

# 7 features of Socialist Alliance

This presentation is meant to be a discussion starter about the character of Socialist Alliance. It is not a comprehensive list of our organisations characteristics but key aspects that hopefully will provoke useful reflection and questions.

[SLIDE 1]

1. Socialist Alliance is a political organisation to help build a socialist future through the self-emancipation of the working class

Our shared political objectives is the reason for our existence as an organisation and shapes our organisational form. We live in a sharply class-divided society where the ruling capitalist elite own or control most of societies resources. The working class is the huge majority but its power comes only through organisation and unity. Unleashed, that working class power has the potential to refashion society free from exploitation and oppression and in a form that liberates human creativity. This is what Socialist Alliance seeks to foster.

In every class society, the ruling class has worked hard to subjugate the oppressed not just through force but through ideological domination. It is the same under capitalism. The ruling class seeks to control working class with all sorts of reactionary ideas, including racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. But we are confident that the oppressed organised in struggle for liberation can free itself from this ideological domination.

If our perspective is to unite the worig class majority into a movement for liberation from capitalism and all class division, then the organisation we build should not act like a “league of the pure” or an organisation only of the “enlightened”. We cannot afford to be a club of “people just like us” or “just people we like”.

[SLIDE 2]

Our ideas about the political instrument that is needed is informed by the classical thinkers of the socialist movement like Marx, Engels and Lenin but also by subsequent experiences of the movement as well-summarised by Marta Harnecker, for instance. There's a whole interesting discussion we can have on this another time but I urge you to read what she has to say on Links or buy her pamphlet *Ideas For The Struggle* (only \$5).

[SLIDE 3]

2. Socialist Alliance seeks to be inclusive and democratic because this is what the objective requires – it also lays the basis for our unity in action.

We seek to draw people into the struggle for liberation and we want to make that struggle as powerful as possible. Experience teaches us that this is done most effectively through a democratic structure that effectively brings together the information an experiences from all parts of our organisation. Going through a thorough democratic process to work out what to do then strengthens our unity in action.

[SLIDE 4]

3. Socialist Alliance is an activist organisation. We understand and accept that our members will

have different levels, sometimes varying over time as work, family responsibilities, health and morale vary. But all encouraged to put in as much as they can. However, the most important thing is our collective, organised approach to activism. We need to organise to develop activists for now and the future. We need to share and develop activist skills.

[SLIDE 5]

4. Socialist Alliance is open to new regroupments and alliances, practising solidarity-based internationalism. This is in our political DNA you could say. We began as an alliance of socialist groups and individuals in 2001 because we realise that an effective “political instrument” (as Marta Harnecker calls it) to build a movement defeat the corporate ruling class is going to have to be one that unites the working class in a struggle for liberation of itself and all oppressed sectors. Socialist Alliance is one step in that much bigger process. We think anyone serious about this revolutionary project must always be on the look out for opportunities to unite more of those in struggle against the capitalist system.

[SLIDE 6]

5. Socialist Alliance is ambitious, organised and persistent. What does this mean? We have a very ambitious objective – that's for sure! And to rise to such an ambitious objective does require us to be serious and well-organised. We have a weekly newspaper that keeps us in a permanent struggle to relate to political, environmental and social developments on an ongoing basis. It also disciplines us into organising to distribute the publication, use it to bring more people into organised struggle, to raise the funds needed, etc.

Many people outside our organisation often ask us how we do it? How do we keep going? Our answer is that by organising ourselves we collectivise the tasks, share the load around, and of course, we learn in the process how to do it better.

[SLIDE 7]

6. Socialist Alliance is committed to developing a serious but non-dogmatic political theory and policy. Political theory is important. It helps us translate our socialist objectives into political strategies and tactics.

But there is another factor that comes into this: real life, if you like. This actual objective circumstances we confront and actual experiences the socialist movement has in the course of its political intervention. “Theory, my friend, is grey, but green is the eternal tree of life,” Lenin famously quoted from Goethe's *Faust*.

Sadly, it has to be admitted that far too often socialist organisations have ignored this and behaved in dogmatic and sectarian ways. The first error flows from the second: If an organisation thinks that it has all the answers or that Marxism offers a finished theory and program, written in stone, then it is likely to develop strategies and tactics that ignores reality and that ultimately work against the interest of the actual movements for liberation. That's sectarianism.

The socialist movement won't get very far with that approach.

[SLIDE 8]

7. A movement-building organisation. This flows from the last point. Our theory teaches us that the way the working class – which is the big majority in capitalist society – will come to the

consciousness that it needs to liberate itself and all of society from capitalism – is through moving into collective action against all oppressions under capitalism.

That's why we are committed movement builders. But we realise that it is important to keep building a socialist organisation as well as the broader movements. Why is this?

A movement-building and non-sectarian socialist organisation can offer the social movements something special:

- Continuity: movements rise and fall. They can pass through defeat or even partial victory. The critical process of activism formation and networking breaks down unless there are organisations that keep going.
- The valuable history of struggles can be lost in this process without ongoing organisation.
- Socialist organisations are often a valuable store of experience and skills that movements desperately need.
- Socialist organisations offer strategic perspective about how all the struggles against various oppressions fit in and how they can become part of a movement to end oppression at its root.

[SLIDE 9]

The last slide is a summary, so you can see the seven features I have talked about during discussion. So let's open up to discussion now.

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