

# Alliance Voices

**Socialist Alliance Discussion Bulletin**

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## **Universal, free, quality healthcare: A draft policy for conference**

*This policy was drafted by members participating in Socialist Alliance's defend medicare e-group. It incorporates existing SA policy and proposals published in the special policy edition of Alliance Voices (Vol 4, No 3).*

The Socialist Alliance bases its policy on health promotion, disease prevention and timely treatment of illnesses and includes promoting good health. It aims to encourage a healthy community in a healthy environment and reduce health risks. Health includes the physical, mental and social well being of the community. It is a resource used by individuals on a daily basis.

A healthy life depends on a healthy environment, safe working conditions and enabling people to increase control over this improvement process. It will be based on the concept of hope and community control.

But access to healthcare is progressively being removed from the poor, and many so-called "high-paid" workers. The public health system is failing, and many in rural and outer metropolitan areas have limited access to even basic general practice medicine. Hospital waiting lists are overcrowded, with too many nights where emergency wards are on ambulance bypass. Meanwhile the private health system benefits from billions of dollars in direct and indirect government subsidies, on top of the semi-compulsory private health insurance rip-off, where working people who can "afford" it pay huge premiums for little return. Where the public system, even in its damaged state, is relatively efficient, the private sector is a black hole for money, with little useful health outcome. In the face of the health crisis, the Howard government is cutting funding to public hospitals and wants to dismantle Medicare. Working people and the poor have a basic right to universal, free, quality health care.

### **The Socialist Alliance will restore and extend Medicare**

The Socialist Alliance endorses the principle of universal health insurance which underlies Medicare, and emphasises that Medicare is not just a "safety net". If Australia is to have comprehensive universal health insurance, paid for by progressive taxation and ensuring equitable access to health care for all, there is no need to have private health insurance. Currently, private health insurance is massively subsidised by the Australian government, and it contributes little to total health expenditure. By abolishing the tax rebate for private health insurance, \$2.5 billion could be freed to provide more resources for public hospitals.

Private health insurance encourages a two-tier health system. The Socialist Alliance would phase out private health insurance so that all Australians would have the same level of health insurance and the same access to health care.

The coverage of Medicare would be extended to include dental care and appropriate ancillary services such as physiotherapy and psychological counselling as well as dental, aged care, prosthetics, rehabilitation, alternative therapies, dental, optometry, speech, dietetics, auditory and preventative services. The Medicare rebate paid to doctors would be increased to an appropriate level, to ensure that doctors receive adequate remuneration for bulk-billing. The Medicare levy would be increased by an average of 1%, to help fund these policies. However, rather than a flat tax, currently 1.5% of taxable income, the levy should be a progressive tax, like income tax, where the percentage of taxable income which would constitute the Medicare levy would increase with increasing income.

### **The Socialist Alliance would make multi-disciplinary community primary health care services the cornerstone of the health system.**

The Socialist Alliance would ensure the availability of adequate funding for Community Health Centres (CHC) providing comprehensive primary health care, focussing initially on areas of greatest need. Funding would be made available to general practitioners working in poorer areas to convert their practices to community health centres, with the doctors and other health professionals working in salaried positions within the public service.

Democratic joint committees of medical professionals, other health workers and members of the community will be established to coordinate the CHCs. The community will be fully involved in the process of establishing and administering the CHCs.

The Socialist Alliance will establish Women's Health Centres providing access to contraception, abortion and cancer screening facilities.

### **The Socialist Alliance would ensure that essential pharmaceuticals are available according to need.**

The Socialist Alliance would retain the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and legislate to ensure that it is quarantined from any trade agreement and any undue influence of pharmaceutical companies. The Commonwealth Serum Laboratories would be re-nationalised, and given the specific task of producing cheap generic drugs.

The Socialist Alliance will lobby in international forums to overturn the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement, which maximises pharmaceutical company profits by allowing 20-year patents, whilst denying millions of people access to life-saving drugs.

### **The Socialist Alliance will ensure that mental health services are adequately funded**

The prevalence of mental health issues is well known in the community, and it is predicted that depression will become the major cause of morbidity in the next decades. There is also a stigma attached to these conditions. Major primary intervention strategies, education and service networks will be established at workplaces, schools, and within communities to tackle these issues.

Counselling, psychological and psychiatric services will be made available free of charge in CHCs.

Facilities will be established to assist the reversing of the prevalence of the current trend especially towards wide-scale depression. It is the view of the Socialist Alliance, however, that the predicted increased prevalence of depression is related to the effects of neo-liberal economic policies, and it can be expected that implementation of a broad range of Socialist Alliance policies will help to reduce the prevalence of depression.

The Socialist Alliance will legislate to protect the right of access to free, quality mental health care, without pressure to conform to traditional gender roles or other social stereotypes.

### **The Socialist Alliance will ensure that funding and structuring of health services emphasise prevention and equity**

Prevention of ill health will be primary in our policies. The promotion of healthy living styles will be promoted by special campaigns.

Schools will be funded to promote healthy eating and providing healthy food for children by establishing a free lunch time meal program in all schools.

Strategies for reduction of stress levels and accidents at work places will be formulated.

Free, quality health education and screening programs will be fully funded.

The prevention of ill health will reduce the cost of treatment in the long run. The inclusion of the community in the decision-making processes will also assist in this process. The fact that the community and individuals take responsibility for their health will boost the type of healthy community we envisage.

The costs of health policies will be achieved by, amongst other things, abolishing government subsidies for private health insurance, and by a major reduction in the defence budget.

### **The Socialist Alliance will ensure that patients' rights are respected**

The Socialist Alliance will guarantee patients' control by legislating the right of access to all information required for informed consent; the right to appoint a legal guardian of a patient's choice; the right to choose or refuse medical treatment; the right to die and the right to assisted suicide. Hospitals to be forced to admit their surgical, pharmacological and other nosocomial mistakes as a matter of due process.

A no-fault medical indemnity insurance system (similar to the system currently available in New Zealand) will be introduced which will ensure that patients are fully compensated for medical mishaps, without the necessity for adversarial court cases, whilst ensuring that patients can expect medical care of the highest possible quality.

### **The Socialist Alliance will ensure that there is an adequate health workforce to meet the healthcare needs of all Australians**

The Socialist Alliance will expand student positions in tertiary health education faculties to overcome the shortage of health workers in nursing, aged care and general practice, particularly in rural areas.

## **Socialist Alliance charters**

Moved by Jorge Jorquera, for the National Elections Working Group

### **Motion 1: Education Charter**

That the Socialist Alliance National Executive work with Resistance and SA comrades in the education unions and student campus members to produce an Education Charter. This Charter should be based on existing SA education policy and have the purpose of popularising the socialist view of education among students, educators and parents who oppose the neo-liberal recipes of Liberal and Labor.

### **Motion 2: Health Charter**

That the Socialist Alliance National Executive establish a working group to produce a Health Charter, based on the policies adopted at this and previous conferences. The purpose of the Charter shall be to facilitate SA agitation and propaganda against privatisation and for a socially owned and run health system.

### **Motion 3: Charter for Workers' Rights**

That the Socialist Alliance National Executive work with the national trade union committee to produce a Charter for Workers Rights, based on existing SA policy. The purpose of the Charter shall be as both a federal election campaigning tool in the labour movement and a general propaganda tool for recruitment and political agitation among workers.

### **Motion 4: Charter Against Poverty and for Welfare Rights (Social Justice)**

That the Socialist Alliance National Executive establish a working group to produce a Charter Against Poverty and for Welfare Rights, based on the policies adopted at this and previous conferences. The purpose of the Charter shall be to facilitate SA agitation and propaganda for social justice.

### **Motion 5: Charter For Refugee Rights**

That the Socialist Alliance National Executive establish a working group to produce a Charter For Refugee Rights, based on the policies adopted at this and previous conferences. The purpose of the Charter shall be to facilitate SA agitation and propaganda for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

## **Resolution on Seeing Red**

Submitted by the Seeing Red Editorial Board

Conference resolves:

1. To endorse the work of the National Executive in forming the Seeing Red Editorial Board;
2. To confirm its support to the method of formation and work of the Editorial Board (including right of co-option and right to offer invitations to individuals to become contributing editors); and
3. To confirm comrade Dick Nichols as managing editor.

## **Motion on building the Alliance**

Moved by Anne Picot (Sydney Central branch)

Following a resolution passed by the Sydney Central Branch of the Socialist Alliance, it is recommended to National Conference that all branches of the Alliance help build the local peace groups, as well as the city-wide coalitions, as a priority area of work in order to build the anti-war movement, help focus it on defeating John Howard at the federal election, recruit to the Alliance and build its influence as a broad, alternative socialist party.

## **Motion concerning military policy**

Moved by Alan Woodcraft (Fremantle branch)

The Alliance is for the legalisation of trade unionism in the armed forces. In Fremantle the anti-sea swap campaign has found that many American Navy sailors are conscripts; after being found guilty by American courts they are given a choice between serving prison sentences or signing up to the Navy. Also after speaking with rank and file Australian sailors they have found the need for a union. There is also considerable dissent within the Australian armed forces, evidence being a number of recent suicides. This motion intends to connect the Alliance to rank and file elements within the armed forces.

## **A paper of the Alliance, for the Alliance**

Moved by Anne Picot (Sydney Central branch)

The Socialist Alliance needs a variety of publications to get our message across, build support for our electoral work, support our campaigns and movement work, and to recruit to a credible left alternative to the ALP.

While conference endorses the goal of developing our own Socialist Alliance paper, conference notes the limited results of the SA *Green Left Weekly* trial. Conference believes that for the Alliance to make progress towards having its own paper, it needs an editorial board that is not limited by a unilateral relationship with the publication of one affiliate.

The incoming SA editorial board needs to take responsibility for editing all SA contributions, which in turn are available to all affiliate publications.

The basic principle of any publication representing the Socialist Alliance is that it is owned and controlled by the Socialist Alliance. This is consistent with seeking the broadest possible input and support for our publications from the

membership as a whole. This principle has been endorsed by the branches and members who have supported the open letter "A paper of the Alliance, for the Alliance".

The SA *GLW* trial period has shown that the development of an Alliance paper cannot be artificially hastened. Such a development depends on growth of membership, political cohesion and resources. By contrast, the successful launch of *Seeing Red* shows what is possible when the Alliance acts together on a publishing project which is within its capabilities.

Conference therefore agrees to build on the experience of the trial period with *GLW* by:

- electing an eight-person SA editorial board to solicit, edit and make available SA material, including the column "Our Common Cause", to all affiliate publications;
- directing the National Executive, in collaboration with relevant working groups, to produce at least four broadsheets a year. These should be offered as inserts in *GLW* and *Socialist Worker*, as articles to other affiliate publications, and printed separately for use on stalls, at rallies, letterboxing etc;
- placing a high priority on the production and sale of *Seeing Red*.

## **What kind of paper?**

Moved by Brian Webb (Sydney East branch and National Executive member)

An Alliance paper will not be possible without the resources of *GLW* and other affiliate publications. But it will also not be possible without a process of thorough debate within the Alliance about what kind of paper it needs.

In order to frame such a debate, conference suggests that, at a minimum, an Alliance paper would need to:

- have a socialist name;
- promote the Alliance, its positions and its campaigns;
- reflect agreed Alliance policy, except in designated debate or letters pages; and
- be sustainable from within the Alliance's own resources, without making selling the paper a requirement of membership.

## **Motion to support the Stop Killer Coke Day of Action - July 22 2004**

Moved by Carlene Wilson (Wills branch)

"That the 2004 Socialist Alliance Conference resolves to continue its support for the campaign to Stop Killer Coke by providing appropriate resources for organizing the second International Day of Action to Stop Killer Coke on July 22 2004 and that this Conference sends a further letter of solidarity to Coca Cola workers in Colombia."

### **Background**

Comrades may be aware that there is an on-going campaign to highlight the abuse of trade union and human rights by the Coca Cola Company in Colombia. Nine trade unionists working for the Coca Cola Company have been killed since 1989 and thousands more intimidated, kidnapped, tortured and had their families threatened. This is in the context of a country considered to be the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade unionist.

Other unions have suffered at the hands of the government and US sponsored paramilitary gangs, many having lost hundreds of members to the death squads.

Sinaltrainal, the food and beverage workers union, which covers the workers in Coca Cola's bottling plants has seen massive de-unionisation as a result of the anti-union violence. But it has been fighting back on an international level by organizing solidarity.

In 2003 Socialist Alliance played a good role in helping to get the first International Day of Action off the ground in Melbourne, where there was a rally of over 100 people. This year it would be great if there were rallies in all the cities and towns where Socialist Alliance has branches and if these could be sizeable demonstrations of support for Colombian workers and against anti-union intimidation and violence.

The Colombia Demands Justice Campaign, which organized last years action has already garnered strong support from unions like the ETU and is currently working to build on this. Socialist Alliance could help by taking an active role in planning meetings, by using our own networks of trade unionists to spread the word about the planned rallies and to provide a donation towards the production of publicity material.

## **Motion on SA leadership bodies**

Moved by Louise Walker, for the Non-Aligned Caucus NE Working Group

"The National Executive and National Convenors will strive to create a positive team-working environment. National Convenors will head areas of work and encourage all NE members to participate in one of the working bodies. Special effort will be made to include as many Socialist Alliance members in those working bodies as possible."

# Amendments to the SA Constitution

Moved by Louise Walker, for the Non-Aligned Caucus NE Working Group

*Note: Adopting the following amendments will replace the September 19, 2003, National Executive decision to allow unaligned NE members to proxy, for a particular NE meeting, any financial member of SA. These proposed amendments (below) require that unaligned NE members be directly elected by their State or Territory, and accountable to it, which means that their proxies should be from the same State or Territory.*

1. To amend 6.3 to read:

6.3. National Conference shall elect a National Executive, and any National Officeholders and national bodies.

2. To add new paragraph 6.4 to read the following, and renumber subsequently:

6.4 National working groups and other bodies may be formed by National Conference or the National Executive.

3. To amend existing 6.4 (new 6.5):

6.4. The National Officeholders shall be five National Conveners, at least two of whom shall not belong to an affiliate organisation. The National Conveners, to be elected out of the incoming National Executive, shall be elected by the same slate method as for the election of the National Executive. Proposed slates for the National Conveners can only be nominated after the election of the incoming National Executive.

4. To amend existing 6.5 (new 6.6):

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

- Two representatives from each of the larger affiliates; From affiliated organisations, one representative for every 50 Socialist Alliance members or part thereof, with declared Socialist Alliance tendency figures subject to scrutiny by National Conference on request;
- One representative from each of the smaller affiliates; Unaffiliated State and Territory representatives: The total number of unaffiliated State and Territory representatives shall match the total number of affiliate representatives, plus one to create an odd-numbered National Executive with an unaffiliated majority;
- Eleven unaffiliated Alliance members who shall have a majority on the National Executive (at least 11 members) and shall include at least one from each state and territory;
  - Each State or Territory shall have at least one unaffiliated State or Territory representative, with the remainder of the total number distributed proportionally among State and Territories in accordance with the total State and Territory membership at the time of the Third National Conference;
    - If an non-unaffiliated member cannot be found to represent a particular state or territory a casual vacancy shall exist and shall be filled through election at a state- or territory-wide meeting or the relevant state/territory executive;
  - Between conferences, if necessary, proxies to the National Executive may be
    - (i) appointed by the affiliated group, in the case of a representative of an affiliated group, or
    - (ii) in the case of a representative of a state or territory, be elected by a state- territory-wide meeting or the relevant state/territory executive. State and Territory representatives can proxy to any member of that State or Territory. If in case
      - (ii) no unaffiliated member can be found to act as proxy a member of an affiliated group may be elected, who shall have voice but not vote at meetings of the National Executive.
- State delegations shall submit their list of provisional State or Territory National Executive representatives to National Conference, including, if necessary, by meeting at national conference and electing by proportional representation, subject to ratification at their next State or Territory conference;
  - Unaligned State or Territory representatives shall be responsible to their respective State or Territory Conference, and will be subject to full right of recall;
  - Any new affiliates new organisations joining affiliating to the Socialist Alliance after the Second Third National Conference, at the invitation of the National Executive, shall be accorded representation on the National Executive according to the formula for existing affiliates as above, at the invitation of the National Executive.
    - If further organisations affiliate to the Socialist Alliance, the extra State or Territory representatives needed to maintain an unaligned majority on the National Executive shall be distributed to States and/or Territories according to membership at the time of the Third National Conference, and elected by the succeeding appropriate State and/or Territory Conferences.
  - National Conference shall ratify the list of National Executive candidates submitted by affiliates and State and Territory delegations prior to election of the National Conveners. Affiliates and State/Territory delegations shall submit

their list of provisional National Executive candidates by 6pm on the first day of National Conference.

5. To amend existing 6.6 (new 6.7):

6.6. The following method of election shall apply for the election of the National Executive Convenors:

- The National Executive Convenors shall be elected by slate;
- Nominations of slates shall be open from the beginning of morning session of the last day of conference and close at the end of lunch on the last day of conference;
- Nominations for the positions of representatives of affiliate organisations on the National Executive shall be made by the affiliate organisations and made known by the opening of conference;
- Any conference delegate shall be eligible to present a slate;
- Nominees may decline nomination if they so wish;
- All slates nominated shall be available for scrutiny by conference;
- Voting shall be by show of hands;
- If no slate receives a majority of votes in the first round of voting, the slate with the least number of votes shall drop off and further rounds of voting conducted until one slate gains a majority.

6. To adopt the following addition to the Constitution:

9.8 State or Territory conferences shall:

- ratify their unaligned State/Territory representatives on the National Executive;
- elect any additional National Executive representatives from their State/Territory as required;
- take reports from their State/Territory representatives on the National Executive.

## **Resolution on Socialist Alliance work on campus**

Moved by Stuart Munckton (Canterbury-Bankstown branch and Resistance representative on the SA National Executive)

### **Resolutions**

1. Given that the Socialist Alliance is opposed to the legislation passed by the Senate last year which allows universities to increase HECS by 25% and full fee paying places by 35%, amongst other things, the Alliance supports the campaign by students against attempts by university administrations to implement these attacks, and for the repeal of the legislation and the reversal of funding cuts. Therefore, Socialist Alliance members on campus are encouraged to be involved in this campaign and to find ways to raise Alliance profile in the campaign. Such ways of doing this can include Alliance banners and placards at protests, Alliance statements on the campaign and on-campus public forums on the issue. Ways of co-ordinating the intervention of Alliance members in this campaign should be explored, such as holding Alliance caucuses where appropriate on a campus or city-wide level.
2. Given that solidarity between staff and students is a critical factor for both the struggles of staff around wages and conditions and students against the attacks they face, the Alliance will look for ways to strengthen staff-student solidarity and collaboration between our staff and student members to this end. Joint staff-student caucuses on a campus or city-wide level should be considered, where appropriate, to strengthen joint work by staff and student members of the Alliance, and in order to help strengthen ties and solidarity between students and staff more broadly.
3. As the coming Federal Elections present an opportunity for the Socialist Alliance on campus to raise our profile amongst students, publicise our support for free education and other issues affecting students, the Alliance should be looking to convince as many students as possible to vote Socialist. Branches should investigate ways to build the Alliance election campaign on campuses, including postering, leafleting and holding forums with candidates. To this end, the Alliance should produce a poster for the elections aimed at students based on a slogan such as "Books Not Bombs" in order to publicise the Alliance's views on education issues and convince as many students to vote Socialist as possible.
4. That Alliance members on campus attempt to find ways to take the broader campaigns we are involved in, such as anti-war, refugee rights and trade union solidarity, onto campuses to campaign around. That Alliance staff and students on campuses find the ways of coordinating this campaigning on campus.

### **Statement in support**

The purpose of this resolution is to put up proposals for Socialist Alliance's work among university students, and how this can be tied in to the work we have been carrying out inside the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU).

Campus is a largely untapped reservoir of potential for the Socialist Alliance. Historically, students have played a critical role in progressive struggles and have provided a pool of recruits to the socialist movement. Campus is an area where the Socialist Alliance can make gains. Given that we have a number of members who are university students, as well as a good intervention into the NTEU, there is room for us to both raise our profile and recruit amongst university students.

There are two openings presented to us this year to help us do this. They are the development of a militant and energetic campaign by students against attacks on the higher education system, which members of the Socialist Alliance are helping to lead, and the coming Federal Elections.

## **An alternative motion to the National Executive Resolution on the newspaper**

Proposed by Sam Pillay (Canterbury-Bankstown branch)

*The mover proposes this alternative in the spirit of the NE resolution with some interim style and operational changes. The aim here is to persuade conference that present difficulties in the perception of the newspaper may be overcome by some actual changes that may help create a new-look organ without turbulence during the transition.*

Conference notes the political difficulties posed in the collaboration between the editorial staff and editorial board to date. It further notes that Alliance contributions have not been as numerous as might at first have been expected.

It is of the view, however, that Alliance contributions should continue to be encouraged in accordance with socialist objectives and the statutes of the Socialist Alliance. It recognises *Green Left Weekly* as the transitional newspaper of the Alliance and that a working group investigates whether there is a viable alternative to be discussed in six months.

In view of this, conference votes for a simple interim device designed to cause the least upheaval. It, therefore, proposes a strap adjacent to the masthead that declares *GLW* to be the organ of the Alliance.

Conference proposes that in accordance with easing the tensions of collaboration with between two large bodies with divergent views, that the size of the editorial board be reduced to a panel of five.

That the proposed panel of five acts in a consultative capacity with the editorial staff and acts also as a liaison to seek out and encourage contributions from Alliance branches.

That the editorial staff be constituted as a political body and encouraged to act independently day-to-day in deciding content, and that both teams work in collaboration with NE where necessary, with the proviso that NE may at discretion inquire into progress and direction of delineated work.

Further, that *GLW* introduces a new concept of frontage headlines incorporated into the present style of artwork, with spills that lead the reader into a set number of international, national and regional news. It is proposed that the new concept replaces the slogan as headline in order to impart to each edition the urgency of new developments.

That, with the cooperation of the Alliance, some branch secondment is encouraged to help with the creation of news "rounds"; a given comrade being put in charge of covering a given area, namely, local government, politics, economics, finance, community affairs and so forth.

Conference acknowledges a wealth of experience and talent on the editorial staff and asserts its confidence that given goodwill in the priority of building the Socialist Alliance, the entire project could move smoothly forward in accordance with the stated aims of the Socialist Alliance.

## **Proposal for a national tour of a Venezuelan trade union leader and other solidarity work with Latin American struggles**

Moved by Raul Bassi(Canterbury-Bankstown branch), Roberto Jorquera (Sydney West branch) and Jorge Jorquera (Marrickville branch)

### **Motion 1**

That Socialist Alliance organise a national tour of a trade union leader from Venezuela. The tour shall aim to work with as many Australian trade unions, Labor Councils and individual unionists as possible. The organisation of the tour should be a matter for the SA National Executive to coordinate in conjunction with a specifically established working group and involving also the SA national trade union working group. The tour shall be self-financing.

### **Motion 2**

Considering also the ongoing and escalating struggles not only in Venezuela but in Bolivia, Brazil and elsewhere throughout the continent, Socialist Alliance shall aim to carry out ongoing solidarity work with movements in the region. As part of this Socialist Alliance endorses the annual national Latin American Solidarity Conference organised by the Committees in Solidarity with Latin America and the Caribbean and other Latin American solidarity groups.

### **Motion 3**

In the face of the latest developments in Venezuela the Socialist Alliance:

1) Reaffirms its support for the Venezuelan people's struggle for social justice, national liberation and against all the actions of the Venezuelan ruling class;

2) Opposes any intervention of the US against Venezuela, direct or indirect, being through the OAS or with the complicity of the reactionary Uribe government of Colombia;

3) Calls on all left and progressive organisations to support all the activities in solidarity with Venezuela and in defense of the peoples struggle.

## Why?

Internationally the left has become all too accustomed to analysing defeat and unfamiliar with the measure of a revolution. The development of the Venezuelan class struggle is an important opportunity to re-acquaint ourselves with the real-world development and challenges of working class revolution and the struggle for power.

One of the greatest strengths of the revolutionary process unfolding in Venezuela is that it is not isolated but part of a continental rebellion, one that compares to both the wave of radicalisation of the 1930s and that of the 1960s-'70s. Neoliberalism in Latin America is in crisis. This is not so much an economic crisis but a political-ideological crisis. The market recipes of neoliberalism persist but they no longer enjoy the support of any significant

sections of the population. The economic restructuring of neoliberalism has undermined the social base of the bourgeois states of Latin America, consolidated by the 1970s dictatorships and over decades of national development. This crisis of the ability of the ruling classes to rule involves a growing crisis of the state. In this context, struggles throughout the continent are taking not only defensive forms but in many cases offensive forms and the left is beginning to reconstruct.

The consequence is the partial political exhaustion of the neoliberal model. The ruling class's alliances and political parties are being torn apart. The middle classes that previously provided the glue for bourgeois consensus are threatened with proletarianisation and increasingly unlikely to continue to support the old bourgeois parties.

In this context it is also more difficult for the ruling classes to mediate their own divisions. Alongside this crisis of bourgeois politics there is a growing coordination of mass opposition. While five years ago popular struggle tended to be localised and atomised, today it is increasingly part of cross-sectoral and cross-city, regional and nationwide struggles against neoliberal measures. A campaign against privatisation of water or a labour struggle can easily spill over into a national political movement.

Three overlapping trends are emerging in this new period of crisis and intensified struggle. In some cases the bourgeois has the option of "Third Way" governments. Where the mass movement has suffered some defeats or is somehow in pause and the ruling class has no traditional parties of its own that can cohere sufficient social support - like Brazil, Chile, Uruguay - the ruling class is opting to support social-democratic parties who have managed to tie significant sections of the working class into the neoliberal agenda. This is the case with

the Brazilian PT government, it's the way the Chilean ruling class has maintained peace with the support of the Partido Por la Democracia-Partido Socialista and it's the road Uruguay will likely take, with the possible election of the Frente Amplio.

The second political trend is the increasing militarisation of bourgeois rule. Where there is a landscape of generalised opposition as with Colombia or even where the threat exists, like in Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, the ruling class is already beginning to test the possibility of using the military to restore what "order" their political system has failed to maintain.

Thirdly there is the trend toward "rupture". In Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia, the ruling class seems unable to reweave any sort of political consensus. The movement in each of these countries has now been through an important accumulation of forces - in Ecuador there was the uprising of 2001, in Bolivia the national uprisings in February and October 2003.

Across the continent the left is re-accumulating forces and re-appraising its political perspectives. In many of the rural (peasant and landless) organisations and in the trade union movement also there are left currents coming to the fore. Left organisations are revisiting old debates but in the context of stepping out of the long-term retreat and tackling the challenges of real potential advances.

## Why a Venezuelan trade unionist?

The offensive character of the movement in Venezuela makes it unique and important, not only for the revolutionary movement in Latin America but worldwide. The specific development of the labour movement in Venezuela also makes it an especially interesting example for workers in Australia.

The labour movement in Venezuela is in the process of breaking free of five decades of "social-democratic" strangulation. Accion Democratica AD, Venezuela's social-democracy, pioneered the "mass" (clientalist) politics of the Venezuelan ruling classes. From the 1930s onwards it rapidly established itself in every town and urban barrio. Most importantly it waged a dirty war in the labour movement against the communist left, which by 1945 it had clearly won. This was facilitated by the Stalinised class-collaborationist politics of the communist movement.

Lasting between the 1920s and 1970s, an oil based "development-strategy" underpinned the long bourgeois-democratic consensus of Venezuelan politics. Two key characteristics of Venezuelan politics were based on the distribution of oil rent.

Firstly, the stability of the bourgeois party-system depended on its strong clientalist character, made possible by the public distribution of oil revenues. People joined and supported AD and the conservative COPEI to get their share of the crumbs. In the late 1980s, out of a population of some 20 million, AD and COPEI claimed a membership of three and two million respectively. In Caracas alone, 150,000 people were affiliated to both.

Linked to the clientalist character of the party-system was the role of the organised labour movement as an adjunct to this system. As the labour movement's membership came mainly from the oil and public sectors, it was more easily co-opted by government. While governments could afford to distribute some crumbs to the organised labour force the trade union movement became a vehicle for state intervention rather than independent class action. This was compounded by

the conscious corporatism of the AD leadership in the union movement. This leadership injected the movement with an ideology based on seeking privilege

rather than establishing class solidarity with the vast majority of workers who remained outside the formal economy and unorganised.

The struggle for independent class struggle unionism in Venezuela has some interesting parallels with Australia, and the recent development of independent unions and their increasing role in the struggle for workers' democracy could be a real inspiration to left unionists in this country.

## **No to a ban on the hijab**

Moved by Melanie Lazarow (Wills branch)

Conference condemns the rise of racism in Australia against people of Muslim belief or Middle Eastern background, especially since 9/11. Muslim women who wear the hijab or burqa have been attacked or harassed. Only last month, a woman soccer player in Melbourne was barred by a referee from playing because she was wearing a hijab.

Conference condemns the recent introduction of a law in France banning the wearing of prominent religious items, including the hijab, in state schools or the public service. While the law was ostensibly to defend secularism, its real target was France's Muslim minority.

Conference rejects the false argument that banning the hijab is about promoting women's liberation. Many of those who support such a ban show no such concern over sexist advertising or women's low pay. Only Muslim women can make the decision to wear or not to wear the hijab.

Conference agrees to campaign against any proposals to ban or limit by law the wearing of the hijab or burqa, and against informal discrimination in our workplaces and communities.

## **Australia - the regional bully**

Moved by Josephine Cox (Melbourne South-East branch)

Conference notes that the Australian government is using the pretext of the "war on terror" and the danger of "failed states" to aggressively assert and extend its imperialist domination of the region.

Australia is the economic and military giant of the region. The Howard government:

- has turned East Timor into a virtual colony for Australian business interests while denying its government and people their fair share of the Timor Sea oil;

- has sent troops and senior public servants to take control of the Solomons;

- is attempting to do the same in PNG;

- has used PNG and Nauru as dumping grounds for asylum-seekers; and

- is supporting the Indonesian government's campaign to frustrate the national liberation movement in Papua.

Conference condemns Australian foreign policy towards its neighbours. The Socialist Alliance is opposed to Australian domination. We are for:

- the abolition of Australian debts incurred by poor nations in the South Pacific and south-east Asia;

- the extension of aid programs under the democratic control of the local population;

- international boundaries in the Timor Sea which favour the East Timorese claim over the Timor Gap seabed;

- solidarity with genuine national liberation movements and trade unions in the region;

- the extension of Australian citizenship to Pacific islanders displaced by global warming;

- the withdrawal of Australian troops from countries in the region.

## **The coroner must hear our rage!**

By Ray Jackson (Sydney Central branch), Alison Thorne (Wills branch) & Sam Watson (Brisbane South branch)

A young Aboriginal man is dead after a racist police chase through the grossly over policed streets of Redfern. The family is mourning and demands justice. The community is angry about yet another Aboriginal death in custody. Yet, most of the media is obsessed with sensationalising so called riotous behaviour by teenagers rather than scrutinizing the events that led to the death of the young man from Kamilaroi on Valentine's Day 2004.

Socialist Alliance has played an important role in putting the focus back where it belongs - on the death in custody - and getting out the truth about racism and resistance in Redfern.

A Socialist Alliance meeting held in the outer Brisbane suburb of Inala earlier this month - at which two of us spoke - attracted strong support from the local mob. Aboriginal activists from Inala pledged, if invited by the family, to organise buses of local people to come down to Sydney to show solidarity on the opening day of the Coronial Enquiry - 5 July 2004. This show of solidarity provides an important lead which we propose Socialist Alliance gets behind.

**We therefore propose the following motion be put at the upcoming National Conference:**

"This 3rd National Conference of Socialist Alliance expresses condolences to Gail Hickey, April and all the family and friends of the young man from Kamilaroi. We share their passion for justice and their commitment to end the over policing of Redfern and racist targeting of young Aboriginal people. Socialist Alliance stands in solidarity with the family and, if invited by the family, will mobilise our members and supporters to show their solidarity by attending to demand truth and justice on the opening day of the Coronial Enquiry."

As of 30 April we can report that Gail Hickey has confirmed to Ray Jackson that she would welcome solidarity at the time of the Coronial enquiry.

## **No to the Australia-US free trade agreement**

Moved by Jess Spate (Canberra branch)

Conference rejects the proposed Australia-US free trade agreement as an exercise in driving down the social wage and job security of both Australian and US workers.

It is also an attempt by the Howard government to cement the Australia-US military alliance.

Socialist Alliance will support rallies, public meetings and other initiatives designed to frustrate the passing of enabling legislation through federal parliament, in order to block the FTA.

Socialist Alliance will raise opposition to the FTA in the anti-war movement, arguing that this is part of weakening the military alliance with Washington.

Socialist Alliance will promote the values of international solidarity, and of international trade based on human need and democratic planning.

## **150th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade**

Moved by Hamish McPherson (Wills branch)

The uprising on the Victorian goldfields in 1854, which culminated in the Eureka Stockade, was an important part of the fight for democratic rights in Australia. The rebellion helped achieve the first extension of the franchise and set the scene for the introduction of the eight-hour day.

Socialist Alliance encourages members to attend the commemoration being supported by the CFMEU on December 3 in Ballarat. Conference instructs the national executive to produce a leaflet for the event, which highlights the role of struggle from below in gaining and defending democratic rights, and encourages branches to hold public meetings on this theme.

## **Motions on publications and national working groups**

Moved by Riki Lane (Wills branch)

### **1. Publications**

The following motion is for the publications section of the agenda, probably in the Green Left Weekly section.

#### **Motion**

"Conference recognises that the Australian publications Green Left Weekly, Socialist Worker, Freedom Socialist Bulletin, Workers' Liberty and Workers' Power all promote the building of SA. This is recognised by the 2003 conference decision to sell them all on SA stalls. In this sense they are all "SA publications". However, Seeing Red is the only official publication of SA. All SA members are therefore urged to sell Seeing Red. There is no expectation placed upon SA members to sell the other publications, except at SA stalls."

#### **Rationale**

The GLW/SA Editorial Board motion seeks to continue the trial of a process that centrally aims to: "secure access for SA members and affiliates to Green Left Weekly, to solicit material and oversee the public presentation of SA within GLW".

I see little to object to in that statement. However, on the ground things are quite different. In many branches - Lismore, Melbourne and Geelong to my direct knowledge - members are being told that GLW is THE paper of the Alliance and that all members should sell it. If that is what is desired, the GLW/SA motion would need to be very different - adopting GLW as the paper of the Alliance, calling on all members to sell it etc. This motion clarifies the expectations on members about selling publications.

### **2. National Working Group meetings**

#### **Motion**

"All national Working Group or Committee meetings (Trade Union, anti-war, elections, etc) are open to all financial members of the Alliance. To facilitate participation:

- i) all meetings of the WGs will be advertised on the web site and in Socialist Campaigner with details of how to become involved;
- ii) e-lists for meeting notification, discussion etc be maintained."

#### **Rationale**

Current arrangements for the WGs are informal and open to administrative error or manipulation. Their membership could easily become selected by a small inner group.

This motion aims to set the groups on a more regular basis - joining or leaving them should be a simple matter of sending an email, which results in attachment to an e-list. This list should be properly maintained on the website, not on individual's computers.

# Draft amendment to NE resolutions on "Australian politics today and the tasks of the Socialist Alliance"

Proposed by Sam Pillay (Canterbury-Bankstown branch)

This amendment is proposed as an orientation towards an internationalist perspective within the Australian context. Essentially it proposes switching the second part – **Socialist Alliance and the anti-war movement** – to form the preamble. Tasks of the 2004 federal election campaign and its corollaries for party organisation, aims and perspectives follow under a new proposed heading - **The Alliance, the federal election and the anti-war movement**.

5. The Australian political situation today is charged with the full import of cataclysmic changes in the international crisis of imperialism. The war of occupation in Iraq is an act that presages revolutionary consequences for all of the Middle East. The fallout, while not predictable in every detail, will be revolutionary and will set the framework of global politics for a generation. The Howard government in particular and the Australian political and economic outlook in general are bound up with it.
6. The United States' resort to mass murder, torture and the widespread use of cluster bombs and depleted uranium warheads on the defiant Iraqi masses is an act of extraordinary but so far futile subjugation. It is not an isolated strategy and is integral to finance/monopoly capital's drive for global hegemony. It aims to crush political dissent everywhere and enslave the world masses. Imperialism is bent on this manic trajectory because capitalism as a system of production and economic management is nearing the end of a long process of unravelling altogether; it is in its death agony. Nothing else explains the war of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan, the February coup d'etat in Haiti, continuing attempts at sabotage of the Latin American States and insurgency and counter-insurgency on the African continent as well as the South Asian region. Imperialist meddling is evident in the affairs of every nation.
7. There are an estimated 20,000 mercenaries in Iraq. The militarised pursuit of policy by other means has in turn launched Howard on his neo-imperialist policy in the South Pacific, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. Its extension is further draconian attacks on trade unions, the working and middle classes, health, education and social services as the war drive sucks up more and more of national revenue.
8. The US is straining under the yoke of multi-trillion-dollar debts, while the stock markets are mired in unstable gambles on an immense scale. The world market is glutted with commodities, marked particularly sharply by the instabilities of the Far Eastern economies.
9. The major banks – the imperialist financiers whose stupidity governs world politics today – have been in a never-ending crisis since the "oil shock" of the early 1970s. The stock market crash of 1987 and the collapse of the Asian "Tiger economies" were all part and parcel of imperialist decay, held together by band-aid measures. Nations paid for a US bail-out of some of its largest banks in the early 1980s. It was the sole cause of the Hawke Labor government's deregulation of finance banking. The world finance market, as a result, sucked billions of dollars out of the Australian economy as the dollar went chasing lucrative currency deals and tax-free havens. The then Treasurer Paul Keating's "the recession we had to have" was the result.
10. The world masses now rise again despite these repeated attacks, and this influence is clear to see among Australia's working class. The Alliance stands proudly among their ranks, in solidarity and in defence of their undeniable rights.
11. Iraq throws into sharp relief the priorities of the Howard government. Its legitimacy, too, is being decided in Baghdad, Najaf and Fallujah. For the working class, the war raises the critical question of whether public money for health, education and social care should be sacrificed on the altar of military aggression and imperialist greed and brutality.
12. The Socialist Alliance stands in defence of basic rights to health education and social care. It is the reason why it is resolved to maintain and strengthen the anti-war movement. The anti-war movement is of strategic importance for the entire Australian left and progressive forces. It is an integral part of driving out Howard and his clique at the federal election of 2004.
13. We demand, "Troops out now." The occupation is the problem, not the solution. We oppose United Nations involvement. It would not even provide a veneer of legitimacy after President George W. Bush's trampling of its tenuous sovereignty just before he launched the war on March 20 last year.
14. Concurrently, we will not be any part of sowing illusions that a Mark Latham Labor government will or is capable of resolving even the most basic of the demands of the working class and its allied ranks.
15. Latham's support for the withdrawal of Australian troops is to be welcomed. The position meets the demands of all progressive people and anti-war activists who have raised the debate in the streets and workplaces. But the Alliance rejects Latham's notion that withdrawal from Iraq provides the excuse for a more interventionist role in Afghanistan and elsewhere. We oppose the occupation of Iraq and we declare our solidarity with the emerging national liberation struggle there, in Palestine and in all the other oppressed States of the Middle East. Reciprocally, our solidarity is aimed at breaking the Australia-US alliance and the Howard government.
16. The Alliance demands that Australia and its allies decontaminate the Iraqi landscape and pay war reparation to the Iraqi peoples for them to use in accordance with their independent democratic decisions. We declare our solidarity with the Iraqi union movement and women's movement, and will campaign for both to have full, legal rights to organise.

17. The Alliance aims to be a significant and active leader in the anti-war movement while recognising that the movement must be open to all activists. The Alliance seeks to build broad, united front peace groups as the vehicle for the growth of the movement.
18. In the anti-war movement, Socialist Alliance members will raise key dates for mobilisations, including June 30 (the so-called hand-over of sovereignty in Iraq) and September 27 (the anniversary of the Palestinian *Intifada*).

### **The Alliance the federal election and the anti-war movement**

1. The central factor in the 2004 federal election is, therefore, this international crisis. The Howard Liberal Coalition seeks another term in office to entrench far more sweeping privatisation of utilities and to slavishly back every US military adventure across the world. The Liberal Coalition aim is nothing short of saddling the working class with the privations of bailing out imperialist finance even as the housing bubble in Australia is bloated to bursting. Such an event would be catastrophic for thousands of first-homeowners.
2. Latham leads the Labor Party in this election under the banner of equality of opportunity, “a classic liberal ideology of giving all comers an equal start ... even though some may be driving BMWs” and ignores equality of outcomes, which means “measures that redress systemic disadvantage and entrenched discrimination”. (*Seeing Red*, Ian Watson, *Latham’s rungs as sticks*, p 20, Issue 1, March 2004).
3. The Socialist Alliance shares with both Labor and Green supporters the desire to drive Howard out. But we emphasise that Latham is a populist rightwing leader. He combines audacity over questions like withdrawing troops from Iraq or parliamentary superannuation with conservatism over national security, the US alliance, Indigenous affairs, and paid maternity leave and a host of other social issues.
4. The task of the Alliance is to work alongside all who want an end to the Howard government, while putting forward our positive, socialist alternative on the questions of the day. We make it explicit that Latham Labor will continue to try to saddle the working class, especially low-income earners with the intolerable burden of an irresolvable glut of commodities, imperialist debt crisis, wars, invasions and occupations.
5. It is clear that attacks on trade union rights will continue, and it is clear from the record of Labor governments in the current period. “[Labor’s] new industrial relations policy [for example] doesn’t specifically commit a Labor government to repealing the Workplace Relations Act (WRA).” (*Green Left Weekly*, Sue Bolton, *Are Labor governments the friends of unions?* p 7, No 578, April 7, 2004). NSW in 2001 lost a number of civil rights in relation to workplace injury, In WA, the Labor government plans to cap compensation benefits and prohibit common law action, in Victoria the Bracks government’s Supply Industry Act forced striking Yallourn Energy workers back to work and in Queensland, the Beatty government helped lock out public works employees for taking industrial action. (*ibid.*)
6. The rise of the Greens vote indicates certain sections of the Australian community are seriously seeking alternatives to Lib-Lab duplicity over the past three decades. We will seek to work critically with the Greens and organise joint platforms with them and Labor. At the same time, we will try to win Greens supporters to the Alliance, the only party in the election that rejects not just the symptoms of capitalism but the system itself, makes a priority of the needs, demands and campaigns of the working class and establishes explicitly that the struggle for a socialist alternative is a class struggle.
7. The Socialist Alliance commits to running the largest and most concerted election campaign that our resources allow. Our central slogan is “Troops out, Howard out, Vote Socialist”. We oppose the two wars that Howard is waging – one against the Iraqi people, the other against workers at home. Alliance election material will highlight the waste of military spending, when money could go to rebuilding Iraq and extending Medicare. We will point to the \$8 billion ACOSS has identified as going to the wealthy in tax breaks and argue for resources to be shifted to free education, from kinder to university.
8. Socialist Alliance branches will identify local issues as part of our commitment to community priorities and integrate them into the election campaign.
9. We aim for the highest number of votes possible by campaigning intensively in our communities, seeking out their views and highlighting them. Our candidates, workers and supporters will work methodically to get to know each of our territories. And we will campaign at every turn to draw new members to our socialist policies to build the Socialist Alliance as a mass multi-tendency socialist party, as the only alternative in this revolutionary epoch.
10. Each branch will set a recruitment target in cognisance of the fact that our campaign does not cease at the end of the election. Ours is a continuous campaign to win new members over to socialist theory and practice. We recognise that key political battles take place between elections, in the workplaces and in the broader community. Our recruitment drive in tandem with the election campaign is to ensure that we continue effectively to represent our communities whether or not our candidate wins the vote.
11. The Alliance election campaign will integrate our work in the anti-war, union and other progressive movements into our election campaign to give real voice to the demands of the working class and its allies.
12. Conference urges branches to consider themselves as being on a war footing against imperialist politics and policies. Unionised workplaces will be approached, a campaign of issues will be submitted to community newspapers, public meetings will be carefully organised at regular intervals. Letterboxing, doorknocks, coverage of polling booths, rallies, pickets, banner drops and street theatre will form a part of the strategy to beat the capitalist media blackout on and tedious vilification of socialist politics.

# Draft amendment to the NE resolutions on "Building the Socialist Alliance"

Proposed by Sam Pillay (Canterbury-Bankstown branch)

That the following clause be included at the head of the three points that follow the section headed Branch activity and participation:

- (i) organise regular study groups on socialist theory and history - dialectical materialism and the materialist conception of history as an integral part of the work of branches.

## Socialist Alliance's Experience in the NTEU

By Jeremy Smith (Geelong branch)

For some years, there has been collaboration between members of SA's affiliate organizations who are employed in higher education. The establishment and consolidation of the Alliance has driven growth in socialist coordination in the National Tertiary Education Union. As a result, this is an area of union intervention in which there has been modest success for the Alliance. With the contribution of Socialist Democracy and Workers League in mind (*Alliance Voices* Volume 4, Number 2), I want to set out this short profile of our work in the NTEU.

Comrades in Socialist Democracy and Workers League have identified some general trends of decline in unionism in Australia. Broadly speaking, many members in Socialist Alliance have a comprehensive understanding of the political reasons for this decline (they are variously outlined in counter-contributions by comrades Wainwright, Sjoberg and Bullimore). There are, however, countervailing trends to decline and it would be remiss of the Alliance to ignore these and not to intervene fully in those sectors where there is evidence of growing militancy. Higher education, which has been traditionally industrially conservative, is one of those sectors.

Membership of the NTEU has grown steadily, although not spectacularly, since amalgamation in 1994. It stands at nearly 26,000. The so-called Vanstone Cuts of 1996 took a large swathe of longer term members out of the industry. Nonetheless, the union was able to re-build its base in the two-year period following the 96-97 budget. The NTEU has organised national strikes twice in the last seven years. In the last round of enterprise bargaining, members in nearly all of 37 branches experienced some form of industrial action in pursuit of the union's pattern bargaining strategy. All, this is evidence of a growth of union consciousness in this white collar industry going against national trend of decline. In addition, some of these actions have involved a degree of militancy that is unprecedented for workers in this sector. This pattern of union organization results also from a partial process of the proletarianization of professional academic work and a greater level of managerialism and corporatism in governance of universities. It is no coincidence that SA has a concentration of members here. The changes in higher education and in higher education unionism have made the industry a naturally attractive one for socialists.

For a number of years, there have been members of the ISO, DSP, Workers Power and independent socialists working in the NTEU. Prior to the formation and consolidation of the Alliance, collaboration was valuable, but sporadic. Nonetheless, that experience meant that closer working relations and the development of a caucus was easier in this area than for comrades grouped in other unions. As the Alliance has progressed, we have found that we have been able to organize on a truly national level for the first time and that we now have activists on a far greater number of campuses. Some of them are in important leadership positions and enjoy the respect of rank and file members in their branches. This represents tangible gains for socialists in this industry and it would not have been possible without the Alliance.

Our position is also favoured by two facts about the NTEU leadership, which the comrades from Socialist Democracy and Workers League neglect in their discussion of the NTEU (*Alliance Voices* Volume 4, Number 7). The ALP has a light presence in this union both in the leadership and amongst the industrial staff. So, while laborist politics is passively though widely accepted, the ALP itself does not have a faction and many NTEU leaders boast of their independence from the ALP. This in itself has created opportunities for SA activists in the NTEU. The excellent Heads of Agreement at the University of Sydney (there is as yet, no certified enterprise agreement) that is mentioned in the Socialist Democracy and Workers League contribution resulted, in part, from the work done by former Alliance member Michael Thompson (the Branch President) and the level of organization and pressure maintained by other SA comrades in that branch. In addition, Sydney University is one of Australia's wealthiest tertiary institutions and is by no means representative of what can be achieved by the NTEU in other universities. Secondly, the radical left is generally accepted ('tolerated' if you like) more than it is in other unions. We have a 'space' in the NTEU that is not available in unions dominated by the dead weight of ALP-led bureaucracy. Consequently, there is no political caucus in the NTEU other than the SA one and this is widely known. This enables us to exercise influence in ways that are not open to other unions. It means that there are times, when the NTEU is well to the left of many unions in this country.

We have done a great deal of work in promoting the Alliance in other ways. For some time, we have been publishing a separate newsletter, *Red Pen*, which is the flagship of our caucus, giving us an identity within the union and on campus. It also broadcasts the existence of the Socialist Alliance more generally and announces the caucus' organization in a semi-public kind of way. We have been prominent in moving motions that promote international solidarity, support for workers in struggle (including the Skilled Six) and participating in debates on broader social issues in the union. In Victoria, a robust and effective caucus of twelve or so comrades has been meeting regularly over the last two years. SA

comrades have real weight and influence over the direction of the NTEU Victorian Division and this has made a demonstrable difference since a change of leadership late in 2002.

A good deal of our experience is positive. However, there are shortcomings and challenges for us that should be acknowledged:

Longer-term members of the affiliates are accustomed to dealing with developed cadre when it comes to intervening in unions. We haven't done a great job of trying to involve newer Alliance members in NTEU branch activity and in Socialist Alliance's intervention. I can see this especially in Victoria, where the caucus comprises less involved or less experienced SA members who are in the rank and file of a NTEU branch as well as very active National Councillors and Branch Committee members who are experienced and involved in leadership activity in the union. The upshot of this has been that our meetings have revolved around what is going on in the leadership bodies of the union, rather than looking at how we can better organize SA work in the union in a way that maximizes the energies of all Alliance members.

Our work is still a little too irregular. A more predictable rhythm of meetings, phone hook-ups and production of *Red Pen* would strengthen our efforts.

*Red Pen* is a good publication. While its distribution is improving, I suspect that it could be a good deal more systematic.

This contribution is designed to give greater coverage of our NTEU work in the Alliance. Our work has followed a particular logic. The successes that we have enjoyed result from three things. Firstly, we have organized explicitly as a Socialist Alliance caucus.

Secondly, a number of us have worked hard within the union structures to *both* build the union *and* put forward socialist perspectives on where it should be going.

Finally, our profile has been enhanced by campaigning on social issues of concern to higher education workers and on international solidarity with other workers. As I see it, our work is broadly consistent with the proposed motion on trade union work moved by the NTUC and less compatible with the less ambitious counter motion moved by the Workers League.

## **Some reservations on the NAC proposal on leadership bodies from within the NAC**

By David Scrimgeour (Adelaide branch)

I did not intend to write about the current proposals on leadership bodies, as I have felt that there are more important issues which require attention. However, as it is being presented as a Non-Aligned Caucus (NAC) proposal, and I am a member of the NAC but have reservations about the proposals, I thought I should outline my reservations.

I must admit a bias against the whole concept of organisational re-structuring. I have seen many organisations - especially government departments - undergo periodic "re-structuring" and I have always thought that it often reflects a lack of imagination on the part of decision-makers. When your aims are not being achieved, the thinking goes, it must be an organisational problem - so re-structure the organisation. It is the organisational equivalent of the poor workman blaming his tools.

No structure is perfect, and sometimes re-structuring is needed. More often, I believe, what is required is a more imaginative approach to working within the given structure.

So I start from the premise that there should be very good reasons for an organisational re-structure, and that this should have wide support within the organisation. Even if I was convinced that this was the case, I am not sure that the proposed re-structuring would be beneficial to the SA.

I agree with comrade Dick Nichols that the leadership structure should be flexible and able to implement initiatives in real-time political life. However, it is hard to get away from the impression that the proposal would lead to a more unwieldy and complex national structure. I believe the main work of the SA should be within the branches and within working committees, and that this where our energies should be directed, rather than towards building up more centralised decision-making bodies.

It is also of concern to me, however, that the proposed re-structuring may have a marginalising effect on the smaller affiliates. I value my status as a non-aligned member of the SA, and as non-aligned comrades constitute the majority of the SA membership, I support the notion that they should have a majority on national decision-making bodies - as happens currently, and would happen if the re-structuring went ahead. So this is not an issue. What is an issue is that the re-structuring seems to allow a greater voice for the DSP at the expense of the smaller affiliates. For various reasons (including reasons unrelated to the structure of the SA, such as the political commitment and experience of many DSP comrades), the DSP already has considerable influence within the SA. I do not object to this influence, but I do not see any reason to increase the influence at the expense of other affiliates. At National Conference, and at National Executive meetings, I have always been impressed by the erudition of spokes-people from the non-DSP affiliates, and have always valued their input and political perspective during discussions - even when I have disagreed with their position. This has always re-assured me that the SA can be a truly multi-tendency socialist party, reflecting a diversity of political perspectives. I also value a structure which allows checks and balances on any particular perspective. I am very wary of weakening this aspect of the SA.

For all these reasons, I remain unconvinced that the re-structuring proposals deserve support.

# Jumping some hurdles on the way to a mass party

By Sam Pillay (Canterbury-Bankstown branch)

There is a strong case to be made for collectively working towards the Socialist Alliance as a mass revolutionary multi-tendency party guided by socialist theory as a world outlook. A multi-tendency grouping is itself an audacious exercise. It undoubtedly will, and does, contain imponderables but there is an objective reason why diverse tendencies have come together here: It is to break long years of sectarian isolation, as well as clarifying ourselves on the tasks ahead.

In coming together we justifiably declare that we are not afraid to compromise as a tactic towards achieving our long-term strategy, we also steadfastly must decline to bend over so far backwards that it breaks our spine. We need not fear conciliation for it is a necessary quality in our struggle to win new forces to our banner. We nevertheless must be alert to the danger, for example, of turning our conciliatory quality into rank conciliationism in our politics.

We ought to proudly proclaim that our politics is socialist politics. It presupposes a dedication to the human emancipation of wage slaves everywhere and a resolute opposition to oppression of every kind. It means we see socialism as the only alternative to bourgeois political duplicity.

It is in this context that that this author sees the confusion that has attended the recent canvassing of “a paper of the Alliance for the Alliance”. Yet there has been no concrete detail on what this medium should be in fact.

## ‘A matter of principle’

Personal investigation in the light of Comrade David Glanz’s resolution has revealed to this author that the DSP has not and does not oppose either a change to the name of the paper or its transformation into the paper of the Alliance. It is especially disturbing, therefore, that the minority report presents the question of a newspaper as “a diversion from the task of growing the Alliance and embedding it in the community”. (*Alliance Voices*. Vol 4 No 7, *emphasis added*)

Declaring a pox on the entire “project” simply because it has proved problematic does not, however, take us a step forward. It is equally disturbing that some comrades may actually be declining to sell *Green Left Weekly* as a matter of “principle”. But the principle of the matter here surely is the enhancement of the Socialist Alliance and to take the socialist message to workers? How are we to go about “embedding it in the community” without the essential tool? Well may the DSP be forgiven for wondering why when it believed it sowed dragon’s teeth it now reaps fleas.

It is best that we gauge the *achievements* up to this point of *GLW* as the medium of the Alliance, as Comrade Michael Bull has done in *AV*, Vol 4 No 8. It was refreshing reading for it was an affirmation of a positive attitude. The point is to enhance that achievement.

If the bugbear in all this is fear that one tendency might somehow bring an overbearing influence into *GLW*, then we must admit in all honesty that this has not been plain to see. The more urgent problem appears to arise from a policy of abstentionism among some comrades, of impressionism and individualism. There is, therefore, little ground for complaint. In any case, all the tendencies in Socialist Alliance are free to work as specific tendencies, and we do canvass our views in *AV*.

## Study of socialism

It is critical here that *GLW* is not seen as being pervaded by this or that perceived line but to recognise that there is a crisis of dialectical materialist perception. It is at the centre of the difficulties outlined in the minority report and several other submissions.

What are we trying to do in producing a newspaper? We are propagandising a socialist point of view, and agitating for a revolutionary solution. We conduct our propaganda in accordance to the changing, developing week-to-week events in politics, economics and social life, not merely on a national basis but on an international basis. We cannot do it otherwise than through our own medium, and we cannot sink it for subjectivist reasons. Consistent study of socialism as a scientific world outlook is, therefore, indispensable to our work.

As socialists, we need first of all to acknowledge that nature is primary and thought secondary. It is nature – the concrete realities of life in general – that provides the life impulses to thought. We do not suck reality out of our thumbs. The brain reflects the real state of world affairs, if we are prepared to apprehend it dialectically.

So, the problems regarding the debate over *GLW* are no doubt a reflection of confusion extant in society itself. All of society confusedly seeks an answer to the brutalities of bourgeois politics but it cannot automatically find a scientific solution to the impasse; that is our task, and we will not find the ammunition in subjectivist charge and counter-charge.

## ‘Outreach’ programs

To paraphrase Trotsky, daily training in dialectics is as important as finger exercises to a pianist. Some comrades have proposed in recent issues of *AV* the setting up of “outreach” programs. The submissions are a call for study groups.

Study groups should be a welcome start to orienting the already outstanding Socialist Alliance achievements in a theoretical direction. It will mean weekly discussions of and a theoretical grip on political events, the outcome of stall activities and other Agit-Prop activities.

Let us note that theory is not studied one minute and then “applied” the next but that it is at once a dialectical process; practice needs to be apprehended, therefore, as human practice grasped theoretically.

So, in the question of *GLW*, it is not a matter of assailing the tool but one of how is the tool being used. Can we, where we stand, contribute to improving its style (at present it is an outstanding theoretical paper without an all-round

coverage of week-to-week political, economic and community *news*), manner of working and methods of political liaison?

Should we suggest real changes such as the appointment of a system of “rounds”; a comrade in particular and constant charge of each appointed area – local government politics, economics, finance, world news and so forth? Can the tendencies provide some comrades on a casual but consistent basis to help provide such reports?

We can jump much bigger hurdles once we have dealt with these immediate questions.

## **More support for “A paper of the Alliance, for the Alliance”**

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

Sydney East and Brisbane South-West branches have joined Melbourne South-East and Wills branches in carrying the resolution “A paper of the Alliance, for the Alliance” (see *Alliance Voices* Vol.4 No.5 p17 for the text and signatures of support).

Further members who have added their name to the open letter include:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Branch</b>	<b>Position</b>
Susanne Johnson	Marrickville	Candidate for Grayndler
John Morris	Marrickville	Senate candidate for NSW
Sam Pillay	Canterbury-Bankstown	Branch exec member
Sue McKay	Canberra	Branch exec member
Vince Caughley	Marrickville	
Bonny Campbell	Sydney Central	
Jessica Spate	Canberra	
Silvia Liertz	Canberra	
Simon Chinniock	Canberra	
Hans Vet	Marrickville	
Daniel Casak	Marrickville	

## **Let's get out of this muddle**

By David Glanz (National Co-convenor)

The Non-Aligned Caucus NE working group withdrew its first proposal on the restructuring of the Alliance leadership because "there is not sufficient time available for the inclusive membership discussion required in making this shift".

Instead, we have been given even less time to react to an even more complicated organisational formula - one that the vast majority of branch meetings, let alone individual members, will have had no time to read, assess and digest.

How many members will have realised that the new formula would decisively shift power towards the national convenors, who would be meeting weekly, and away from the national executive, which would meet every two months?

Rushing into a decision at conference on this basis is a recipe for demoralisation, internalisation and bad feeling.

The International Socialist Organisation recognises that the current leadership structure has flaws. We support a shift to a 15-person NE, and a larger national council.

But no one has been able to forge a consensus that is both workable for the Alliance and palatable for the various currents active within it.

The ISO will be moving a procedural motion that the motion on leadership structure "lay on the table" so that we can give ourselves time to come back next year with a system we can all support.

The Alliance cannot afford hasty decisions. Let's get ourselves out of this muddle before any harm is done.

## **Of things great and small – the Alliance and the SA-GLW project**

By Austin Whitten (Sydney Central branch)

In perspective, the SA-GLW project should be a relatively minor one within the Alliance. There are many issues concerning Alliance members, issues that brought us together for common cause. Did anyone join Socialist Alliance in order to squabble over a newspaper? Ah, but “it is not a merely organisational matter” but rather, is “an entirely political question” asserts Comrade Sam Pillay in a recent *Voices* (I do agree with his use of the salutary title. It helps to remind comrades that this is a discussion amongst comrades).

Comrade Pillay, of course, in common with my religious friends, quotes chapter and verse from their respective bibles – Lenin in Comrade Pillay’s case – to buttress their point. Lenin, according to Comrade Pillay, wrote that “we need a newspaper in order to conduct systematic, all-round propaganda and agitation”, with the “we” being Russia in the immediate case and revolutionists in the early 1900s in the broader sense. Comrade Carlene Wilson, in the same *Voices* issue, notes her Leninist tradition and writes “we have a very clear idea of what a party paper should be.” The “we”, in this case, is presumably Comrade Wilson’s affiliate organisation. Comrade Wilson writes that a party paper “should be a tool for organizing both our cadre and our class.”

Comrade Pillay writes that it is "purely opportunistic" for Comrade Whitten to "gratuitously" quote from Comrade Humphrey McQueen – whatever that means. Comrade McQueen, of course, is a member of SA. Meanwhile Comrade

Pillay quotes freely from Michel Pablo, a Greek writing 50 years ago and also from Lenin. What is Comrade Pillay's definition of "gratuitous"?

Comrade Pillay mistakenly said I took exception to Comrade Glanz's "personal view" of a paper. No exception was taken. I pointed out that *Green Left Weekly* meets Comrade Glanz's definition and goes beyond it, reaching out to a broader left audience which his conception of a newspaper would abandon.

Comrade Pillay again mistakenly states that I offered my personal view of what an SA newspaper should be when I wrote, "I believe GLW is closer to being an SA paper than anything that has been proposed that would be commonly agreed on by the overall SA membership." Unlike Comrades Pillay, Wilson and Glanz, comrades have not been told what my personal view of a paper should be, only what I believe will be acceptable to most of the SA membership. I stated this as a belief, yet Comrade Pillay writes, "It's comforting to know he has the numbers."

Comrade Pillay recognises a "personal hallmark" in my writing that "reflects a body of thought in my tendency". The only clue to the hallmark and non-aligned tendency that Comrade Pillay found is "a heavy strain of opportunist politics" that needs to be "confronted and put down" as one would an old horse. Is Comrade Pillay attempting to "frighten the horses" with his confrontational words, ignoring the well-known caveat that alerts one to the consequences?

Comrade Pillay misses a number of other points in my submission. Comrade Glanz was identified as the head of ISO, the owner of Socialist Worker, to place Comrade Glanz's petition in perspective, not to label him as a "petty bourgeois owner and head." The rivalry is obvious, not for profits but for audiences. How else to explain the inconsistent, illogical sniping? Note that Comrade Pillay did not address any of the points I answered in Comrade Glanz's petition – the three points in the petition that have already been addressed by the editorial board and the charge that *GLW* would not agree to a name change when none was asked for. Instead, Comrade Pillay chooses to cite erroneously from what I wrote and to attribute sinister motives to my submission.

What does it take to get Comrade Glanz and his supporters to respond to replies and not to attempt to deflect from the issues that Comrade Glanz raises? Perhaps a public discussion is needed at the upcoming national convention between myself and Comrade Glanz on the subject of the SA-GLW project, how it operates, what it is accomplishing and what the plans and challenges for the next round will be, as a way to keep his supporters on topic. Rather than turning "curmudgeonly on Comrade Glanz", as Comrade Pillay charges, I was attempting to identify the nature of the hostility to what has been a successful project within the scope that was defined for it.

Comrade Pillay mistakenly, yet again, wrote that I took a "swipe at Comrade Anne Picot." Perhaps Comrade Pillay was distracted when he read my article. I wrote that it was to her credit that she was able to be a valuable member of the editorial board whilst having to represent the ISO in its opposition to the project she was engaged in. Where's the swipe?

And yet again, Comrade Pillay seems to have missed another point, stating I made a second swipe, this time at the SW readership when I wrote, "ISO regulars regularly characterise the SW readership as having little time and a short attention span for reading longer articles". I wrote, "ISO regulars regularly characterise the SW readership...", not myself. I feel it is an extremely patronising attitude toward people when I hear an ISO member say this. I've ONLY heard ISO members say this. If I was swiping, it was at those who sell people short. As in the film, *Field Of Dreams*, build it and they will come. Carry longer articles and they will be read.

Comrade Pillay feels I was being "extraordinarily pessimistic" when I wrote that it may take centuries to define what an SA newspaper should be. The fact that no one is leaping off their chairs to take on this project offers evidence for the awareness of what is involved. I was actually being optimistic – a pessimist would have said it would be an infinitely long task, with no end in sight. The SA-GLW project allows us to explore the possible whilst we wait for the definition. The editorial board can use whatever comes out of such an effort to help steer a course. That was the point that was made in my submission.

Comrade Pillay states that to be an effective campaigning organisation, we need to be "consistent in principle", which is correct for our common cause issues - those that brought us together in the Alliance – and totally incorrect when persisting with attempts to enforce consistency when none exists, which are mercifully few. In the latter case, our task and challenge is to find ways to accommodate our differences. This, of course will sound like "a heavy strain of opportunist politics" to Comrade Pillay.

Comrade Carlene Wilson finds "worrying overtones" in my writing, seeing it as a "quashing of dissent", and quotes part of a sentence I wrote, "...one would ask that dogmatic opposition to the overall will of the members be discontinued", omitting the first part, "If the national conference agrees to continue the SA-GLW project." Characterising the phrase "one would ask" as "quashing of dissent" is rather extreme. People with power, quash, Alliance members, ask. Comrade Wilson seems to have lost track of who the real opponent is.

Continuing, Comrade Wilson writes that warning bells should be going off when I write that marginalisation within SA would seem to be likely if dogmatic opposition to popular projects within the Alliance continues. Sounding a warning was indeed my purpose but Comrade Wilson tells us the ringing sound in her head is sending her a "shut up or ship out" message. Again, people with power over your life tell you to shut up or ship out. "Would seem to be likely" is a comradely way of stating the obvious, a message from a friend, not a powerful enemy.

Comrade Wilson would have us believe that she is defending democracy and the right of dissent and states that she is ready to fight for it. Democracy is a complicated business whose reality bears little resemblance to its characterisation by the ruling class. Hopefully, Comrade Wilson was not intending to wrap herself in the same feel-good cloak. Fighting for the right of dissent is one thing. Knowing when it is time to stop fighting and to turn one's energies to finding an accommodation with those who are not your enemy, those who have a strong desire to work together for common cause, is a greater challenge

Comrade Wilson is not surprised that the SA editorial board felt the SA-GLW project was successful and voted in favour of continuing with it. She states this is a logical outcome of our enthusiasm for taking on the task. As I wrote, I have never previously been part of a project where less than enthusiasm on the part of its participants at the outset was a given, especially on a volunteer project where monetary rewards are not a factor. There is no guarantee, however, that enthusiasm will be sustained if a project fails. There is a certain cover-your-ass factor that can cause project members to put on a false happy face afterwards when their project goes down the tubes, but this is not the case in this instance. Our goals were modest, we met them and felt good about it afterwards and board members, save one, voted in favour of extending the trial and expanding its goals.

The membership will decide if it wants to continue the project. Comrade Wilson states that “many in the Alliance ... continue to be opposed to the idea of the GLW becoming the paper of the Alliance.” Unlike Comrade Wilson, I have no axe to grind. If our comrades vote to discontinue the project, I can assure you I will not continuously petition the membership to resurrect it. I would see it as a lost opportunity but I would not incessantly advance what I feel should be done at the expense of compromising why I am in the Alliance – to work for our common goals.

Comrade Wilson repeats the claim that the public perception is that GLW is a DSP paper. The public arena that Comrade Wilson circulates in is obviously not the same as mine. The people I know who subscribe to and read GLW would be surprised – are surprised, when I tell them of the claim - and couldn't care less if they thought it was true. If the charge gains credence, they may well want to join the DSP instead of the Alliance! Their perception, when asked, is that it is a paper of the SA.

Comrade Wilson goes on at length about political differences in the Alliance and in “papering over the cracks” of these differences. Clearly we have differences - amazingly few on issues - but some fundamental ones for some members on methods for achieving and sustaining a successful resolution of these issues. The hope, I think, is that we will be able to accommodate our differences, not papering over or ignoring them, but not allowing them to tear us apart or render us impotent through internecine squabbles.

Comrade Wilson states that “people in some branches are being asked to sell the GLW ‘because it is the paper of the Alliance’”. There is no sign of this in my branch and I have seen no National Executive dictate stating this as a policy. I would suggest that Comrade Wilson take this up with the branches in question. As far as members – affiliate or non-aligned - refusing to sell GLW in order to assert their “democratic right not to sell propaganda”, no one has ever forced me to sell GLW nor would I advocate such a policy. I freely sell GLW and the Socialist Worker at SA stalls without reservation. I personally prefer GLW so find it easier to engage with people over it but I have never presented it as an SA paper. I find that ISO members find it easier to engage people with SW, which is understandable.

Comrade Wilson prefers selling Seeing Red as an official SA publication. Good on her! It seems Lenin had less to say about academically oriented periodicals than he did newspapers, making it easier for some Alliance members to accept it without demanding that it fit a strictly defined mould. It would be wonderful if Comrade Wilson could bring the same tolerance and understanding to the newspaper issue that she brings to Seeing Red when she wrote, “I may not agree with the exact way people make their arguments or what is prioritized, but I see it as the collective voice, and representative of the developing political debates inside the organisation of which I am a part.”

It may not be possible to have an SA newspaper, at least in the near term. The last paragraph of the Anne Picot/ISO minority report gives up on it. No newspaper is better than having one that does not fit the ISO definition it seems.

I am all in favour of accommodation and of continuing the SA-GLW project, even though it may not end up with GLW becoming the SA newspaper. But it would be short-sighted to rule out the possibility out of hand. The opportunity of having a vehicle and an outlet for SA contributions is invaluable. It would be foolish to pass it up.

I am not, however, in favour of constantly having to defend the project. If the majority of the membership decides to carry on with it, then distractions and diversions trying to bring it down are not productive. The task at hand has many challenges requiring all of our attention and effort.

It would also be useful if techniques and strategies used to fight the ruling elite were not used against SA comrades. I have a low tolerance for purposeful obfuscation, whether it comes from the class enemy or from comrades.

I personally feel that dishonesty is never justified, whether used against an enemy or a friend. Propaganda is one thing but there is a line that should not be crossed. The end never fully justifies the means, a landmark lesson that came out of the 50's, when many comrades finally came to terms with what was happening in the USSR.

There are several things in the ISO minority report that are dishonest as there were several things in the ISO petition that were dishonest. I dealt with the petition in detail in *Alliance Voices* (Vol 4 No 6). The points the petition contained were trivial as they were presumably intended to be. It acted as a “sign on statement” to get comrades aboard a fog enshrouded train. SA headquarters reported receiving several phone calls from confused comrades when the petition appeared in *Voices*, asking what it was about. Some said they didn't know what they were signing. I was asked to clarify the situation in *Voices*, which I did.

As previously noted, Comrade Pillay studiously avoided the clarification and it didn't stop Comrade Picot from bringing the petition to our branch meeting last week for voting on. It was defeated by a large majority, despite the presence of several ISO members who have not previously participated in our branch meetings (I attend most of them and know).

I am reluctant to perform the same debunking task with the minority report in order not to dwell on the techniques that are being used – but I can and will if challenged. But I will deal with one of the more glaring examples. The minority report contains an “anecdotal” reference to “The audience's hostility to an Alliance member who called for people to support the Alliance at a large public GLW fundraiser, featuring Tariq Ali.” Comrade Picot concludes,

“Accordingly, I cannot see how we can put the banner ‘Paper of the Socialist Alliance’ on the front cover of GLW nor within it, systematically advocate [stet] voting for the Alliance or joining the Alliance.”

For the benefit of out-of-town comrades who were not at the event, and what everyone there would know, “The audience’s hostility to an Alliance member” was not due to hostility to SA but rather over the abuse of the Q & A period after Tariq Ali’s presentation where Comrade Kieran Latty insisted on talking, despite repeated requests from the chair and the audience and Tariq Ali’s obvious displeasure over the length of the diatribe that was not a question. I pointedly asked Comrade Latty at our next branch meeting what the wisdom was in pursuing an action that resulted in the antagonism of almost 1,000 people against someone who had gone out of their way to identify themselves as a member of the Socialist Alliance.

I put the incident down to unwise and misplaced enthusiasm at the time, but now that the incident has appeared and been distorted in a report rendered on behalf of ISO, considering its virulent opposition to GLW, one has to begin to wonder. Comrade Latty should have identified himself as a member of ISO perhaps, instead of SA, acting as he did.

In summary, I feel as I always have, that the main task of the Alliance is to find a way to work for our common cause. Comrades who feel this is wishy-washy, “opportunistic”, compromising of the revolution or whatever should take a look at the founding principles of the Alliance – to attract the broad socialist left and to unite for common cause in order to achieve what we want to achieve. We would all like to have unity on our own terms, with all others changing, except ourselves, in order to unite. Although we can grow together somewhat, the Alliance will never be what any one person wants. But, in common with multicultural societies, we can find mechanisms and accommodations that allow us to work together, to succeed together and to reclaim control over our lives from the ruling elite.

Comrade Pillay indicates he is watching out for those with “opportunistic tendencies”. Comrade Wilson sees “worrying overtones” in my writing. I, along with others I talk to within and without the Alliance are also watching – seeing if Alliance members can set aside their differences and work for common cause. And perhaps more significantly, we are trying to decide if those who champion dissent now and claim to tolerate it, will suppress it if they acquire power. If these issues cannot be solved within the Alliance, then how can we expect them to be resolved under a socialist system with the current players? It is an extremely significant question to ask.

