funding.

There was a debate in the Greens about a decade back about what kind of population we could sustain in this country. That has been turned around by a very clear assessment that the needs of human beings have to come first. The needs of the environment are in there but we have to look at human beings having a safe place to live as well.

**Do you think the Greens should support opening the borders?**

I think that in view of the current climate, to advocate a position of completely open borders straight away is just not possible. The Greens policy is about a generous reception to people who are fleeing.

**The Greens have been advocating a United Nations intervention in the war in Afghanistan. What exactly does this mean?**

The Greens argue that we should use the international agencies that were set up after the Second World War to help ensure that war was not the first reply to aggression.

The terrorist attacks in New York and resulting loss of life were a tragedy. Given this tragedy it would have been easy for America to seek from the international community the right to extradite and try those who they believe are responsible.

What has happened instead is that America, the richest country on earth, has put all its might into attacking one of the poorest countries on earth. There is no need to kill hundreds of thousands of people in Afghanistan to right the wrong that was done in New York.

The Greens believe that an international court of justice under the agency of the UN would be needed to give its approval of the extradition of Osama bin Laden, if he was indeed the perpetrator.

**Given your assessment that the clear anti-war and pro-refugee positions of the Greens were the key factors in achieving such a high vote, will you be calling on your constituency to mobilise on the streets around these issues?**

The Greens have already been very active in the anti-war movement and the refugee movement. The result of this election will see the Coalition hardening up its position on the war and refugees and I would see that the Greens will be responding. It will be a natural continuation of their position already.

The Greens is an activist party. We all know that challenging the decisions on the streets is to lessen the

power in the parliament. I think it is important that the Greens should stand up and be counted as they have been and will continue to be.

**Will you be encouraging your constituency to come out on the streets on Human Rights Day, December 9?**

I don't have to encourage them; they will be there.

**You have been an activist for many years, what made you decide to run in the elections as a Greens candidate?**

I have been an activist on community issues for over a decade. I saw that standing for parliament this time was a way of extending the debate around the refugee issue into groups that perhaps hadn't thought about it.

I believe the way we can bring about change is to use a multi-layered approach. I see that action in the streets can be complemented by standing in parliament, as indeed the Socialist Alliance has done. They obviously see that there is a way to extend that debate by being active in many different forums.

As a Green I just see that's a natural way of extending that activism by standing for parliament.

**Will you be working in the framework of the Greens in an ongoing way?**

I would be keen to stand again as a Greens candidate. I made a decision some years ago when I joined the Greens that changing horses midstream is never a good policy. The Greens policies are the sort of policies that I feel proud to stand behind, they stand up for the issues that I really care about.

**Coming from an activist background yourself, do you see your role as shifting the Greens towards a more activist, grassroots, on-the-streets campaigning direction?**

I believe that there is a real place for grassroots activism. That is the way in which people connect

with issues and with parties. I see that there is a real place for this in the Greens.

If we look at the campaigns the Greens have waged over the last decade, they have had a strong grassroots base. The environmental campaigns have been about people going to out of the way places in harsh environments and sticking at it. There is a real background to that grassroots activism in the Greens.

**Will the Greens be using money from the elections to help build the anti-war and refugee rights campaigns?**

For the first time the Greens in Victoria finally have some money and we will be thinking how we can best use this over the next few weeks. We have a tiny office with donated equipment and this will be the first time that the Greens have the money to organise themselves.

**What is your opinion on increasing joint work between the Greens and the Socialist Alliance?**

I can see that there are many similarities in policy between the Greens and the Socialist Alliance. But I think there is a strength in diversity; there are groups that more naturally gravitate to our organisations. That strengthens the electoral process giving people avenues to align themselves outside of the two major parties.

The Greens and the Socialist Alliance take principled stands on issues and present them openly and honestly to people and the people who stand besides us are taking the same principled stand.

**Can you conceive of a red-green alliance sometime in the future? Do you think that would be a positive step forward?**

I think that the future holds all sorts of promise. Who knows? I wouldn't like to say at this stage. It will be interesting to see whether the alternative groups find common ground or whether they stay as separate parties but work closer together. There are all sorts of possibilities.

From *Green Left Weekly*, November 21, 2001.

## Policy for the farming community

*By Bernie Rosen (Burwood Socialist Alliance)*

As a Socialist Alliance Senate team will be contesting the forthcoming federal election a policy suitable for the small and medium sized farmers should be prepared and propagated as soon as possible.

Comrades from rural backgrounds could form a sub-committee for this purpose. I would like to throw into the ring a few ideas to start discussion on this important aspect of our political work.

Government subsidies to assist farmers, the establishment of a rural bank charging low interest rates and generous overdraft facilities are proposals that merit consideration.

The availability of advice on scientific farming, marketing, transport and ecology by professionals in these fields would make life on the land a more pleasant mode of existence if farmers were free from the pressure of avaricious banks and finance companies.

A Socialist Alliance Senate candidate who campaigns in the countryside should have some knowledge of rural problems and be able to explain socialist policies that the farmer perceives as realistic for the present period.

The construction of dams for water conservation, irrigation, environmental protection are policies that would benefit the farming community.

The advocacy of legislation to compel the banks to reopen branches in country towns as well as in large cities should receive popular support.

I commend these proposals for your consideration.

# Message of support

*By Chris Jones*

It is very heartening to see a unified socialist ticket at the upcoming federal election.

I am also pleased to see one of the candidates is an activist for the rights of illicit drug users including people on the methadone program and ex-users. Methadone programs are currently being run as if they were a chemical warfare outpost in the war against drugs rather than putting drug users rights first. Drug users face police harassment, police dog searches, and

many other forms of discrimination which are a breach of basic democratic rights.

Repeal all anti drug laws.

Disband the police drug squads.

**STOP THE WAR ON DRUGS NOW!**

Best wishes

Chris Jones

*[Poet and novelist, activist for gay rights and the rights of illicit drug users]*



# Victorian Senate campaign balance sheet

By Peter Murray

The Victorian Senate campaign was hampered by the fact that we did not have a dedicated Campaign Committee. I don't think the point needs to be laboured too much, but it was a pity that the Senate Campaign was subordinated to the Victorian State Liaison Committee, particularly since representatives on the SLC had an initial aversion to decision-making as opposed to "information sharing".

This meant that Senate campaign issues were one item in a usually full agenda and could not be developed to its full potential. It also meant that the Senate campaign was forced to, and did "do its own thing", with some success, but less accountability that I feel comfortable with.

That said, our success was in outreach! Alison and Sarah were excellent "out of town" campaigners for Socialist Alliance, travelling to three regional centres. Tony was a great sounding board for ideas, and wrote a leaflet that Sarah distributed in regional Maryborough around the closure of the Nestle factory.

Alison participated in a couple of Geelong events, to both push the Senate campaign and assist in publicising Tim Gooden's Corio candidacy. Alison chaired one of the anti-war rallies in the lead up to November 11 and both Sarah and Alison made excellent interventions in an anti-war, pro-refugee protest and candidate forum (focussing on higher Education) at the University of Ballarat. This was sponsored by the National Tertiary Education Union, assisted by the work of Jeremy, a DSP member and delegate at the university.

David Glanz was also a great support through his mobilisation of rural IS members for the Senate Campaign.

I'm no doubt forgetting a hundred phone conversations and interventions—Sarah on prime time news on seven and nine, Alison on numerous programs on Community Radio 3CR, etc etc.

Our major success was this: in rural centres and suburbs where Socialist Alliance had no lower house candidate, people were given a chance to vote for Socialist Alliance. At Melbourne Town Hall, people from all over the State and the country were given a chance to vote for Socialist Alliance (Well, at least potentially—I'll come to this.)

Thanks largely to Alison and David, we had people handing out how to votes for the Senate in Castlemaine (2 booths); Wonthaggi (2 booths); a booth in the Latrobe Valley, one in Bendigo, one in Ballarat, one in Prahran, one in Frankston. Then there was Blackburn Secondary College—reputedly the largest booth in the

country—which was staffed all day, except for 45 minutes. And of course, Melbourne Town Hall.

I'd be interested to know how much other Senate Campaigns took—or created—opportunities outside the seats where we stood in the Lower House.

Tony and Sarah and Alison were a great team to work with!

In terms of volunteers on the day, FSP, with assistance from the IS, mobilised some thirty Socialist Alliance members and supporters of the two organisations. Brenda Hunter, from Radical Women, FSP's sister organisation, co-ordinated all of the booths we covered in Corio, and FSP/RW co-ordinated a booth in Wills and Batman.

At Melbourne Town Hall, where at one stage I had five people handing out Senate how-to-votes, and HTV's for Steve Jolly (who stood for the Socialist party in the Seat of Melbourne), and a smattering of HTV's for Jorge (Gellibrand), David (Wills) and Jackie (Batman), I could have used another five people. The queue was (after 10am) *never* less than 150 Victorian voters and 200 out of state voters. I could also have used some how to vote cards for all, I repeat all, of our Senate and lower house candidates throughout the country. There were votes we could have got, I believe!

On the day, we handed out somewhere between 2500 and 3000 (!) how-to-votes at Melbourne Town Hall, about 2000-2500 for Jolly, and several dozen each for Melbourne metro candidates

Next Federal election, we *must* fully staff the capital city town hall booths in every State and Territory, with a supply of how-to-votes and a couple of comrades well versed in who is standing where. This is particularly relevant when our name is on the ballots—it gives us credibility as a national organisation. I winged it by telling people which group we were in the Senate in other States—sorry South Australia, I couldn't remember which letter you were. This is not professional!

It is also important to staff the main capital city booths in state elections for similar reasons.

Finances?

Wills funded the local campaign and, through loans from Alison and our organisations, partly bankrolled the Senate campaign. I expect a return of around \$1300 on the wine fundraiser Wills is soon to finalise.

Apologies for brevity!

[Peter Murray was the 2001 Senate Campaign Co-ordinator, Victoria.]



# A (partial) outline of polling day experiences in Hobart

*By Kamala Emanuel*

We ran only in the Senate, not in any lower house seats, and therefore had no hope of covering the almost 300 polling booths in Tasmania, or even the 50-odd booths in the Hobart-based electorate of Denison. We therefore selected the seven booths that we wanted to cover well (i.e., with at least two people preferably for the whole day). These seven booths included the largest booths in Denison and Franklin and together attract over 15,000 voters. We made an orientation towards those 15000 people our priority. We divided the seven booths into two clusters of three and four booths in close proximity and organised one team for each cluster. As it turned out, we only managed to cover five of the seven booths.

In addition, a number of supporters who wanted to hand out nearer to their homes did shorter stints by themselves at their preferred booth.

We also had one “roving team” whose job it was to put posters up at booths we weren’t covering and to take refreshments around to booth workers.

The roving team turned out to be a particular success. We discovered that three people was the optimum number. After a quiet approach at our first booth, we decided to go in with guns blazing thereafter and kept this up for the rest of the day. At each booth, we would gather up our material then get out of the car and march towards the booth. As soon as we were vaguely within sight (or hearing distance) of the booth—often around 100 metres—we would begin chanting though the megaphone: “What do we want? Stop the war! When do we want it? Now!” as we approached. This immediately got the attention of all booth workers from other parties as well as people coming to vote. “What’s going on here?” people would think.

As we approached the booth, we would stop chanting but start spruiking through the megaphone: “We’re here from the Socialist Alliance. We are urging you to vote against the war. The most consistent anti-war vote you can make is for the Socialist Alliance...” and we would proceed to explain why we opposed the war and our approach to other issues such as refugees and the GST. This almost always kept people’s attention and got a good response.

Immediately we finished spruiking, we would grab the “Open letter to the ALP” and walk directly to the nearest ALP booth worker and say “This is specifically for you”. We would briefly summarise the contents and explain why we thought ordinary ALP members ought to support the anti-war movement. Even though at this stage we didn’t use the megaphone, we found that we usually had an audience. This would generally arouse

curiosity among other people nearby, so we gave them out also to Greens and others who looked interested.

After this dramatic entrance, one person would then go and hand out how-to-vote leaflets to anyone who was going in to vote. The other two would proceed to put up posters wherever we could. This meant we made a big impact and could often get into good discussions with people there—especially the booth workers from Greens and ALP—as well as people turning up to vote.

We found this approach worked well, even on small booths like the one where there was nobody around except one Green and one ALP. We figure that we gave the booth workers something to talk about, impressed ourselves greatly on the ALP rank and file, and couldn’t possibly lose anything.

On bigger booths of course the rewards were greater. We used this same approach – marching up chanting and then spruiking – even when we approached booths that we were covering. This generally gave a significant morale boost to our own members and supporters and also boosted our prestige to the people who saw. Again, we had nothing to lose.

Over and over again we were told things like “it was pretty quiet here until you turned up—good on you for what you’re doing”. The ALP response to the open letter was continuously positive. We were told specifically: “This is very good”, that they supported us on this issue. A number were embarrassed by their party position.

Our biggest disappointment was when we went to the biggest booth with a spectacular entrance, a big audience and a comparatively long spruiking session, only to find out the media had been there only 15 minutes before to film a Liberal candidate casting his vote—oh well.

At one point, when we had five people with us, we found that although our arrival made a bigger impact (more banners, etc) it wasn’t that much bigger than with three people and we then seemed to have too many people to know what to do with. From then on we settled back to three in the roving team.

Some specific stories from polling booths

At one booth, an oldish person went up to the Liberal and said, “Is your man (sic) a communist?” The Liberal was a bit taken aback and said no. Then he came up to me and said “Is your man a communist?” I said “Yes!” (not quite sure what was going to happen next). His response was “I’ll vote for youse then”.

At another booth, a woman came out went over the road to a shop and brought a cup of coffee back to our

comrade. She said she had read the blurb on our how-to-vote leaflet and was very impressed and even moved by our politics.

At one booth, an obnoxious ALP member said that he had sympathy for the Socialist Alliance, and even read *Green Left Weekly* periodically, but that we “nearly” lost his sympathy because of our attitude to the environment. Obviously putting up posters on poles

around the city displayed poor environmental credentials (as if the ALP government’s woodchipping policy or its record on other environmental issues was a paragon of virtue). After explaining the facts of life for a small budget campaign, our comrade asked him: “So, did you know we were running in the elections?” We rested our case when he replied: “How could I not? Your posters are everywhere!”

# Campaign Questionnaire Results

[The National Conveners sent a questionnaire out to all candidates and campaign managers on our effort in the recent federal poll. Below we have grouped the answers received into two sections: those with a simple numerical answer and those with a short descriptive answer.]

## A. Some statistics

1. How many people did you get out on polling booths:
  - a) In total
  - b) Members of the affiliated organisations?
  - c) Independents?
  - d) Young people?
2. How many people did you join to Socialist Alliance as a result of polling day activities?
3. How many polling booths did you cover as a percentage of all booths?
4. How many polling booths did you cover as a percentage of voters?
5. How many people were regularly attending your Socialist Alliance meetings?
6. How many people came to the Socialist Alliance community rally?
7. How much money did your branch:
  - a) spend during the campaign?
  - b) raise during the campaign

**Table 1: the basic statistics of the election effort**

	1a	1b	1c	1d	2	3 (%)	4 (%)	5	6	7a (\$)	7b (\$)
Adelaide	40	12	28	10	0	20b'ths	75	8	-	2500	2150
Brisbane	101	54	47	5	1	58	51	12	90	3500	1750
Batman	65	44	21	30	0	59		10	20	1890	800
Corio	34	12	22	10	0	10b'ths	40	10	100	200	2300
Darwin	30	12	18	9	0		21	12	60	1970	350
Fraser	88	23	65	4	2					2800	2000
Gellibrand	65	43	22	15		56		5		1900	1782
Grayndler	65	50	15			53		12	175	1454	1344
Hobart	27	12	15	13	0	22		10	20	2850	2200
Kingsford Smith	17	12	5	5		5	10	15	40	900	900
Lowe	38	20	18	6	0	40	50	15	35	1100	800
Newcastle	45	20	25	10	3	36	53	20	150	1000	1000
Page	25	12	13	11	1	12	20	8	100	800	140
Perth/Fremantle	50	33	17	13	0	40	75	16		6194	5245
Reid	39	27	12	17	0		20	25	300	1500	1000
Throsby	20	9	11	8	1	33		11		3000	2000
Wills	82	51	31	12	0	76		15	100	3500	2500
Other	15										
<b>TOTALS</b>	846	446	400	178	8			211	1190	37 058	28 261

**NOTE: This is not a complete accounting of those who came out for Socialist Alliance during the election campaign. We calculate that well over 1000 members and sympathisers helped the election campaign in one way or another.**



## B. Polling day

1. What sort of contacting did your branch arrange to get people out on polling booths?
2. What sort of presence did the Greens have on polling booths? Where were they concentrated?
3. What sort of presence did the PLP and other left organisations have?
4. What sort of visual material did you have on polling booths?

### **Adelaide:**

1. By phone and at meetings.
2. They did not cover all booths by any means. They appear to have concentrated on booths with high numbers of voters.
3. Nil
4. Posters, leaflets, chalked slogans.

### **Batman:**

1. Socialist Alliance contact lists from stalls, *Green Left Weekly* subscriber base, friends, Jackie's family.
2. A number of Greens (including Scott Kenean who toured booths commented on how well we had covered the booths. As far as we are aware they did not cover all the booths and concentrated their forces in the south of the electorate (closer to the city) where many of their young supporters live. We did a similar thing though also choose some key booths in migrant areas.
3. We saw no one on any booths other than Democrats, Labor, Liberals and Greens (CEC did not poll, thankfully).
4. Around eight giant placards of Jackie (with "No War" on it), five banners, lots of chalk, the "No War" posters, and stalls on the larger booths.

### **Brisbane:**

1. Ring-around of complete membership list; got people to sign on at campaign launch; put around sheets asking people to leave names if they wanted to help at rallies, then chasing them up.
2. Often less than us but present on all booths.
3. Only Refugee Action Collective.
4. Banners at major booths, placards and stalls at all the booths, some comrades had T-shirts.

### **Corio:**

1. Contacts grouped into four teams – one person contacted each team.
2. 70 per cent coverage, mainly at the larger polling booths.
3. None.
4. Polling booth boxes the size of the "No War" posters were on every polling booth that we covered. Ten out of the 14 booths that we covered had a tape-up done at the start of the day.

### **Darwin:**

1. Phone contacting of those who'd put their name on Socialist Alliance contact lists or who were *Green Left* subscribers and general networking of friends, family, workmates.

2. The Greens were at all the polling booths we were at (and more) but they were much less organised. Often they didn't have the booth covered for the whole day but would leave a table with their leaflets on it and hope someone rocked up to hand them out.
3. None.
4. All our polling booths had a banner (either a plain Socialist Alliance one or one which had been used in demos), big bits of cardboard with the "No War" poster stuck on them and various other slogans and posters. We also chalked up slogans at most of the polling booths.

### **Fraser:**

1. Full-on contacting of all members and contacts.
2. We generally had more on each booth or equal to. But they were also doing the second Canberra seat of Fraser and they had also put all their effort into ACT elections where they had parliamentary reps.
3. None. Two PLP members did help us. A2 sized red posters, sandwich boards, tables in some booths. Banners in a few.

### **Grayndler:**

1. Phoning up all members, sheets at the Newtown Community rally, asked at leaflet drops.
2. On all polling booths, thin on some.
3. None
4. Posters, placards, the anti-war translations.

### **Gellibrand:**

1. Contacting membership and supporters in ethnic communities etc in area.
2. Very small, a lot of booths uncovered, possibly more than us; and usually one person to our 2-4.
3. None
4. Posters/placards, how-to-vote, lots of leaflets for events.

### **Hobart:**

1. Thorough contacting of Socialist Alliance membership and contacts, affiliate members and contacts.
2. We saw them on every booth that we covered. We expect they were on every booth, at least in the major cities and towns. Fairly evenly spread.
3. None
4. Posters, banners, stalls (almost every booth that we did).

### **Kingsford Smith:**

1. All members of Socialist Alliance and all contacts off stalls.
2. Every booth but small active organising base (maybe 10 people).
3. None.
4. Posters.

### **Lowe:**

1. Phone and personal visits.
2. We think they had nearly every booth covered. They were spread thin with often only one person per booth.

3. None
4. T-shirts, poster, stickers, A-frames

**Newcastle:**

1. A few comrades fairly systematically went through all the Socialist Alliance contact lists, DSP / Resistance/*Green Left Weekly* supporters” lists as well as Socialist Alliance petitions. A thorough list of questions on a contact sheet were asked to all people, so that we could see what other activities they might be interested in in the future.
2. Newcastle Greens covered Newcastle, Shortland and Charlton seats and seem to have had every booth in these three seats covered with one or two people (150+ booths)
3. PLP had less presence on the booths than Socialist Alliance.
4. Primarily the NO War posters and other slim posters – one or two for each booth. We could have done better presenting ourselves in this way

**Page:**

1. Ringing around by convener, Resistance organiser, and attempts by supporters in Grafton to round people up.
2. Not sure though previously they have said that while they’ve only about six activists they can mobilise over 100 people on polling day and cover most booths. Generally only one person on whereas we mainly had 2-3 people and a stall.
3. Zip, PLP had a branch here in 1997 but not since.
4. Seven booths had stalls—all had “No War”, pink, and candidate posters glued on cardboard, some made into A-frames or with little stands rigged up. Also card table sized banners with “Welfare not warfare, people before profit, Socialist Alliance” on them and red balloons stuck around the stalls. Everyone was given thick chalk but it rained all day, which also made a couple of the stalls a bit useless. In the booth right in Lismore CBD we had a shade tent with a tarp on top (everyone else very jealous as there was no shelter), a bigger stall and a big Socialist Alliance banner, making us the most visible.

**Perth and Fremantle:**

1. We rang and mailed out to all members about the day. It was discussed in the meetings prior to polling day.
2. They covered all the polling booths that we were at. They seem to have had at least one person on most of the polling booths.
3. No other left organisations present in WA.
4. Every polling booth we had showed a presence and had about four Socialist Alliance posters. We also had some of the Socialist Alliance banners.

**Reid:**

1. Contacting all members, people who had put names on contact lists, motivating people actually campaigning on polling day (not just passively giving out slips), collecting names on stalls in lead up to polling day.
2. Low presence, probably only on half the booths we covered, the bigger booths (they have a low membership in Reid).
3. No PLP or others.
4. Colour posters and stickers done by a Socialist Alliance member who works in print shop; big “No War” posters. Also “Vote against war, Vote Lisa MacDonald” posters; Senate posters.

**Throsby:**

1. Initial mailout, follow-up phoning.
2. Minimal, they concentrated on Cunningham (they staffed 8 booths). The Greens were spread round the north of the electorate.
3. Nil.
4. Policy statements, campaigning leaflets, badges, sandwich boards; DSP members had *Green Left Weekly*, posters.

**Wills:**

1. Phone calls, emails.
2. They were apparently on 21, mostly in the southern part of the electorate.
3. None
4. Posters, balloons.

## C. Campaigning

1. How many local stalls/speakouts did your branch do? In how many suburbs?
2. How much and what sort of media were you able to get during the campaign?
3. Which local community/migrant/progressive organisations did you contact about the Socialist Alliance? What sort of response was there?
4. Did your branch get a list of local prominent people to endorse the campaign? If so, what did you do with the list?
5. How much of the nationally produced material (posters, broadsheets, etc) was actually used? Any general feedback on the usefulness/timing/etc of this material?
6. How useful were the national media releases? Any criticisms/comments?
7. What use did you make of the (a) the Open Letter of our candidates to ALP members and (b) the proposal for united anti-war declaration by Socialist Alliance, left and Green candidates?
8. What merchandise did your branch produce?
9. Which election issues were debated most in the branch?
10. How successful was the launch of the campaign in your branch?
11. How useful were the translations? Were there any other languages we should have translated?
12. How many workplaces/schools/TAFEs/public meetings/etc were Socialist Alliance candidates or representatives able to get to during the campaign? What sort of response did you get?
13. Socialist Alliance community rally: Who spoke? What sort of media response was there?

### Adelaide:

1. Twelve—in the city and at anti-war rallies.
2. Our intervention at Politics in the Pub was carried on Radio 5UV;
  - One Senate candidate confronted Beazley as a warmonger – reported in the *Advertiser*, on TV;
  - Intervention at anti-war rallies reported;
  - Candidates profiled in *Advertiser* election supplement.
3. Moslem organisations, Romero Community (Latin American). Positive response.
4. No
5. All of it. Socialist Alliance's name should have been more prominent on the anti-war poster.
6. They were useful for us—that's about all.
7. Gave (a) to ALP members.
8. Nil .
9. Whether to stand in Senate and House of Reps; preferences; refugees and war.
10. Most successful event of the campaign (politically and financially)
11. Useful in Greek community.
12. Six.
13. DNA

### Batman:

1. Speakouts both in the migrant-dominated suburb of Preston and at least one stall happened each week.
2. Lots of local press (three good articles with photos).
3. This aspect was distinctly lacking from our campaign though we did have discussions with the CFMEU.
4. No.
5. Around 80 per cent, we did some huge paste-ups two weeks prior (the council was less than pleased).
6. No answer.
7. I am anecdotally aware of a least 5 comrades using it.
8. No answer.
9. Our branch operated more organisationally than as a political forum. This is certainly a weakness and is related to the low attendance at meetings. The earlier period of Socialist Alliance meetings was much more fruitful in this regard.
10. Around 40 people attended. Good range of speakers include AMWU shop steward.
11. They were fantastic in our electorate—heaps of migrants. We could definitely have used Italian as well.
12. This area was minimal. We did attend a local anti-war rally called by the council.
13. No answer.

### Brisbane:

1. Did stalls in six suburbs—most stalls on one day was five.
2. Mainly quest papers. Got coverage from NDA on November 4
3. Virtually nil.
4. Just the endorsements we got for the party launch in May.
5. “No War” posters were very useful. “People before profit” good but should have had on it “No War”. Timing good.
6. If we'd been better organised they would have been very useful.
7. Nil.
8. Badges
9. No answer
10. Good, could have been built better on the campuses.
11. Didn't use them hardly at all.
12. Attended campus meetings and neighbourhood forums, good response.
13. About 80 to 100. Media was there but to my knowledge they didn't run it.

### Corio:

1. Ten stalls, four speakouts in three suburbs.
2. Interviews by main local newspaper (*Geelong Advertiser*) of all candidates on a range of questions; refugees, the war, aged care, education,

- health system. They sent us—two questionnaires and we responded to both.
3. AMWU passed motion at general Geelong branch meeting, three members of Workers First handed out how-to-votes. Two CFMEU members helped with how-to-votes.
  4. No answer
  5. 70 per cent. It arrived too close to polling day.
  6. No answer.
  7. No answer.
  8. No answer
  9. The war.
  10. Twenty people at a BBQ at the back of Geelong Trades Hall, raised \$150, speeches from Tim Gooden, Alison Thorne and a TCFUA steward who is involved in a strike currently at a big Geelong factory.
  11. Not used, except in Resistance bookshop window.
  12. Tim Gooden spoke at Trades Hall branch meeting, getting response “What, you’re standing against Gavin?!?” (Gavin is the sitting ALP member). Friends of ABC public meeting with all candidates speaking on their position on the ABC. Response was friendly and supportive.
  13. We organised an anti-war rally under the name of Socialist Alliance and ANSWER. 100 people came. Speakers: Uniting Church minister, Muslim Imam, Deakin NTEU branch president and Tim Gooden.

#### **Darwin:**

1. We’ve had a regular stall at the Nightcliff markets since the Territory election campaign. During the federal election campaign we also held stalls each week in the mall. The day before the elections we had a great impromptu speakout with Gary Meyerhoff spruiking on the microphone about the war and refugees and freedom of speech after the cops tried to shut him down. We got out heaps of info and how to vote cards. We also did stalls in outer areas such as Palmerston and Casuarina as well as having a successful stall in Katherine.
2. We got articles in the *Darwin Sun* (free local paper), *Palmerston Sun*, *Katherine and Litchfield Times*, although we never broke the “big time” *NT News*! We also got profile on community radio stations—Radio Larrakia and Top FM and on the local ABC talkback (in fact talkback producers rang us a number of times to make sure we would ring up). After the elections Gary did an interview with Annie Gaston on the local ABC about minor parties in the election campaign. Since the Territory election we have had a weekly spot on the local indigenous radio show Radio Larrakia and this will be continuing.
3. Socialist Alliance information on refugees went out in a multi-cultural council mailout. We also did a fax out to all the Aboriginal communities.
4. No answer.

5. We couldn’t have survived without it! All the broadsheets were used in extensive letterboxing and from campaign stalls. It would have been good if the pink posters had arrived earlier. I also think that it would have been useful to have had available from quite early in the campaign a similar thing to the centre spread of *Green Left Weekly* with photos of all the candidates and everyone listed (and which Senate group listed).
6. Very useful.
7. (a) We didn’t get a chance to use it a lot apart from at the polling booths (b) We did our own media release for November 3 with the Greens.
8. No answer.
9. Preferences (Greens/ALP), and a lot of organisational stuff.
10. No answer
11. Comrades got very enthusiastic about these but I haven’t heard any report-backs about them being particularly useful up here. We started some thinking about making election or political material that was more appropriate for use on the Aboriginal communities up here, and June wrote a personal letter to all communities.
12. NOWaR public forum on November 7—Socialist Alliance candidate and speakers got excellent response. A social justice and human rights alliance meet the candidates night—June also got a very good response, particularly when linking the Indigenous struggle with the campaign for refugee rights and pledging that if elected she would take no more than an average workers wage. Also did a Tertiary education forum at Northern Territory University where we weren’t invited to be on the panel, but the audience asked why and we ended up looking great.
13. We didn’t have a community rally but we had a peace-fest(ival) on campus instead. About 60 people came (which is huge for NTU). There were lots of performers and also speakers from the Nurses Federation, Independent Education Union, NOWaR committee, NTU students union, Maurie Ryan Japarta (indigenous House of Representatives candidate). The media came but then didn’t run anything but it was a huge success and part of the speeches were replayed on Radio Larrakia. We also had a few Socialist Alliance-called anti-war demos with crowds of up to 80 and including the Greens.

#### **Fraser:**

1. One speakouts, about 30 stalls in 15 suburbs.
2. Letters in the *Canberra Times*, three minutes on ABC radio, 20 minutes on 2CC right-wing radio, photo in *Canberra Times* of Alliance free the refugees placard. 2XX community radio, about half an hour.
3. Canberra Muslim Council, individuals from Sri Lankan, Turkish and Latin American community, Trades and Labor Council.

4. Yes, Ken Fry. We had his endorsement on all leaflets.
5. No War poster—used about 100; broadsheets—about 200. Most of our material was local with candidate's name on it.
6. No answer.
7. No answer
8. No answer
9. No answer
10. Very. We got about 35 people, majority non-constituent parties, and had \$1500 pledged, inspired people.
11. No answer
12. Went to mosque and to TLC. Well-received at both. At TLC got applauded as only party to go to Woolies' cleaners protest and only candidate to turn up to TLC meeting.
13. This turned into mass leafleting.

#### **Grayndler:**

1. All major shopping centres—Marrickville, Ashfield, Newtown and Leichhardt were done several Saturday mornings. There were regular leaflet drops at Marrickville Station for several months. Other train stations that were covered in the election campaign were Sydenham, Ashfield, Newtown and St Peters. In the four weeks of the campaign 10 stalls and 10 stations drops.
2. Two articles in local papers.
3. Local Greens—agreed on preferences, ALP—spoken to about the campaign. Contacted some local community groups for meetings on the refugees.
4. No answer.
5. The anti-war, translations, vote Socialist Alliance posters were all pasted up around major shopping centres and train stations where we had stalls, leaflet drops. The translations could have been available earlier.
6. Mainly for members, who saw we had positions on the questions of the day. The refugee ones were useful in campaigning.
7. The open letter to ALP members was used on an individual basis. The Greens candidate attended our anti-war, pro refugee rally to speak.
8. Badges.
9. No answer.
10. Received a little publicity.
11. Very important as part of the profile of the Alliance. The translations would have been useful at earlier stages, especially when we were campaigning around refugees.
12. Two or three. Good hearing.
13. 150 – 200. The Socialist Alliance candidate, the NSW Senate candidates, the local Greens candidate, Sydney University SRC President, Nurses Federation representative spoke.

#### **Gellibrand:**

1. One speakout, quite a few railway station stalls.

2. Lots of local media (all local papers several times—about 7 articles), SBS Spanish radio, ABC Radio National, local radio.
3. Good response from Latin American community, African communities, Middle Eastern community.
4. No answer
5. More local material used.
6. Mostly local press work was successful.
7. No answer
8. No war on refugees t-shirt.
9. Not much extended debate.
10. *Very.* A dinner with 70 people, over 40 being independents and non-members/supporters.
11. No answer.
12. One campus meeting of academics, some other smaller meetings
13. Mainly organised supporters

#### **Hobart:**

1. Approximately six stalls, some of which were also speakouts (not including stalls at rallies) in three suburbs. Also meetings/profile excursions to Launceston and Huonville.
2. Minimal when directly related to elections or else profiling the name "Socialist Alliance" but our candidates were profiled in a number of stories about campaign actions (especially anti-war).
3. Not much—oops.
4. No answer.
5. Almost all of the posters. Majority of broadsheets (especially the last). Pink posters didn't have feminist demand despite NE motion to that effect. Tall thin posters are best for far-flung regions where poles are the most common paste-up spot. That said, the "No War" poster was particularly striking and useful (doubling also as placard) though could have had a more prominent Socialist Alliance logo.
6. Definitely useful.
7. (a) *Highly effective*, especially on polling day itself; (b) We didn't go very far with this since we didn't have a November 3-4 protest.
8. No answer.
9. No answer.
10. No answer.
11. We didn't use them (but should have). Hmong is a prominent language group here.
12. One. Good.
13. Twenty people to Huonville public meeting. Candidate (Alex Bainbridge) spoke. Nil media.

#### **Kingsford Smith:**

1. Around five.
2. Small amount of local media—two articles.
3. FILEF (Federation of Italian Workers and Their Families)—passive support. SPANNR, Botany residents against chemical processing.
4. No answer
5. All the posters. Lots of broadsheets left over. The pole posters were better for us. Smaller runs of

larger posters as there are less places to put them up.

6. To be honest we didn't do much with them.
7. No answer
8. Badges against the war.
9. "Open the borders" demand.
10. Film night with about 20 people.
11. No answer
12. Went to one meet the candidates meeting in Botany. Went to meetings of Botany residents against chemical processing—good response.
13. Around 40. Candidate (Marina Carman) spoke. No media.

**Lowe:**

1. Twelve stalls in three suburbs.
2. Four articles in local press and interview on community radio.
3. Interviewed on Farsi language radio. Members of Korean Resource Centre and Greens came to our election rally. Too early to say what sort of response we got.
4. No answer.
5. We gave away all the national broadsheets and used a large number of the anti-war posters. The pink strip poster was too small and a little bit limp.
6. No answer.
7. No answer.
8. Badges.
9. The war.
10. No answer.
11. No answer.
12. No answer.
13. Thirty-five people came. Socialist Alliance local and Senate candidates, Green candidate, indigenous and Korean activists all spoke. No media.

**Newcastle:**

1. Five stalls in three suburbs, but there were a couple more done before the official start of the election campaign.
2. Two press releases got picked up—No to Howard's three wars and the Socialist Alliance pledges to harbour escaped refugees. We sent one late in the piece about "Socialist Pledges to Receive Workers Wage", but did not get picked. A letter to the editor also got in (could have used this forum better).
3. No answer.
4. No answer.
5. Used everything sent up except the glossy joining forms. Big "No War" Posters could have had a space for the candidate's name and picture, but were otherwise very useful.
6. Very useful
7. (a) Open letter was only handed out in ones or twos on polling day.(b)Used this to get Socialist Alliance/Green/PLP candidates to issue a joint declaration. The three candidates lead the anti-war march on November. 4. While NBN TV had

pictures of the "anti-war three" leading the march (good), Socialist Alliance's profile as the "true anti-war party" suffered as a result.

8. No answer.
9. No answer.
10. No answer.
11. No answer.
12. Five public meetings. One of our own and the others community-organised events – Newcastle Uni forum, Progressive Christian forum on unemployment etc. Other candidates commented on how well Erin Killion del Castillo (our candidate) spoke as a candidate.
13. (Was a joint rally) 100-150 attended. Erin (Socialist Alliance), John Sutton (Greens), Harry Williams (PLP), Thabani (Uni. International Student Officer). Steve O'Brien chaired and one or two other Socialist Alliance members spoke on the open mike. Good media response – NBN TV (see above) and *Newcastle Herald* (tacked on to broader article).

**Page:**

1. We've done at least two stalls per week since May (i.e., basically regular DSP/Resistance stalls involving other Socialist Alliance members and focussing on Socialist Alliance with big banner, Socialist Alliance material, *Socialist Worker* as well as *Green Left Weekly*/DSP/Res stuff). Generally one in Lismore CBD, one on Southern Cross University campus, and tried to cover most of the rotating weekly markets in various towns in the area, including Lismore, Nimbin, Channon, Bangalow, Mullumbimby—about 7 "suburbs". We had a refugee rights speak-out in June of 30 people, one in September with 20 people, and an October 13 anti-war rally of 100 people which was built in our name.
2. One front page local daily, one front page local weekly, and articles and pics in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *Courier Mail*,—all for October 10 picket with 50 people of National member Ian Causley's campaign opening with John Anderson and basically reported as an Socialist Alliance rally. One page 2 in local daily after October 13 rally of 150 people which quoted Socialist Alliance. A derogatory mention in the local weekly's write-up of an October 25 NTEU forum (in which the Green, saying fairly similar policy things to us, was praised effusively). A fairly hostile interview on local ABC on November 8 (the interviewer invited listeners to ring to "dispute what Edda is claiming" about the war and refugees). Two letters in the local weekly and three in the local daily.
3. Refugee Action Collective Brisbane came to September 28 Socialist Alliance forum and September 29 "anti-corporate carnival". Newly formed RAC Byron Bay came to November 3

Lismore anti-war/anti-racism rally. We made some good links with Nimbin activist circles around hemp campaign, Nimbin environment centre and Peacebus, attending and speaking at hemp rallies in July, and Nimbin pre-CHOGM event in September.

4. No answer.
5. Broadsheets good and virtually all distributed, brochures a bit ugly and not particularly useful when other stuff available. Posters good but a local crackdown restricted paste-ups. More “pole” posters in different colours would’ve been good, the cheaply printed full-colour ones for the 1998 Democratic Socialist campaign were very effective.
6. No answer.
7. (a). Open letter to ALP seemed to get good response including from the candidate, a right-winger but against the war (or at least upset when we hassled him about it), also from Janelle Saffin the NSW MLC, an NTEU branch executive and NC member, and a Teachers Federation activist. (b). A united front media release was agreed to by the Greens, Hemp Party and “Independent Labor” (i.e., knifed by the machine for preselection) candidate for Richmond, Julie Nathan. Didn’t get any coverage but useful for talking about campaigning. The independent dairy farmer candidate Tom Cooper agreed with the release, but basically said he didn’t want to alienate right-wing potential supporters. Interestingly he did publicly call for a vote on the war.
8. A few last minute “stop the racist war” badges that didn’t raise much money but were good for polling day.
9. Not really enough discussion/debate. A bit on preferences, i.e., whether Greens’ preferences should affect our preferences to them.
10. Not very—we had a party at a comrade’s house rather than a forum-type launch, no organised discussion and not a great fundraiser either. Real problem of lack of time for events and lack of venues here.
11. No answer.
12. October 25 NTEU education forum (80 people), October 30 environment forum (40 people), November 5 council meet-the-candidates (200 people). Generally good response, especially on the war (probably half of a fairly conservative looking crowd at the council meeting applauded anti-war statements by our candidate Edda Lampis), but a bit lost in the large field (12 candidates). The Greens guy better able to represent a “left pole” by having more questions directed at him and having more concrete, specific responses.
13. Our October 13 anti-war rally was sort of an Socialist Alliance rally, speakers being Socialist

Alliance, student council, Peacebus. Reported on page 2 of local daily.

#### **Perth and Fremantle:**

1. About five speakouts. In Fremantle there was a stall every Saturday and a number of other suburban stalls around Fremantle. In Perth we had regular stalls in Maylands and then scattered stalls in other areas.
2. Very little media. Some short remarks on radio and local papers.
3. Fremantle contacted a number of local community groups. The response was good.
4. No answer.
5. We used almost all the posters and broadsheets. They were very useful. It would have been better if they had arrived a bit earlier. The broadsheets were particularly useful. It would be great if they came out more regularly. They give people a great idea of what the Socialist Alliance is on a national level.
6. Great. The more the better.
7. (a) Some comrades spoke to the ALP members on the polling booths. There was a mixed response. Some were very happy with it while others didn’t say much. However there didn’t seem to be any outright hostility to it. (b) We didn’t use this very well. I think we needed to have more discussion on what we wanted to do on polling day. A number of comrades were not sure of what we were trying to get out of the day.
8. Badges
9. How many electorates we should run in. There was a little bit of discussion about the profile of member organisations during Socialist Alliance stalls and protests. There has also been a bit of discussion about how much we should be expecting of individual people and member organisations during the campaign.
10. It was OK but not great. We got 70 people which I think was a bit low. We should have had at least 100. The evening could have been better organised. We should have also had a larger public meeting.
11. No one in the Perth/Fremantle electorates used them. But I think that is because comrades didn’t try. I think that they can be very handy and something that we could still use.
12. No answer.
13. No answer.

#### **Reid:**

1. Two regular stalls, Auburn and Parramatta, on weekly basis; leafletting at a couple more spots in Reid.
2. Coverage in local papers—especially around rally, also refugee issues (including pictures)
3. Various groups around the anti-war, anti-racism rally (Afghan groups, AMWU organiser, refugee groups, etc)—but not specifically about the Socialist Alliance itself. Good response to the action.
4. No answer.

5. Most was used, but difficult to get any money for it. Posters especially useful.
6. They were fine.
7. No answer.
8. Badges.
9. Preferencing, Greens and ALP, union disaffiliation.
10. Quite successful, around 40+ people.
11. Translations very good and very necessary out here. Turkish would be good.
12. ABC public meeting, but not much else.
13. 250-300 at Auburn rally; speakers from Mission Afghanistan; Greens; Socialist Alliance; AMWU; Free the Refugees; others on open mike. Covered in local paper, page 3, with photo.

#### **Throsby:**

1. At least one election-specific stall per week; during the election period we covered 2-3 stalls on Saturdays in Warrawong (shopping centre closest to Port Kembla/Cringila), Dapto (working-class suburb), and the Wollongong Mall. We also covered stalls during the week in the Mall and had two stalls in the working class suburb of Warilla, and one in Cringila, a suburb with a large Arab/Muslim migrant population. In addition the Socialist Alliance conducted regular anti-war stalls on campus and on the streets, built, leafleted, had a stall and spoke at the 500-strong rally the week before the election.
2. Very minimal but good articles in the "free-to-homes" papers including colour pictures mainly profiling our anti-war work (but tending to call us "social alliance"). We were included in the ABC Radio forum for the seat of Throsby and candidate Marg Perrot made regular interventions into the talk-back forums on ABC radio in the mornings. Naomi Arrowsmith quitting the ALP made a big splash in the *Illawarra Mercury* and we were prominent in the *Mercury's* only article to date on the anti-war movement. This article was a two-page spread on a Saturday with large photo profiling us.
3. No answer.
4. Collected some from the national list but didn't really make huge use of it.
5. Nearly all of the material was used but we needed them much, much earlier. The broadsheet was letterboxed in conjunction with our election leaflet and was best used of the material. Arabic Strip very useful but late in the campaign.
6. As we shifted our resources mainly to street campaigning rather than "media" we didn't make huge use of them. Useful more for briefing and background.
7. No answer.
8. No answer.
9. Where to run easily was the longest debate, drawn out over two meetings, and involved a change of

- emphasis from Cunningham to Throsby. Fairly long debate on local preferences for Throsby.
10. Didn't bother having a formal launch, rather we put the effort into getting supporters/members involved in the campaigning.
11. Arabic was the essential one we required, and whilst we got it very, very late in the campaign, we got a good response from it.
12. The refugee policy public meeting, Anti-War rallies (all four). There were no "meet the candidate meetings we were aware of". Excellent response.
13. No answer.

#### **Wills:**

1. Two anti-war rallies in one suburb. Stalls about eight times over several months in five suburbs.
2. Before the official election period, we got a double spread in one of the main major local papers. During the election, we got the usual picture and brief statement as did the other candidates. Our candidate (David Glanz) was interviewed once on aged care by one local paper and came second in the list of preferences of Friends of Merri Creek, which featured in a local paper. David also took part in a two-hour talkback and discussion on 3RRR (semi-alternative radio) with the Green and Lib candidates (from midnight to 2am!).
3. Made tentative links to the Turkish Kurdish Human Rights Association. Other links were more one to one. Friendly, but not heavily mobilised.
4. Not a local one. We used the Quantock/Johnston list and published it on our main leaflet.
5. We used the language posters on polling day. They were useful, but the electronic method of distribution, if anything, made it slower to use them. Next time they should be done earlier and mailed out hard copy! The pink half A2 verticals were excellent and were all put up. The A2 hand No War poster was excellent and used well. We also had 10 reasons, open letter to ALP, etc on the stalls, but being spread thin meant it was difficult to use them.
6. No answer.
7. (a) None so far of the open letter, but that might change post-election. (b) No use of the proposal for a united anti-war declaration. But in practice we collaborated with the Greens on our speakouts.
8. No answer.
9. No answer.
10. Not very. It was going through the motions.
11. See comments above. If we're really well resourced, we could use Horn of Africa languages and Vietnamese.
12. We had a candidates forum. It went well for us, but it was only 30 people, mostly Socialist Alliance and Greens. The only "workplace" meeting during the campaign was a lunchtime meet-the-candidate at the pub opposite Moreland Centrelink. Eight

workers came. We put 500 leaflets in the Tax Office at Moonee Ponds against job cuts.

13. 100 to the first, 30 to the second. We had Socialist Alliance, Greens, ALP (the mayor), Ethnic

Communities Council, Islamic students; Turkish activist and Refugee Action Collective speakers. We got good media coverage for the first one—in both local papers.

## C. General comment and future plans

1. *What did your campaign do best?*
2. *Where was the greatest room for improvement?*
3. *When is the next state election?*
4. *When does state electoral registration have to be completed?*
5. *What plans do you have to gain registration?*
6. *What post elections plans/events does your branch have?*

### **Adelaide:**

1. Activities around polling booths on the day. Intervention in anti-war campaign. We were the recognised leadership of refugee and anti-war movements.
2. Fundraising, media (especially stunts), trade union contact.
3. Supposedly in March 2001.
4. (and 5). These questions are currently under investigation. There are two problems: (a) the name “Socialist Alliance” was used by the Socialist Party of Australia here some years ago. We therefore are not able to use it until the state election after the next one. (b) To register in this state we need names and (electorally correct) addresses of 500 members. This could prove difficult in the time we have.
5. See answer to 4.
6. Public meeting on refugees with the Greens in two weeks” time. Fundraising BBQ in mid-December.

### **Batman:**

1. Identifying ourselves as opposed to the war. Leafletting about 70 per cent of the electorate once. Developing a dialogue between ourselves and the Green candidate. Creating a campaigning atmosphere on the booths.
2. Networking was weak. Public meeting/rally opportunities were not taken. A much broader layer of supporter could have been mobilised for polling.
3. October 2002?
4. No idea.
5. Not considered locally yet.
6. Discussions with the Greens around the February council elections. A public meeting (next Thursday) to launch a collective to organise locally around opposition the war and racism (the emphasis is of course mediated by the developing political circumstances around Afghanistan.)

### **Brisbane:**

1. Intervening at rallies.
2. Working the media.
3. Two-and-a-half years
4. Before next election.
5. Recruit more members.

6. Fundraising, registration, keep profile up, initiate actions (eg local NOWAR group)

### **Corio:**

1. Letterboxing.
2. Mobilisation for stalls, organisation of more public meetings in our own name and better use of media—more distribution of our media releases.
3. March 2002.
4. Unsure.
5. None yet.
6. BBQ or Politics in the Pub in mid December.

### **Darwin:**

1. Three years (pew)...but local government elections in 2003 (very relevant to long grass issues).
2. No answer.
3. Not applicable.
4. Not applicable
5. Not applicable
6. Next year we are looking at having semi-regular events such as forums, dinners, debates to maintain Socialist Alliance profile and outreach. Continuing Nightcliff stall on Sundays and looks like we will have Socialist Alliance radio spot on weekly basis.

### **Fraser:**

1. Letterboxed 70 per cent of electorate, 45,000 leaflets dished out, spoke at eight rallies over the last six weeks. Involved over 120 people throughout whole campaign, politicised the elections on polling day by putting “Stop the War”, “Free the Refugees” on all of our how to votes, made links with migrant communities, got two current ALP members and another three ex-members to help us, plus more who left in the last six months.
2. Didn’t speak at many community meetings, nor union meetings.
3. October 2004.
4. No answer
5. We plan to put in 120 names for ACT registration by the end of the year.
6. Intervene in anti-war teach-in, December 9 rallies, have meeting in January next year, go on membership push.

### **Grayndler:**

1. The Marrickville Socialist Alliance was prominent around campaigning, early school closures then very prominent around the refugees and then the war. Our anti-war, pro-refugee rally on October was a feature of our campaign. Actively built with leaflet drops, it was loud, out there, well supported and with a little bit of civil disobedience. The rally raised the Socialist Alliance’s profile, raised it as a

- way groups contesting elections should act and raised the spirits of our activists.
2. The Socialist Alliance in Marrickville has a lot of “passive” members and supporters, our task is to encourage them to participate in the Alliance’s activities.
  3. April 2003.
  4. We have to lodge it in late January, registration needs to finished by the end of February 2002.
  5. Mailouts, phone-arounds, rallies to attract registration numbers.
  6. Mailouts, phonecalls, rallies to attract registration numbers. Public meeting next year.

**Gellibrand:**

1. Reach out to migrant communities and refugees campaign.
2. Work with unions in area.
3. 3. No answer.
4. 4. No answer.
5. 5. No answer.

**Hobart:**

1. Firstly, polling day team format with roving teams really made an impact. Secondly, the anti-war demo on October 20 (organised by the NO WAR network).
2. Media work (followed by general networking).
3. Tipped for early next year.
4. Takes around six weeks for processing. Elections take place at least four weeks after being called. Therefore an application would need to be in by the end of this year (this would be *very* difficult to achieve) to have a 70-80 per cent chance of being completed prior to election (if it is held in February as tipped).
5. Currently under discussion. Registration requires 100 members willing to have their names and addresses published in the newspaper. We have been trying to recruit close to this number all year but are currently around 40. We have been thinking we would launch a registration attempt when our membership level was within striking distance of 100.
6. Intro to Socialist Alliance meeting last week.

**Kingsford Smith:**

1. Stalls and basic outreach.
2. Working out local actions that would work better in an area where we are just starting to build up support and there is not a great tradition of street actions.
3. March 2003.
4. Names in by January 2002.
5. Contacting and hassling friends.
6. End of year meeting and drinks. Public meeting on war and globalisation early next year.

**Lowe:**

1. Involve new members and supporters.
2. We were too pressed for time to be better organised or make more use of nationally supplied resources.

3. March 2003.
4. January 2002
5. Being organised by Sydney District Organising Group.
6. District BBQ, branch meeting to assess our efforts.

**Newcastle:**

1. No answer.
2. No answer.
3. March 2003.
4. January 2002.
5. Sign up 100 members in Newcastle area.
6. Primarily by following up all contacts that we came across during the election campaign.

**Page:**

1. Regular street presence through stalls, paste-ups and presence at rallies, events with banners, leaflets, speakers over a number of months.
2. Sharing production of material and other organisational tasks between more people, particularly having someone or working groups concentrating on finances/fundraising and media work; fundraising plans prepared well before campaign (e.g., Greens had planned a gig for months before hand and only had to adjust date, theme slightly after the war started, and attracted several hundred people); better prepared topical/educational discussions at meetings; more clever/outrageous media stunts both to involve people and get attention; politically, need to be better at differentiating in various forums/media our working class anti-capitalist economic demands from the various types of petty bourgeois anti-corporatism expressed by Greens, CEC, One Nation and several independents.
3. March 2003.
4. January 2002.
5. Ring around members, contacts, forms on stalls.
6. Joint *Green Left Weekly*/Socialist Alliance end-of-year dinner, leaflet on and donation collection for striking Sunshine Sugar mill workers from stalls, building December 10 refugee rights rally in Lismore, possibly one in Grafton, thinking of next year regular forum such as monthly Politics in the Pub.

**Perth and Fremantle:**

1. Our intervention into anti war and refugee rights protests. We had speakers on all the platforms and handed flyers to all those that participated in the rallies.
2. Campaign stalls and speak-outs. We could have organised more with better organisation.
3. In three years.
4. Not sure yet.
5. We are launching a campaign at December 9 rally. The aim is to get registered by mid-March next year.
6. Intervening into the December 9 human rights rally. End of year B.B.Q.

**Reid:**

1. Local rally.
2. Meeting and involving people.
3. March 2003
4. January 2002
5. Big push from next branch meeting .
6. Branch meeting; registration campaign; end-of-year social event; intervention into human rights day rally.

**Throsby:**

1. Street campaigning; outreach to the anti-war campaign, including initiating the first three rallies; letterboxing; posters.
2. The establishing of a campaign committee was a great step forward but should have been done earlier, fundraising also could have been started earlier. However, with the size of the branch and the importance of the non-election campaigns we were stretched, and with the convener getting full-time shift work there were limited opportunities to spread the work effectively. We would have liked to have a meeting in Cringila to reach out to the

migrant communities more but the cost of the hall and the short time were prohibitive.

3. March 2003.
4. January 2002.
5. Contacting blitz to be put to AGM on Wednesday.
6. Maintain Socialist Alliance profile in anti-war and refugee action groups and events and several fundraising events as outlined above.

**Wills:**

1. a) The anti-war protests. b) We printed the how to vote cards early with an anti-war statement on the back and letter-boxed them. This clearly had an impact, with voters turning up with our how-to-vote cards at at least one booth. c) We letter-boxed approx. 30,000 homes.
2. Mobilising supporters, getting into workplaces and community networks.
3. Any time from October 2002.
4. A comrade is checking this.
5. Link it to re-registration of existing members, plus recruitment drive.
6. Lots of fundraising! Also, we are likely to stand in council elections in March. ■

## *Section B: The “war on terrorism”, the left and Islam*

# Why political Islam is not an ally

*By Toma Hamid Toma (Worker Communist Party of Iraq)*

September 11, was the climax of fierce and bloody conflict between two terrorist camps. America and Its alliance in the one hand and political Islam in the other. The impact of this conflict is not restricted to the two sides but will have profound negative impact on the international political situation and the entire humanity.

In this conflict the USA poses as a defender of democracy, civilisation, human principles and western lifestyle, while the political Islam poses as the defender of Palestine, Iraqi children and as fighter against injustice toward Muslims and Arabs. Contrary to their propaganda for both terrorist camps, this conflict is a power struggle. It is a war between the world's sole superpower and a political current aiming to get a bigger share from the political power in the region and worldwide. Each camp is pursuing its own objectives. The USA is trying to reinforce its hegemony on the world and improve its political position, which was declining prior to these events.

America was aware about the declining of its global position. It's aware that it is losing control on the global affairs. It is aware that after the collapse of Soviet Union there has been no reason to keep the west under the leadership of the USA as was during the Cold War against the evil empire of Soviet Union. The west as well is pursuing its own objective outside the USA tent.

So, for the USA it is necessary to take advantage of this tragedy to serve its interests and first of all to assert itself as the only world superpower. It is necessary to exploit these events to ensure that the west remains under its leadership. The events today are very similar to those following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The golden opportunity that Iraq had offered to the USA in 1990 to appear as the defender of the civilised humanity is presented today by the terrorist Islamic groups.

America takes advantage of these events to silence its critics in Europe and worldwide, and to legitimise its arrogance, militarism and warmongering policies.

Eradicating terrorism is the USA slogan to mobilise the world once again around its policies and objectives.

America has tried by all the means; through its media, politicians, researching institutions and ideologists to create an evil empire and a common enemy from Saddam, Milosovic and Islamic Fundamentalism. In order to maintain its hegemony and leadership on the world while its economic position has been declining and other economic and political blocs are emerging.

Today it is trying to create a bogey from Osama Bin laden. A bogey that humanity should be thankful to America and NATO for eliminating it, saving the humanity from its wickedness and building a world of security, peace and prosperity as they promised after the fall of the Soviet Union.

On the other side, there stands Political Islam, which was created and nurtured during the Cold War by the West and the USA. The West had dished out billions of dollars to these Islamic groups and provided them with weapons to fight the Evil Empire of Soviet Union. In Iran political Islam was brought to power to oppress an anti—USA and anti—Shah revolution which was strongly moving towards the left. The west had brought mullahs from the peripherals of political field into power. In Afghanistan they brought Taliban in the way that we all know.

Political Islam was created by the support of the oppressive nationalist governments in the region, which are terrified by the ghost of left, communism and working class. They support political Islam to control the emerging left and growing and dissatisfied working class in the developing capitalisms of these countries.

Political Islam was founded and sponsored by the USA and the west to fight against the Arab nationalist governments for their conflict with Israel or for their militant and populist nature and being against the west and pro-Soviet; like Egypt.

For decades these currents had been marginal forces without any real role in the political life of the region, but the USA and the West were who blew life into them. The USA and the West were who brought them to the political fore in the region.

Political Islam is a rightwing political current, which base on Islam as an ideological framework and fight for a bigger share of the political power. It has nothing apart from its name in relation with the religious currents of 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the twentieth century. It derives its existence from contemporary society and politics.

Political Islam was the result of, and a reaction to the failure of the modernising projects of the growing bourgeois nationalism in the region and its failure to establish the promised prosperity after the independence of these countries. It is the response of a bourgeoisie in crisis in order to reorganise the society in these countries within a new ideological framework against working class, the left and progressive forces.

Political Islam as a current has exploited the problems, which face the society like poverty,

deprivation of the majority of the masses, suppression, and exploitation. It exploits the anger and discontent of the people in that region with the USA and its unconditional support of Israel in its suppression of the Palestinian people, with imposing the economic sanctions on the people of Iraq and supporting the reactionary and oppressive regimes against the masses of people.

The backbone of the political Islam is those hopeless, exhausted and over-burdened masses on the outskirts of Cairo and Islamabad. In that environment where there is no existence to a strong left with a clear alternative, able to solve the crisis and difficulties of the society in the interests of communism, working class, prosperity and civilisation, this current has emerged.

The end of the Cold War has not weakened the political Islam but it actually has come to the fore stronger, seeking a position in world, which has experienced profound changes. This current has grown due to ideological and political shifting of the world to the right, spreading killing, terrorism and massacres against women, children, intellectuals and journalists. Spreading terrorism against the innocent people in different part of the world. Political Islam has grown not just in Egypt, Algeria and Sudan but in the heart of Europe and America.

Political Islam is due to the political and philosophical shift of America and the west to the right. It is due to the reactionary and racist theories like “cultural relativism” and “clash of civilisations”, it is due to reactionary and racist respect for the “peoples’ culture”. It is due to the ghettos made for “Muslims” and “Arab” in the western societies, for which the masses in America themselves are paying now. It is due to the West’s abandonment of civilisation and modernism. Contrary to their claims these are the causes behind the growing of political Islam and not the presence of groups hostile to the “civilisation”, “Western lifestyle” and “Western culture”.

So the emerging of political Islam is absolutely not related to the “culture of the Islamic Societies” or “Islamism of these societies”. It is a political issue deeply rooted in the situation of contemporary world, and its difficulties and crisis. Creating such a relationship is distorting the reality. Its a false, deceitful conception and for public consumption only. By pushing this concept to the fore they try to fool the masses in the West who unfortunately are far away from Baghdad, Tehran and Cairo to know that these societies are not Islamic and that they have finished with Islam for decades. It is the concept of the mainstream media, which is part of the foreign ministries in these countries. It is an attempt to give a wrong picture to the masses of people in the West and America and keeping them unaware of the situation in order to pass their plans and projects

The USA knows very well that the reason behind rising of political Islam is the very starvation, poverty, unemployment, lack of political and civil liberties, political executions, and arbitrary imprisonment and so on. It has repeatedly asked the Egyptian and Algerian regimes to ease the pressure on the masses of people by making some reforms, because they know that these factors make a fertile ground for the growing of political Islam.

Political Islam claims that it defends Palestinians and Iraqi children and that this is the aim of its conflict with America. But we all know the hell political Islam and its gangs has created for the people in that region, especially children and women. They behead women who refused to wear veil, kill and assassinate journalists who talk about freedom of expression, and take intellectuals, and writers to medieval courts. They rape virgin girls so that, according to their beliefs, the soul of their victims won’t go to paradise. They use the money of the Gulf Sheikhs to impose the Islamic veil on the heads of the poor children.

These societies are not Islamic but political Islam has tried to impose Islam upon them by force, terrorism, killing and luring the poor with money. You have seen that as soon as Taliban run away, women threw the veil, youth shaved their beards, danced in the streets, turned their recorders on to listen to songs although Northern Alliance is not much better than Taliban. Guess what would have been the response of people if they were completely free.

America does not want to eliminate terrorism, and does not aim to achieve security for the humanity. If it was to do that, then the path is clear and quite different.

The USA responds to terrorism with terrorism. It faces the terrorism of groups and gangs with more violent, better-orchestrated and more damaging state terrorism.

During more than half a century, the USA has been a major source of insecurity and terrorism. From Vietnam, Cambodia, Louse, Latin America, to Palestine, and Iraq the terrorism of USA is clearly obvious. It is the only state, which has used atomic weapon and reduced thousands of children and innocent people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki into ashes within seconds.

America has protected and defended Israel by all the means to maintain its occupation, racism and terrorism against Palestinians.

America supports the most reactionary, terrorist and militarist regimes in the world starting from Penoschet, Soharto, and Shah of Iran, the Gulf regimes and others. It had sponsored and supported the Islamic groups.

The leaders of these Islamic groups like Omer Abdul Rahman, Abo Hamza, Ahmed al-Thawahery and tens of others in Germany, France, and Britain were until very recently agents and mercenaries of the CIA. They were trained on different kind of fighting

and taught the most lethal ways of killing and making the most destructive explosives by CIA.

If we assume that America will arrest Bin Laden and dismantle al-Qaeda and Jihad networks and that Taliban and Iran will stop supporting terrorism, would that mean the end of terrorism?

What about hundreds of terrorist Islamic groups in the west whose followers have no problem with committing suicide as they sold the life on this world for a later life?

What about the problems which face the humanity on which the terrorist Islamic groups lean. From poverty, deprivation, despair, suppression of the Palestine issue, economic sanctions on Iraq and political and economic crisis of the regional countries? The result of violence is nothing but violence and its victims are the innocent and defenseless people in different parts of the world.

Would eradicating al-Qaeda or al-Jihad and other terrorist networks, this if America decides to eradicate them, be the end of terrorism? Contrary to the USA claims, this war will create a ground for the growth of terrorism and will exacerbate it worldwide; from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Lebanon and Palestine to Europe, America and Latin America. If USA is pursuing eradicating terrorism, this is not the right way to do that. The growth of these groups and escalating terrorism will be a serious hurdle in the way of secular and progressive forces.

In this war, the eradication of terrorism is not the objective of the USA as returning Sheiks of Kuwait or Kuwait sovereignty was not its objective during the Gulf War.

It is pursuing its own objective in consolidation and expansion its political and military hegemony and

dominance over the world as the only superpower and not eliminating terrorism,

Its problem is not with the terrorist nature of these gangs. America does not aim to eradicate terrorism, but to stop them from standing as a hurdle in the way of the USA and its interests. For America, the terrorism of political Islam is necessary but not against the interests of America. It is necessary against the left, communism and progressive forces. The USA aims to tame and pacify and not eliminate them. It aims to impose a retreat on that part of political Islam, which is against the interests of the USA but nothing more.

America helps Rabani, Dostum, Khatami and Gulf Sheiks as long as they are not against the interests of the USA, in return America introduce them as moderate Islam. For the masses of people, Islam is Islam: Daily and flagrant violence, killing, executions, lack of liberties and civil rights specially women's rights, discrimination, racism and sectarian suppression and so on. Today they are not the peoples' opium but groups of murderers and criminals.

Ending Islamic terrorism is related to ending the causes behind it: these causes are the issues, which political Islam feeds on. Eliminating terrorism will be through establishing an independent Palestine state, ending the economic sanction on the people of Iraq, stopping the support to the oppressive regimes in the region, and stopping the support to all the groups of political Islam. Will be through supporting the secular and progressive trends in the region and support the struggle of the masses against the reactionary currents.

This is the task of the progressive and secular forces, working class, socialist forces, liberation and egalitarian forces, and the force of the humanity. The USA will not do that, You see how America is attempting to impose another gang which as criminal as Taliban on the people of Afghanistan.

## Anti-war Coalitions: Lost Causes and Self-defeated Movements

### *Interview with Koorosh Modarresi (Worker-Communist Party of Iran)*

*The anti-war movement is taking shape in the West. It has focused on condemning the war against Afghanistan and US and UK imperialism and militarism. However, nothing is being said about the Taliban, political Islam and Islamic terrorism. Why do we insist on both sides of this war of terrorists being equally condemned?*

**Koorosh Modarresi:** The war is practically over. Fortunately, the rule of the Taliban Islamic murderers has crumbled and ironically with its collapse, the "anti-war" coalition will lose its purpose and momentum. People will not get attracted to lost causes and self-defeated movements. To answer your question, we should really look back and address the arguments behind this movement. Why has the fate of this movement been entangled in the fortunes of a barbaric,

anti-human, Islamic gang of drug dealers—the collapse of which has brought a smile to the face of every human being not only in Afghanistan but throughout the world?

In looking at this movement, we must distinguish between the intentions of the many decent people who have participated in it and the framework in which this movement has been defined and organised. Unfortunately, intentions do not count in the end result of a movement. A movement's demands, slogans and political framework determine its place in the real social and political environment we live in. Indeed, this shows where a movement stands and what it can achieve. To make a quick judgement on the position of this movement, I point to a fact. In your question, you

have mentioned that the anti-war movement is a movement that is “taking shape in the West” This is a misconception and a clue to the root of the problem. In real life and in the context of social movements worldwide, this movement is not and was not a Western movement alone. In reality, although one end of this movement has definitely been in the West, the other end has been in the anti-war demonstrations in Peshawar and Kabul. The aims and slogans of the two have been indistinguishable. Even more striking is the composition of the movement, especially in Europe. On the streets and in the movement’s slogans and demands, the line between those who are genuinely and passionately for the freedom and dignity of the people in Afghanistan, and those who were seeking to impose one of the most brutal and devastating political systems in history, namely the murderous anti-human rule of Islam, has not been clear. The two have joined arms; ranks of Moslems praying in this political action have joined arms with ranks of those protesting against Imperialism.

When you concentrate on Imperialism and ignore the role and significance of Taliban or political Islam as a whole, you create a common cause and join arms with political Islam. This twisted reality has its roots in the inverted colonialist mentality of the Western marginal left, which in all its life has been nothing but a pressure group without any distinctive perspective. On one side we have the Western left intellectuals who feel guilty about the past colonial history of the West and are apologetic to the “Third World” as such. The issue in their system of thought is not the plight of the people living in this “world”, but a preoccupation with self-serving concepts about people in the West and the rest of the world. To them, the rest of the world, the “Third World” is a given entity. In this entity, people have this strange “culture” of depriving themselves of the achievements of human society in the 21st century. In this entity, women love to be deprived from any human rights and spiritually adore sexual apartheid; girls love to be segregated from boys; people hate freedom of thought, conscience and expression. They are Moslems and want to implement the rotten laws of Islam in their society. Human beings in this entity are portrayed as inhuman. This is the inverted colonialism that I was talking about. You and I and all the millions of people fighting for freedom, equality and prosperity and against not only Imperialism but against the barbaric and criminal rule of political Islam in all its aspects, do not exist in their picture of this “world”. We who have been brutally suppressed, jailed and executed do not exist in their picture of this “world”. All those people suffering from Islamic or nationalist anti-human governments and so-called oppositions simply do not exist. We are deprived from the need for “Western” human rights and concepts of dignity and prosperity. In this view, human rights are not universal but “relative” to culture and culture is a uniform barbaric culture. If people are executed for a simple

out-of-marriage relationship or because of expressing a simple doubt about the validity of the “divine” laws of Islam, they deserve it. This picture of us and of this “world” is actually the same as the colonialist’s view—be it inverted.

If the freedom, equality and prosperity of people in Afghanistan are in question, then we should first declare the undeniable rights of people, defend these rights against whoever is suppressing them, and choose our allies accordingly. By moving Taliban and political Islam to the “domestic” and benign side of the conflict, this movement shoots itself in the foot. At the end of the day, there is and there has been a long and bloody struggle between the majority of the people in these countries with political Islam. In this context, whatever the justification, this movement has chosen its ally; it has chosen to ally itself with the Taliban and political Islam and not us. The anti-war movement cannot share in the happiness of the children in Afghanistan, the smiles on the faces of girls who can go to school and on women who can unveil after the collapse of the Taliban in Kabul. This is the tragedy. The anti-war movement simply asks that the lives of the people in Afghanistan be left in the hands of the Northern Alliance or tribal leaders. They are prescribing yet another human catastrophe.

*The assistance of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a source of terrorism in the world, has been sought in the so-called war against terrorism. Why is it critical that the anti-war movement go beyond the Taliban and condemn the Islamic Republic of Iran and political Islam in general?*

**Koorosh Modarresi:** If this is a war against terrorism and not only against terrorism applied to the West, then it should be fought on all fronts. The reality is that Western governments have financed and nurtured political Islam as a weapon to fight the former Soviet Union as well as progressive movements in the region, which could threaten its economic and political interests, i.e. cheap labour and stability. In the context of the current conflict, these governments do not want to give up this political arsenal. They want to curtail political Islam from reaching the West itself and confine it to its designated role, i.e. terrorising people in their own countries. “Behaved” political Islam has been and is an ally of Imperialist interests. That is why they turn to the Islamic government of Iran, one of the bloodiest regimes in recent history for support. In this respect, as I mentioned earlier, the anti-war movement has followed the same mentality—but inverted. They are reaching the same conclusion from another side. They say they are anti-war, but one should immediately ask which war? Are you against the war in which Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and in fact the West imposed Taliban on Afghanistan? Where were you then? Are you against the terror, which Islamic regimes in Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, etc. have imposed on the people in these countries? In this inverted colonial mentality, these are “internal affairs”.

Political Islam and lack of human rights are parts of people's "culture" in these countries—or in a sense better than Imperialism. This mentality is not about the plight of people in ex-colonies, it is about the guilt for the Imperial past in the minds of these intellectuals. Otherwise, they should have targeted these beasts in any clothes, defended the undeniable rights of people, declared it universal, targeted all those who are against it and have allied with all those who fight for it.

*Some activists have stated that condemning the Taliban and political Islam will prevent a mass movement from developing. As a result, mullahs and even supporters of the Taliban are welcome in such gatherings. For example, in a Coalition against the War meeting in Birmingham, England recently, someone who distributed a leaflet against "Islamic fundamentalists" was threatened by Islamists. Can a movement, which includes Taliban supporters and Islamists, be called reactionary or should people support such coalitions nonetheless? Please comment.*

**Koorosh Modarresi:** Same dilemma again. According to this view the "masses" in these countries are Moslem and want political Islam, so if you want a mass movement you have to ally yourself with political Islam. This is pathetic and insulting. This is inverted racism and colonialism. There has been a fight going on, particularly for the last 20 years between people and progressive movements in the Middle East and Europe on one side and political Islam on the other side. Just look at the daily struggle or the record of the struggle of the non-Islamic opposition in Islam-ridden countries. The self-centred mentality in which everything must revolve around the guilt of "Western" pseudo-intellectuals is appalling. I would have been ashamed to be a part of a movement in which defenders of freedom and distributors of anti-Islamic literature are threatened, women are segregated from men or religious slogans are brought forward as political demands. Freedom of expression, equality of men and women and more importantly the right for a secular state applies to the people in the "Third World" too. Isn't it shameful that we have to argue about this?

*At the same meeting in Birmingham, Muslim women sat separately from others in the meeting. These meetings are playing into the reactionary theory of cultural relativism. Please comment.*

**Koorosh Modarresi:** As I said, I would have been insulted and ashamed to participate in such a meeting and I would have protested and argued as loudly and as persuasively as I could to defend human dignity and either eject these reactionary anti-human forces out of the movement or deprive the movement from the participation of any freedom loving individual or group.

*Several activists have stated that it is better to use the term fundamentalists or Islamic totalitarianism rather than political Islam. Political Islam is seen to some as a positive term—for example Muslims who are*

*politicised and fighting for their own demands. Why do we insist on the term political Islam?*

**Koorosh Modarresi:** Islamic fundamentalism and totalitarianism are old labels invented by Western foreign offices and media to distinguish between Islamic movements benign to their interests and those with some hostility towards them. They have divided them into good and bad guys or fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists. I should mention only two points about this distinction. Firstly, they are not fundamentalist; they are pure pragmatists. Consider Khomeini and the Islamic government in Iran, for example; they have twisted Islamic law whenever they have had to, and mostly under pressure from people or the necessities of their politico-economic environment. They, however, adhere to Islamic laws, they are Islamic regimes and the whole idea has been to implement Islamic laws to control society. This is political Islam. Secondly, suppose there is a difference between fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist Islam. Then what happened to the right of having a secular state? Are these people prepared to live in a non-fundamentalist religious state? Are they prepared to accept that a law is "divine" and cannot be questioned by people? The answer is simply no. But they prescribe a religious state for Afghanistan and they think people there deserve to live in the Middle Ages. Any decent human being would reject the idea of a religious state in any form just like they would reject the idea of a fascist or racist state. People all over the world deserve to be free, and should be encouraged to get rid of any religious and racist state. That is the simple truth, which is ignored. I do not support racists who are fighting for their demands or fighting Imperialist forces. Similarly, I will not support those who are fighting for their demands under the slogan of political Islam. I fight my war for freedom, equality and prosperity against not only Imperialists but also political Islam. The anti-war movement has chosen the Islamists and not us and millions of people in the West and East to ally itself with. This is the simple and bitter truth.

*Some activists comment that condemning political Islam will encourage racist attacks against Moslems. Please comment.*

**Koorosh Modarresi:** As I said before, it's the other way around. Getting along with an anti-human ideology and letting down the progressive forces is the real racism here. When you judge the truth and the rights of people according to a race or culture you are a racist.

*On September 11, 5-6000 innocent people perished in a crime against humanity. Not much is being said about them in the anti-war movement. In much of the discussions around this, there seems to be support among activists—though not ordinary people—that the attack was a revenge attack for injustices meted out by the USA. Please comment.*

**Koorosh Modarresi:** Suppose it was revenge. Are we allowed to excuse any fascist and anti-human revenge? Are we prepared to offer the same conciliatory attitude towards fascists and racists who attack foreigners in Europe? Well, these attacks are definitely revenge against the system, but it is aimed at innocent people. Can the family of the victims of the September 11th massacre go for revenge? The answer to these questions will be no. This sympathy can be justified if and only if you consider the revenge seekers lesser beings than yourself. If you subject them to your own human standards then blind revenge and criminal acts cannot be appreciated or justified in any sense. Here, you smell the roots of cultural relativism and inverted racist mentality, or it may be political Islam in disguise again.

*We believe that a true mass movement can only come about if both sides are condemned. What demands must a progressive social movement after September 11 include and why?*

## Islam = Peace

*[This is the text of a leaflet distributed at the Auburn Socialist Alliance anti-war community rally on October 4, 2001.]*

The word “*Islam*” has two meanings. The first is “*surrender to the will of God*”. The second is “*comprehensive peace*”. These two meanings combine to make the basic premise of Islam. That is, that *the only way to find true peace is through surrendering to the Creator’s will*.

The “*Muslim*” is the one who has Islam i.e., the one who attains real peace by surrendering to God’s will.

The entire universe surrenders to God. The entire universe is bound by laws of physics, chemistry etc. These scientific laws are in reality God’s laws. So the entire universe is Muslim.

Islam can never tolerate war unless it is a just war. Islam can never tolerate injustice. For this reason, Islam is diametrically opposed to all “isms” that create conflict and war.

Islam is against war between nations, tribes, genders, classes etc. We are all humans. Divisions,

**Koorosh Modarresi:** At this stage we must declare the undeniable rights of people in Afghanistan, support the formation of a secular government based on a free elections, condemn political Islam and Imperialist policies which have created this humanitarian disaster in the region, condemn imposing another model of tribal and religious rule on Afghanistan, and support the genuinely secular forces and organisations in Afghanistan and region. Furthermore, we must dry out the roots of political Islam by giving the Palestinians their rights and putting an end to Israel’s occupation and brutal racism. We must defend the basic rights of people against both the Imperialists and political Islamic movement. This is the only way out. This is the only way we can help to create a civil society in which people in the Middle East and Islamic-ridden countries can have a chance to participate in determining their future. Isn’t it strange neither the imperialist governments nor the “anti-war” movement defends, or even mentions the right of the people in Afghanistan to a secular state? This is not accidental in any way.

which are beyond our control (race, gender, etc), are not worth fighting about.

Islam is therefore opposed to socialism. **A true Muslim cannot be a socialist. A true Muslim stands up for the rights of all classes, not just the so-called “working class”.**

A true Muslim recognises that socialists are killing and raping Muslims everywhere. A true Muslim will never stand with socialists who slaughter and rape Muslims in Kosovo and Bosnia.

A true Muslim fights socialism because socialism is evil. Socialism is against *all* religion. Socialism is the enemy of spirituality and religion. Socialism is dangerous to the soul because socialism says that matter and economics determines history, not human morals and beliefs.

We congratulate our socialist friends for organising this event. But in being here, we are not supporting the evil of socialism.

**Produced by the Auburn Chapter of the  
Naqshbandi-Khalidi and Chishti-Sabiri-Imdadi  
Sufi Orders**

# Correspondence with Jeff Richards

## *1. My disagreement with the Socialist Alliance Statement on the September 11 terrorist attacks (by Jeff Richards)*

I would like to express my overall disagreement with the Socialist Alliance statement on the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. by the Al-Qa'edah, led by Osama Bin Laden.

In my view, we should have expressed more open condemnation of Al-Qa'edah and the Taliban, who are the perpetrators of this crime. We should have called for the overthrow of the Pakistan-sponsored regime in Afghanistan and called for logistical support for the opposition to the Taliban, including air strikes and commando units, whether by NATO or Russia. We should provide qualified support for imperialist military intervention in the central Asian region. Furthermore, we should have used the statement as an opportunity to condemn religious fundamentalism (of all faiths).

The problem with the Socialist Alliance statement is that it has adopted the world view of the—currently fashionable—anti-globalisation movement. Because of its stunning media success, the politics of the anti-globalisation movement has too readily been adopted by left wing organisations who have slowly been growing tired of living on the distant margins of political life. We have not subjected the ideology of the anti-globalisation movement to the kind of scrutiny that the left gave to feminism. The problem with the world view of the anti-globalisation movement is its tendency to collapse all politics in to the relation between superpower and client states (.....where have I heard this discussion before? Circa 1973? Circa Cultural Revolution variant of Maoism?). At its most extreme, the politics of class relations within and among client states has simply disappeared from the conversation of the anti-globalisation movement, replaced by the “horror” of everything Washington does in the world. The result is a form of “apolitical politics”.

I regard the Taliban and Al-Qa'edah as a dangerous political force created and nourished by The Pakistan ISI and the Saudi Arabian ruling elites. These forces are now out of control and are posing a dangerous threat to the region. The Taliban could become serious contenders for political power in Pakistan. A Taliban victory in Pakistan would place that country's nuclear arsenal in the hands of people who would be willing to use it against any who dare challenge the authority of the Wahhabi fundamentalists. I have little doubt that India, China and Russia will not stand by and let this happen. They will launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike against Pakistan in an effort to destroy Pakistani nuclear capability.

I would also like to state my agreement with those, like the journalist Christopher Hitchens, who have

characterised the Taliban and Al-Qa'edah as fascist I realise that naming something fascist is “fraught with theoretical contention”. I recognise the central importance of Trotsky's analysis of fascism. I feel that the use of its methodology by sympathisers of fourth international politics has made it impossible to describe anything that does not follow closely the trajectory of Weimar politics as fascist.

1) The Taliban and Al-Qa'edah are the creation of the ruling elites of Pakistan Saudi Arabia and the United States. The Taliban leadership is largely recruited from lower middle class members of the extreme fundamentalist Wahhabi Madrassas. Al-Qa'edah is largely made up of murderous psychopaths from a wide range of Asian and Middle Eastern societies.

2) Taliban and Al-Qa'edah are not national liberation movements that have emerged from the ruins and social conflicts of Afghani Society. They are parasitical warlord organizations transplanted into the shattered Afghani polity. They can only maintain their organisational cohesion by continuous conflict.

3) Al-Qa'edah represents a new “post-modern” form of terrorist organization. It has deep relationships and networks to criminal organizations, business groups, and state security. Its use of the vague political ideology of “the war of civilisations” (used by all the major contenders in this conflict, overtly or otherwise) makes it possible to ascribe a political goal to what was essentially a massive exercise in shorting the stock market (up to AU\$25 Billion).

A number of commentators have argued that the actions of Al-Qa'edah are born from the despair of the dispossessed. This is profoundly insulting to the despairing and the disposed. It is a perverse idea. There are other more significant reasons for the use of terrorist politics that have to do with the changing nature of power among financial and political elites and with the historical failures of socialism in the 20th century. These have nothing to do with the powerless.

I am concerned that we have effectively formed an alliance with the Taliban in their struggle against US Imperialism. That is what could be inferred from the SA statement.

Finally, I would like to have a little quibble about the final paragraph.... “is determined to play the fullest part in this struggle for humanity and life against money, power and death”. Sure, it's a flourish... but what does it mean? I don't think it makes much sense. Is money as a transactional medium against humanity and life? Are we now against power, which is a relation among organised interests... I thought we

wanted power... or have we suddenly become anarchist? Against death... well, not even the glorious victory of socialism is going to conquer death? This statement is even sillier than that previously fashionable slogan on ultraleft badges "Smash Capital".

## **2. Suggestion to Jeff Richards from National Conveners**

Friday, 5 October 2001

Jeff,

After discussing with Dick Nichols, we thought the best way to deal with your statement is to issue it in an Socialist Alliance *Internal Discussion Bulletin*.

Are you happy with that?

## **3. Resignation letter of Jeff Richards**

This is to inform you that I am resigning from the Socialist Alliance. I refuse to participate in the Socialist Alliance's defence of theocratic fascism. I refuse to be forced to accept that this election campaign will be wasted on apologising for the "alleged terrorist Osama Bin Laden" (GLW Homepage October 14). This is nothing more than political opportunism of the worst order.

Not a word in your statements condemning the horror the Taliban has inflicted on the people of Afghanistan. Not a word condemning religious fundamentalism, Not a word about the women you have been executed or beaten by the Taliban. Not a

## **4. Reply by National Conveners**

Sunday, 21 October 2001

Jeff,

The statements adopted by the Socialist Alliance NE were arrived at after considerable discussion. We all agree that opposition to the war drive by Bush and Howard has to be our central focus in this election. Within that, there were differences on what weight to give to criticism of the reactionary politics of religious fundamentalism.

There will undoubtedly be considerable discussion on this in Socialist Alliance after the election. We have internal discussion bulletins for that purpose, and had already agreed publish your comments on this issue in that forum.

You should note that we have sent a message of solidarity to the Labour Party of Pakistan (attached below) in their "struggles against the US war on Afghanistan and against the religious fundamentalists in Pakistan" and that the NE unanimously agreed to organise a speaking tour by Farooq Tariq of the LPP.

We think it is very unfortunate that you have decided to resign from Socialist Alliance, and urge you to reconsider. The Socialist Alliance is an open organisation that welcomes vigorous debate. We think you could contribute to that by arguing for your views

## **5. Reply from Jeff Richards**

Monday, 22 October 2001

Riki,

I think this is another example of how we are letting the apolitical politics of the—currently fashionable—anti-globalisation movement get the better of us.

Jeff Richards, Adelaide, South Australia, 4 October 2001.

The Socialist Alliance NE reached the position in the statement after some serious debate. Whatever differences we have, all on the NE agree that opposing Bush's war drive is our first priority.

Riki Lane

word about the women who had acid splashed into their faces because they were exposed. Not a word about the communists butchered by the Taliban. Not a word about the killings and kidnappings carried out by the Al Qaeda network all over the world.

I am also fucked off that you evolved your miserable Taliban cheer squad line without bothering to ask the membership for their opinions. You didn't even bother opening a public discussion. Is this the new democratic centralism? You can have your Socialist Alliance. I have better things to waste my life on.

Jeff Richards

Riki Lane for

Socialist Alliance NE

### **Addendum**

Farooq,

Below is a message of solidarity from the Socialist Alliance in Australia. Socialist Alliance was formed in February this year by nine socialist groups (Democratic Socialist Party, International Socialist Organisation, Freedom Socialist Party, Socialist Alternative, Workers' Liberty, Workers' League, Workers' Power, Worker Communist Party of Iraq, Socialist Democracy). Since then we have recruited many members who are not members of these groups and are actively involved in mobilising against Bush's drive to war. We are standing candidates across the country in the national elections on 10 November.

We will discuss launching an appeal for political and financial support for the LPP and, if possible, a speaking tour by one of your members at our National Executive meeting on 19 October.

Yours in solidarity

Riki Lane

Thank you for your efforts to try and get me to stay with the Socialist Alliance. Unfortunately I simply unable to carry the political positions adopted by the

Socialist Alliance and the “currently fashionable” anti-globalisation movement. I have a moral and political problem with it, as I made clear in my first letter to the Socialist Alliance. I think that “the opposition to the war drive” is something I could not defend publicly. I want political and military action in Afghanistan. I want to see the Taliban destroyed and Bin Laden and his associates arrested or killed. I don’t have a problem with civilian casualties in war. War without civilian casualties is inconceivable. I know that my stand would never be accepted by people in the Socialist Alliance. Rather than engaging in a fruitless attempt to

## ***Appendices***

# **1. Socialist Alliance statement on September 11 terrorist attacks on US**

## **Oppose Bush’s drive to war! Oppose racism!**

The Socialist Alliance shares the horror felt by human beings across the planet at the devastation and suffering unleashed in New York and Washington on September 11. We condemn these acts of indiscriminate violence, which can only serve to destroy solidarity among working people and for which there can be no justification.

Working class people in the United States have borne the brunt of this atrocity, and we stand in solidarity with them and in particular with the public sector workers and trade unionists. They performed the most dangerous and difficult tasks in rescue and recovery, in the course of which hundreds gave their lives.

However, with many millions around the world, Socialist Alliance also shares the fear that the United States government and its allies, including the Australian government, will compound this tragedy by taking yet more innocent lives. Washington’s looming open-ended war against “terrorism” will expose millions of innocent people to death, injury, destruction and social disruption. Bush’s vendetta could plunge humanity into a global cycle of extreme violence and mindless vengeance.

Here in Australia the Howard government has again rushed to give unconditional support for the US to use lethal force. Yet state terrorism of any kind is not an acceptable response to these events—in cooperation with others the Socialist Alliance will do its utmost to stop it.

We remember that only three years ago, a previous US president, with the vociferous support of John Howard, exacted revenge for a terrorist attack by bombing a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, with huge loss of life and destructive consequences for the people of that country. There proved to be no connection whatsoever between the factory and the alleged perpetrators of the terrorist attack. The US bombing, and Australia’s shameful support for it, became yet one

win people over I think I should just step aside and engage in political reflection for a while. I think that Socialist Alliance has a long long way to go before it is politically significant and my efforts to make people agree with me will be nothing but a bit of political dust. I think I will just be a good nurse, a loyal union member, and a reasonably good father who reads a lot of interesting books.

Regards,  
Jeff Richards

more sharply felt grievance in the Third World, and another spur for the types of people who may have committed the outrages in the USA.

The Socialist Alliance condemns the hypocrisy and arrogance of the US political leadership and its allies in Australia. These people are themselves complicit in appalling acts of terrorism and violence against civilian populations, and in general of imposing policies of inhuman brutality across much of the Third World. Their policies are the root cause of the terrorist response against symbols of US power like the Pentagon.

Among their human costs have been the deaths of more than half a million children in Iraq, hundreds of thousands in East Timor, and many others in the Balkans, Palestine, the Congo, Central America, and of course Afghanistan. There, indeed, the USA armed, trained and funded both Osama Bin Laden—the supposed author of the terrorist attacks—and the reactionary Taliban rulers of the country.

The most fitting memorial to those who died or suffered in New York and Washington would be the complete reversal of Washington’s policies of exploitation of the Third World, and their replacement by policies that promote peace, democracy, co-operation and sustainable and egalitarian economic development.

The Socialist Alliance also condemns those politicians and forces in the media who have seized on these terrifying events to promote their own self-seeking agendas of increased military and intelligence spending, curbs on civil liberties, and racist attacks on asylum seekers, immigrants or members of religious or ethnic minorities.

Liberal government ministers cynically used the horror of the attack on the World Trade Centre to strengthen opposition to refugees. Already there have been instances of racist attacks on Muslims and ethnic minorities. The Socialist Alliance will be in the

frontline in the struggle against this racism and xenophobia.

The Socialist Alliance calls on all who have shared our horror at the scenes in the USA to join us in acting now to prevent the proliferation of violence across the world. We are ready to play our part in mobilising the broadest possible opposition to any attempt by US politicians and their global allies to use this tragedy as a pretext for military aggression.

Labor and the Coalition appear united in their support for US foreign policy, however dangerous it may prove to the people of the planet. Once again, the Liberal and Labor response to the terrorist attacks in the US demonstrate that working people in Australia need an independent voice that will speak out against the elite corporate interests that now dominate the main parties.

To eradicate violence, it is necessary to eradicate social and economic injustice. Global capitalism is

creating a world of ever more pronounced extremes of wealth and poverty, power and powerlessness. As long as this process continues, we will live in a violent and unstable world.

The Socialist Alliance says it is absolutely vital that we stand together against the war-makers, the arms-dealers, the giant corporations, the racists, and all the highly-placed hypocrites who would exploit fear, grief and uncertainty for their own ends. The Alliance calls for, and will participate in, broad and representative groupings of all those who are determined to organise against the war threat. In particular, we believe that the trade unions have a vital role to play in building opposition to Bush's drive to war.

The Socialist Alliance is determined to play the fullest part in this struggle for humanity and life against money, power and death.

## 2. Resolution on the tasks of the Socialist Alliance in the movement against war and racism

*Adopted by the National Executive at its September 28 telephone hook-up*

1. The National Executive of the Socialist Alliance has taken a clear stand against Bush's determination to exploit the mass grief and suffering caused by the acts of terror of September 11 to launch a new war drive. That drive has the potential not only to spread death and destruction around the world, but to relegitimise US imperialism's "right" to use its military might as it thinks fit and to roll back democratic and civil rights before a new version of McCarthyism.

Moreover, in Australia the Howard government is acting as the ever-loyal ally of the US and the Australian "popular" media (e.g. the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*) is doing all it can to instil a mindless revenge mentality and war hysteria in the Australian population.

At the same time, however, there is deep scepticism and concern in wide layers of people. The protests, public meetings and organising meetings that have already been held against Bush's war drive show that a mass movement against US militarism and the bipartisan support it receives in this country can be built.

It is the responsibility of the Socialist Alliance to define how it thinks this movement can best be developed and what its role should be within it. To this end the Socialist Alliance National Executive is adopting this resolution.

2. The Socialist Alliance will devote itself to consistent, committed opposition to the impending war. It believes that the movement against the Bush war drive has to be driven by non-exclusionary, activist

committees and/or networks that agree on clear, concrete demands and in the organised labour movement. The demands of the Sydney Network Opposing War and Racism (NOWAR) exemplify the right approach. They are: (a) No US war! (b) No Australian troops or support! (c) No racist scapegoating! and (d) No attacks on democratic rights! All who agree with such demands should be encouraged to join the movement and be given a place within it, regardless of their positions on other issues.

3. The Socialist Alliance will make the struggle against Bush's war drive and the backing it receives from Howard and Beazley the central feature of its campaign for the 2001 federal elections. Howard wants to ride a wave of war and racist hysteria back into office. The abject capitulation of the Labor Party to this agenda is a major reason for Howard's rise in the opinion polls.

The campaign will have the following features:

- The Socialist Alliance and its individual affiliates will strive to give prominence to its speakers at all rallies and protests against the war. To this end it will hold and/or participate in regular anti-war stalls, actions, public meetings and teach-ins. The September 18 Melbourne public meeting is an example of the sort of initiative that should be adopted by all Alliance branches and regions.

- Socialist Alliance candidates will use every opportunity—especially workplace and trade union meetings—to explain why the war should be opposed, and why there should be no Australian involvement and support. We should build around slogans such as "Money for jobs/welfare, not for war" and argue to get

the Liberals out and vote Socialist Alliance for a real alternative.

- Alliance candidates will seek to strengthen ties with migrant organisations on the basis of its anti-war and anti-racist stance.

- The Alliance will launch an immediate media offensive against the war threat in the name of its candidates, and all local branches should seek to build the Alliance's profile as the anti-war political force in their area. In Wills, for example, an anti-war meeting will have speakers from the local city and ethnic communities council and the principal of the local Muslim school alongside the Alliance.

- The National Conveners will oversee the production of a Socialist Alliance mass distribution leaflet, which refutes all the arguments for war point by point, as well as of an anti-war Socialist Alliance poster, badge, sticker and t-shirt.

4. Socialist Alliance trade union members are urged to raise motions in their unions that urge their unions to position themselves against the war, and to provide financial and political support to the movement's networks and committees

## Section C: Socialist Alliance stalls and the literature of affiliates

# THE ALLIANCE AND THE LEFT PRESS

*[The October 19 National Executive discussed two resolutions concerning what policy to adopt towards the presence of the literature of Alliance affiliates on Alliance stalls. The National Executive resolved not to vote on the issue, but to publish the two resolutions discussed to the Internal Discussion Bulletin and to hold off a vote until the next national conference. The two resolutions are published below.]*

### 1. ISO resolution

#### Introduction:

While the formation of the Socialist Alliance rests on the nine socialist groups, the success of the Alliance will depend on its ability to achieve a membership and involve substantial numbers well beyond the membership of those groups.

The quality of the united front that the ISO sees as particularly important requires that the Alliance project aims at more than “left unity” around a common platform.

At this stage of the Alliance, the “image” (for want of a better term) of the Alliance is particularly important. If it simply seen as an exercise in a hunting ground for the left groups, it will fail in its efforts to actually be something that can go beyond that. That’s why we made the effort at the launch meetings not to have picket lines of competing paper sellers or a gauntlet of literature tables.

Considering the reality of the Alliance and the prominence of the left groups in sustaining it, any policy concerning selling the left press will need to have a degree of flexibility. But there is a relationship between how we conduct Alliance activities now and we need where we want the Alliance to go and what ideally the Alliance will look like in the (hopefully) not too distant future.

There should be a difference between a group stall and an Alliance stall. It is one thing to use a group stall to collect names and join people up to the Alliance when we are trying to get the Alliance established, but it is another thing altogether once someone has joined the Alliance and the Alliance takes on some independent existence.

When an Alliance member wants to help at a suburban Saturday morning stall, are we asking them to come to an Alliance stall or are they on a “group” stall doing Alliance work?

The same problem arises when it is not a matter of FSP, DSP, ISO, WP, WL or other comrades doing their individual group’s stall. Ideally, Alliance stalls

shouldn’t be run by members of the one group. But if different groups are on a stall, who gets to sell the interested person the paper? Which paper? Or are they all just available and not actively offered? It is unrealistic to expect that copies of all the left press is going to be available on any given Alliance stall. But, in any case this wouldn’t address the fundamental problem regarding the character of the Alliance.

Not selling our respective papers on any particular stall is of course a sacrifice of sorts for the groups with publications, but it a sacrifice worth making for the longer term gain of developing the Alliance to its greatest potential.

The fact that issue of selling the left press has come up this way, reflects the limited advances the Alliance has made to be greater than the sum of its parts. Are there any places where we have managed to build Alliance branches that have the kind of independent existence that we envisage? For now the answer may be no, but no reason to give up on the project.

#### Resolution:

That where possible, Alliance stalls should be “joint efforts”, staffed by more than the members of any one group. Alliance stalls should be made up of Alliance-only literature.

This general position does not preclude, individual groups holding their respective stalls promoting the Alliance and selling their literature. But our priority is to establish an independent existence of the Alliance as soon as possible.

**Moved: Ian Rintoul**

### 2. DSP resolution

In the light of discussion on this issue on the Victorian State Organising Committee, this meeting of the National Executive of the Socialist Alliance resolves:

1. That all Socialist Alliance stalls should be clearly identified as such (either with placards and/or banners) and that Socialist Alliance literature should be displayed most prominently on these stalls;
2. That the periodicals of all Socialist Alliance affiliates can also be carried on Socialist Alliance stalls; and
3. That affiliate organisations are strongly urged to place Socialist Alliance literature on their own stalls.

**Moved: Dick Nichols**

# A contribution on perspectives for Socialist Alliance

*By Jorge Jorquera (Melbourne West branch)*

The discussion raised in Melbourne and on the National Executive in Socialist Alliance regarding the sale of left papers on Alliance stalls poses anew some of the questions raised at the national conference regarding both the political platform of the Alliance and the organisational perspectives for the Alliance's development.

The comrades who oppose the public association of the left papers with Socialist Alliance (which is what the "stalls" debate is all about) are essentially suggesting that the Alliance should disguise its revolutionary credentials and put forward a left social-democratic platform and image.

The arguments are the same as those put forward at the conference against the "open borders" formulation and the issues of disarming the police and funding to public schools. According to this viewpoint, if we are to win workers breaking from the consensus, we must present ourselves as "a little bit to the left of Labor but not too much".

This contribution will deal with both the incorrect reading of the current political situation involved in this perspective, and the theoretical weaknesses involved in it. Unless we can open a discussion of depth in this framework, we risk keeping the Alliance at the level of a "left truce" rather than developing a dynamic process of working class political unity.

## **The political period**

We are not in 1990s Australia, any more than in Britain today. The dissolution of Labor's hegemony over the working class (as a whole and most importantly among its most advanced elements) has a new character and is significantly more developed when considered in historical perspective.

The first cracks in Labor's (historical) grip on the organised labour and social movements occurred on two fronts in the 1980s, largely independently of each other. Both were reflected in and outside the Labor Party. The Builders Labourers Federation and associated left union struggles against "Accordism" punctured Labor's control and created a drip of dissent that is still being felt today in the unions. Within the Labor Party these union struggles significantly increased the numbers of activists resigning and the demoralisation of those remaining.

Likewise, the Nuclear Disarmament Party reflected a similar development in the social movements. Both represented the beginnings of a molecular process that in its early days, against a background of retreats of the working class movement around the world, ended in defeats.

This cycle of struggle and defeats could be said to have come to some conclusion by the early 1990s. By this stage what remained of a substantial socialist left

in the Labor Party was drastically moving to the right. The confidence and imperatives of economic rationalism were growing, while the old frameworks for resistance to it were dissolving.

But before the far right would begin the process of filling some of this void (what One Nation's growth reflected), some of the remnants of the social movements were able to construct a sort of "progressive" electoral opposition to the Liberal-Labor consensus. This is what the Greens and (at times) the Democrats reflected in the 1990s. The broader (international) retreat of the socialist left, and the specific rightward shift in the Australian unions, created an atmosphere where this development of the Greens/Democrats "alternative" was tilted toward a narrow parliamentarism.

Nonetheless, the vibrancy of the environmental movement, the only social movement still growing in the 1990s, suggested the possibility for the revolutionary movement to develop a pole within this "green parliamentary opposition".

As a result, the early 1990s presented the left with the task and possibility of trying to build a "left social-democratic/green" electoral alternative. This was as much because of weakness as of strength.

Today, in one important sense at least, we are in a much stronger position and understanding how it is that we are stronger is the critical question. We are stronger because our influence within the advanced workers is significantly greater. For most of the last two decades (and beyond) the groups that make up the Socialist Alliance and the revolutionary perspectives they represent were all but a marginal pest to the Communist Party-Labor left class collaborators. That has changed.

The paradox, however, is that today the advanced workers are weaker in relation to the class as a whole. That is to say, the numbers and political depth of the advanced workers today is much less so than in the 1970s and 1980s. In other words, the social movements and unions are weaker but where they are strongest is precisely where the base of revolutionaries is greatest. There's no better example of course than the anti-corporate movement.

In this context should we turn our attention to reconstructing the old "left-Labor" social democratic project that held together the larger mass of politically advanced workers throughout the previous decades? Should we be led by the yearnings of some of the older demoralised layers of the working class? Or should we use the new strength of the revolutionary forces among those newly in struggle, to develop in the direction of a mass revolutionary project for the Australian working class?

If there was a natural movement of the advanced workers toward the articulation of their demands in the

framework of a mass social-democratic vehicle, then the revolutionary movement would have no option (out of weakness, as discussed earlier) but to ride that wave and try and develop a revolutionary pole within it.

But there *is* no such movement happening within the Australian working class. On the contrary, there is an advanced layer among the working class, that though small, has tasted every sort of “progressive” (parliamentary) alternative and has witnessed their deficiencies. This precisely, is what the anti-corporate movement reflects, and what tendencies like Workers First in the labour movement in part also reflect.

### **Theoretical weaknesses**

Apart from the misreading of the political period, the perspective of building the Socialist Alliance as a left social democratic opposition implies some theoretical mistakes. These assumptions were expressed more or less clearly by some comrades of the International Socialist Organisation in the national conference debates referred to earlier.

Many of the contributions by ISO comrades in these debates relied on the view that the revolutionary left should take its cue from the so called “average worker” who is fed up with Labor but. However, even if this represented a marked social trend, it would certainly not be the starting point for revolutionaries.

Revolutionaries have always taken their tactical cue from the advanced workers, those engaged in struggle on the issues of the day. It is workers *leading* union struggles and social movements who provide, in the course of their struggles, the slogans and demands which the revolutionary movement seeks to generalise across the mass movement.

The political weight of each such demand raised is measured in relation to the strategic necessities of the class as a whole, which boils down to the development of unified and independent working class action.

Socialist Alliance’s role must be that of helping provide leadership to those working class elements already advancing on their own and providing proposals (even localised) to move the class forward. In concrete terms, we should take our cue from militant elements in the AMWU, CFMEU etc, rather than focussing on the leaderships of the bankrupt Labor-controlled unions.

However, instead of concentrating our tasks on the development of the revolutionary consciousness (political class consciousness) of the leading elements of the working class, some ISO comrades would like us to concentrate on the development of the basic trade union consciousness of the least

politicised elements. For this you only need a social-democratic vehicle—ten priority pledges, an election campaign and you’re off.

Not really. The problem for this perspective is that because there is no natural movement in this direction by the advanced workers, there are actually no forces who will practically make such a perspective materialise. The activists in the labour and social movements are interested in something more radical—developing a revolutionary political leadership for the class.

We should not mistake this simply for a question of (written) “program”, as if by posing a radically worded revolutionary program we will attract such activists. It is a question of developing a (practical) revolutionary leadership, in the movements. You can’t do this with a left social democratic organisation. Such an organisation is inherently slanted to electoral work, which is only one field of battle. Most importantly, in this period especially, it’s a field of battle where we can only make significant gains in *as a result of successful struggles in the movements*.

Some ISO comrades seem to want a left social democratic Socialist Alliance for electoral work and the ISO organisation for movement work. The assumption seems to be that workers are only won in masses to some variety of social democracy, which revolutionaries must participate in as some militant minority until a given date or opportunity.

These theoretical assumptions are being negated by the reality in front of our eyes. Socialist Alliance is not developing as a mass (left) social democratic vehicle. Our development depends on the actual and real commitment of the left organisations involved and on the small but committed numbers of newly radicalised forces that are joining us—the people who *act*, the advanced workers and movement activists we recruit to Socialist Alliance and who actively help build it.

### **Developing the Socialist Alliance**

To build the Socialist Alliance we need to develop it as a front of the revolutionary forces in this country. Unity of the revolutionary forces (organisations and individuals) in the current political context—given our strength in relation to the advanced workers—is already playing a powerful role in advancing the struggles of the anti-war movement. In the trade unions and among students and social movements, a united revolutionary pole could attract the natural leaders of the movements and provide the possibility of extending the scope and depth of each struggle.

In every arena (trade unions, student movement, etc) and various campaigns, Socialist Alliance should aim to work as a front, drawing on our collective strength to put forward the slogans and demands that can build these movements and help generalise the growing struggles of the day.

## Section D: Policy development

# Existing policy egroups

[The Founding Conference on August 4-5 this year voted to open a process of policy elaboration, based on detailed policy that was referred from the conference to policy working groups to be set up as egroups. Below are the existing policy egroups, along with the convener of each group. All Socialist Alliance members should get involved in the policy discussion, and if any member wants to convene a policy egroup in any area where this does not exist, they should get in touch with the National Conveners at [ne@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:ne@socialist-alliance.org).

Policy area	Convener	Egroup name
Ecology:	Michael Morphett	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa_ecology_group">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa_ecology_group</a>
Women's liberation:	Kamala Emanuel	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SA_womens_liberation">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SA_womens_liberation</a>
Health:	Phil Sandford	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SA_health">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SA_health</a>
Tax	John Passant	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa_economics_group">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa_economics_group</a>
Refugees:	Ian Rintoul	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa_refugees_group">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa_refugees_group</a>
Trade Union rights:	Peter Murray, Chris Cain	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa_tu_group">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa_tu_group</a>
Anti-nuclear:	David Lockwood	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa-antinuclear_group">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sa-antinuclear_group</a>

Groups are also presently being formed in the areas of education and youth policy. The National Conveners will notify branches when they are finalised.

## Section E. Information

# Socialist Alliance does well in student elections

By Belinda Selke

**WOLLONGONG — Despite contesting the Student Representative Council (SRC) elections for the first time at Wollongong University, the Socialist Alliance won the highest number of primary votes for education officer and came a close second for president. The elections were held October 23-25.**

After preferences were distributed, the positions were won by Question, a ticket promising better student services. The position of women's officer is yet to be declared, the result delayed by the last minute withdrawal of a candidate. It is likely that Socialist Alliance member Nicole Hilder will be elected to the position.

Two left-wing tickets, Nobody Can Eat Fifty Eggs and Upset About Hair Products, were disqualified on the final day of polling after a complaint about their election material. Both tickets supported the same candidates for the sexuality and activities officer positions. The initial count indicated that if these tickets had not been disqualified their candidates would have won. Instead, these positions were won by Question.

The Socialist Alliance ticket ran under the slogan "No to war, no to racism". It won four general representative positions on the SRC.

According to Socialist Alliance member Christina Sacco, the result "showed that students are not just concerned with on-campus issues. The war and racism

are important issues that students think the SRC should be campaigning around."

"The Socialist Alliance ticket was the only one to run on an actively anti-war basis", she explained. "We pledged to use the resources of the SRC to oppose the bombing in Afghanistan."

Hilder told *Green Left Weekly* that the campaign was a great success, despite missing out the positions. "This will be a big boost to the Illawarra Socialist Alliance branch", she said. "We were clearly the pole of attraction for students looking for a democratic, active and inclusive SRC."

From **Darwin**, Gary Meyerhoff reports that the Socialist Alliance provided the only spark of political activity in an election that totally underwhelmed Northern Territory University students. Only the positions of student union president and National Union of Students (NUS) delegates were contested in the October 23-25 student elections. All other positions were elected unopposed or remain unfilled.

The Socialist Alliance team won two of a possible three NUS positions. "We campaigned on a clear anti-war, anti-racist platform and students supported that", Socialist Alliance NUS delegate Scott White told *Green Left Weekly*. Ruth Ratcliffe, the Socialist Alliance candidate for president received 35 per cent of the vote, losing to independent Paul Canet-Senior.

From *Green Left Weekly*, November 7, 2001.