

Workers' Liberty



The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself

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Jobs! Not war!

Vote 1 Socialist Alliance

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Inside:

- **Jobs! Not war** Riki Lane
- **Socialists and the anti capitalist, anti-war and anti-Liberal movements** Janet Burstall
- **Afganistan's history of reaction** Dan Katz
- **Australian unions and the war** Leon Parissi
- **Ireland and the fallout from September 11** John O'Mahony
- **Australian and international labour reaction to the "war on terrorism"**
- **Islamic fundamentalism - a secular activist's experiences in Iran** Interview by Lynn Smith
- **Ansett workers interviewed** Liz Macnamara
- **Reject the politics of fear - election comment**

Where we stand

SOCIALISM to us means not the police state of Stalinism, but its polar opposite, the self-organised power of the working class breaking the entrenched power of the billionaires and their bureaucratic state machine.

Socialism means a society restructured according to the working-class principle of solidarity. It means an economy of democratic planning, based on common ownership of the means of production, a high level of technology, education, culture and leisure, economic equality, no material privileges for officials, and accountability. Beyond the work necessary to ensure secure material comfort for all, it means the maximum of individual liberty and autonomy.

The trade unions are the product of long struggles by the working class for the right to build their own organisations to protect them from the arrogant power of the bosses. They remain the major organisations of the working class, the major vehicles of class struggle. There is no short-term prospect of them being replaced by new organisations. Since we believe socialism can be achieved only by the working class liberating itself, we must focus on the trade union movement, rather than on "radical" movements without a working class or socialist perspective.

Yet the unions represent the working class incompletely, unsatisfactorily, binding the class to capitalism. We must develop the unions, transform them, reinvigorate them with socialist purpose. To do that, the radical activist minority must organise itself and equip itself with clear ideas. That is our aim: to spread ideas of unfalsified socialism, to educate ourselves in socialist theory and history, to assist every battle for working-class self-liberation, and to organise socialists into a decisive force, able to revolutionise the labour movement so that it, in turn, can revolutionise society.

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Jobs! Not war

Riki Lane

Howard and the Liberals were dead in the water a few weeks ago. A tide of state and territory electoral losses meant they faced a crushing defeat at the national poll.

Now, they could win the 10 November election.

Howard played the race card to the cheers of One Nation supporters. The artificially created Tampa crisis appealed to strong traditions of xenophobia and racism. Refugees from tyranny were used as pawns in the sordid calculations of political opportunism. The horrendous September 11 attacks, and the US war in response, gave Howard further opportunities to whip up nationalist hype.

But where is the ALP? Tailing along behind the Liberals. In a pathetic display of gutlessness, Labor has gone along with the racist attacks on asylum seekers and gung ho support for Bush's war. All principle has been forgotten as Beazley tries not to alienate racist and nationalist sentiment.

Working people desperately need a real alternative to the Liberals that Labor is not providing. HIH, One Tel, Ansett - every week, workers' jobs are being destroyed in their thousands. Our public services are massively underfunded, while huge subsidies go to private schools, hospitals and transport.

A government that ruled for workers would change all those priorities and reorganise society on the basis of production organised for human need and ecological sustainability, not corporate profit. It would replace the rule of the free market with workers' control and democratic planning for social need.

This is the sort of government that the Socialist Alliance stands for.

SA is obviously not going to win these elections. That choice is Labor or the Coalition. We want Labor to win. Despite all its leaders' betrayal, it is still the party of the unions. An ALP victory can give confidence to workers to go on the offensive and fight for wages and conditions, jobs, democratic rights. In office, Labor has to respond to pressure from its union base - the Coalition just goes on the attack against us.

The re-election of the Coalition would depress and demobilise the labour movement. We would face ever harsher waves of repressive legislation, racist attacks on refugees, privatisation etc.

Where the Liberals and Labor rule in the interests of capital and support Bush's drive towards war, Socialist Alliance is firmly on the side of working people everywhere, from Australia to Afghanistan, from Pakistan to the USA.

Socialist Alliance is only taking its first steps - it can become an important development for building a real voice for the working class and all the oppressed. To do so, it needs to draw in working people in their thousands, have a real internal life of robust and serious debate, participate in all the struggles of workers organised in their unions and local communities.

In these elections we can vote to get rid of the Coalition, and put in place a Labor Government. But we need to do more - we can vote for Socialist Alliance as the only party that wholeheartedly supports us, and will continue to campaign to put health, education and jobs before profits, and against the war, which will be conducted by Labor or the Coalition.

Get involved to build SA and to ensure that Howard and his mates are replaced by Labor.

Socialist politics and the movements – anti-capitalism, anti-war and anti-Liberal

Janet Burstall

A few months ago 2001 looked like a year for almost uninterrupted progress in the rebuilding of a socialist movement in Australia and internationally.

The anti-capitalist movement had blasted into Australian political life at S11 in Melbourne in 2000, a new combative and enthusiastic coalescence of radical youth, environmentalists, anarchists and socialists that could not be ignored by the trade union movement.

There was more co-operation amongst the left groups over S11 than there had been for years, and this created an atmosphere for following the example of the left in Britain, by establishing an electoral unity project in the form
Workers Liberty No.20 November 2001

of the Socialist Alliance. The process began in January to prepare for the Federal election this year.

The conservative side of politics was very unpopular, and the Coalition began losing state elections and by-elections by large margins. Coalition policies were 'on the nose', especially the GST, and the policies on aged care, health and education. Company collapses (HIH and One.Tel) and factory closures (e.g. Arnotts) produced increased scepticism about free market ideology. A number of small but important union battles were won. The left, particularly at the initiative of the International Socialist Organisation, was even making headway in turning public opinion to supporting the refugees, with large demonstrations and the activities of well-organised support

groups gaining some more sympathetic media coverage in the presentation of the factual background to the refugee issue.

It looked as though Labor would easily win the federal election, possibly boosting the confidence and expectations of unions. The Socialist Alliance was ready to try to mobilise a fight for Labor to deliver on working-class demands and to stand up against the demands of capital. All this happened against the background of the radicalising anti-capitalist movement. New opportunities would have been there for socialists to advocate that workers stand up to the Labor government, and to advocate the formation of much-needed closer connections between the left, the labour movement and the anti-capitalist movement.

In a few short weeks the political landscape has changed.

On the anniversary of the S11 World Trade Organisation blockade reactionary religious fundamentalists suicidally and murderously flew plane bombs into the World Trade Centre towers in New York City, a potent symbol of the capitalism that we had protested against at S11 and on M1.

Anti-capitalist movement

The dominant perspective of the anti-capitalist movement had been to sustain a perpetual calendar of protests at symbolic events of global capital. This perspective was supported unquestioningly by most socialist groups in Australia: Democratic Socialist Party, ISO, Socialist Alternative, Workers' Power. In order to progress, the movement needs an analysis of what capitalism is and needs to relate to the working class, which is capable of overthrowing it. Before M1 these needs were rejected by the DSP and the ISO as belonging in the 'too hard basket', or as risking compromise with the conservative politics of trade union leaders. Since M1 there have been some more promising signs of effort to make connections with unions through the Nike protests in cooperation with the union Fairwear campaign against sweatshops.

Anti-war movement

Now the anti-capitalist movement is funnelling into an anti-war movement. The politics of the anti-war movement are a mixed bag of pacifism, anti-imperialism and is open to influence from the religiosity of fundamentalism, with socialist politics barely getting a look in. Once again, both the ISO and the DSP are active in advocating a basis for the anti-war movement which obscures socialist politics. Once again, seeking to reach unionised, organised workers is not a priority on the ground in many SA Branches, despite the National Executive agreeing that unions were important to the anti-war campaign.

Anti-imperialism can be reactionary

Once again the movement's enemy is identified simplistically – this time it is simply "US imperialism" in its

military manifestation that we are supposed to fight against. The ISO refuses to condemn the terror attacks on New York. The DSP and ISO organise events under a title which neatly sidesteps the question of fundamentalism "Who's to blame: The Middle East people or US foreign policy?" Their answer is of course "US imperialist foreign policy", as though religious fundamentalism in the region around the Middle East is not a dangerous and reactionary force in itself. It is indeed the mortal enemy of socialists, women and the working class in the region, the people who most need our solidarity at this time.

At the initiative of Workers' Liberty and Socialist Democracy the Socialist Alliance (SA) did send a message of solidarity to the Labor Party Pakistan endorsing their struggle against Bush's war and religious fundamentalism and there is support to tour a leader of the LPP next year. The big problem is that to build an anti-war movement that gets support from the unions, we have to be upfront about opposing jihadi terrorism.

The DSP and the ISO now seem mesmerised by the potential of an anti-imperialist peace movement, with the limited goal of opposing the US military effort, and Australian support for it. At SA meetings they have been proposing that building the broadest possible anti-war movement is the priority for the SA, not building a socialist movement.

Class politics

But the need for a socialist and independent working-class political voice is all the more urgent in this climate of the international politics of fear, nationalism and militarism that have been the response of western governments to the plane attacks on the USA. In Australia, Howard had already begun to whip this up sentiment and secure it to his advantage with the gung-ho xenophobic policy of sending the navy against the leaky boats of asylum seekers. The political initiative is now in the hands of western governments. Issues where workers can organise themselves and place their own demands on governments are overshadowed – health, education, job security.

If our main enemy is at home – our own leeching, profit hungry, worker-sacking bosses, and their fear-mongering, narrow-minded, militaristic, socially reactionary political servants – then the conditions are worse than they were even a few months ago for developing a consciousness of collective working-class interests opposed to that enemy.

The Socialist Alliance, more than ever, is needed to articulate class as the basis of our problems – to show that the capitalist ruling class is our enemy - and our need for a collective working-class identity, consciousness, loyalty and analysis in order to consolidate the basis for a socialist alternative.

This job will need doing whether Howard or Beazley wins the federal election.

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Afghanistan's history of reaction

Dan Katz

Even before a series of wars, beginning in 1978, devastated Afghanistan, the area was one of the most underdeveloped, backward regions on earth. The boundaries of Afghanistan were defined in the second half of the 19th century by the pressure of the Russian Tsarist empire, to the north, the British empire and Persia.

One result of underdevelopment has been that nothing approaching a national economy or a nation state developed. Afghanistan remains a patchwork of different ethnic groups, four main groups and 50 in total. Attempts to modernise Afghanistan from above - by the king in the 1920s, and then by a pro-Soviet party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), after a coup in April 1978 - were met by tribal rebellion.

When the PDP took power in 1978 there were 16 million people in Afghanistan including over one million nomads. There were no railway lines. Literacy was under 10% (and for women was 3%). In the countryside, where 85% of the people lived, 5% of the landowners owned nearly half the land. By the early 1970s factory production made up only 2-3% of GDP.

The PDP attempted limited land reform and legislated for women's rights. They attempted to brutally suppress the revolt of the countryside - but succeeded only in deepening hostility to their rule. In March 1979 there was an uprising in Herat which left 5,000 dead. By the end of 1979 there were 400,000 refugees in Pakistan.

The Soviet invasion over Christmas 1979 was designed to prop up a client regime, the pro-Soviet PDP government. The Russian war in Afghanistan became their Vietnam. Before their final humiliating withdrawal in 1989 a million people had been killed; five million had fled as refugees; half the villages had been destroyed. The Russians left their Afghan friends to face the fundamentalist mujahedin fighters who had been armed by the West, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. That regime survived until 1992 when the fundamentalists took the capital, Kabul. Fighting then broke out between the competing fundamentalist militias.

Taliban

The Taliban emerged in the spring of 1994, around a former mujahedin commander, Mohammad Omar. Ethnically the Taliban are based on the Pashtoon clan which exists in southern and eastern Afghanistan (and northern Pakistan). By October 1994 the Taliban had become well armed and funded - thanks to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan (with the backing of the US) wanted to end the stateless chaos into which Afghanistan had descended. A measure of stability would guarantee access to the oil pipeline from Central Asia to the Indian sub-continent and beyond. In 1996 the Taliban over-ran Kabul and since then have ruled over most of the country. The Taliban were helped to power by a series of alliances stuck with commanders of other militias, some of whom were bribed using Osama bin-Laden's money, and with the direct assistance of bin-Laden's military force which rests on his own following of non-Afghan mujahedin fighters.

Bin-Laden is a wealthy Saudi who flew to Afghanistan on behalf of the Saudi intelligence service shortly after the

Russians invaded in late 1979. Bin-Laden helped to organise and train the anti-Russian fundamentalist fighters, only breaking from the Saudis in 1990 over the stationing of US troops in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. The Saudi regime cancelled his passport in 1994, although he has maintained political links with - and got funding from - Saudi supporters.

Bin-Laden's fighters, many of whom are non-Afghans from the Arab world, Chechnya and Pakistan, form a key prop for the Taliban regime. Bin-Laden's troops have formed shock battalions in the war against the remnants of anti-Taliban opposition, the Northern Alliance. These mujahedin have been responsible for some of the sectarian massacres carried out by pro-Taliban forces against the minority Shiite communities in the north and west of Afghanistan. Bin-Laden almost certainly was responsible for the murder of Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud two days before the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. If he was responsible, the killing of Massoud would cement bin-Laden's close relationship with Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

The Northern Alliance controls less than 10% of Afghanistan, with its forces in the north-east of Afghanistan and in the Panjshir Valley to the north of Kabul. They are also fundamentalist, albeit slightly less illiberal than the Taliban. They in no way deserve our support. The Taliban's Islamic state is the most reactionary regime on earth. They preside over vast misery, starvation, and a population of women who have been reduced to non-educated, right-less mutes forced to wear ill-fitting, all-covering sacks, known as the burka. The Taliban's religious police from the Ministry of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice carry whips made of electrical cable and enforce bans on singing, television, photography and kite flying. Minority groups, such as the Shia Muslims in northern Afghanistan have been butchered by the Taliban.

The Taliban are not simply brutal bigots but represent a different period of history - they are the revenge of the Afghan countryside on modernity's inability to bring Afghanistan into the modern world.

A US compliant regime

The US is currently attempting to find an alternative, compliant regime to install in Afghanistan, to replace the Taliban. Russia has said it will give military assistance to the Northern Alliance. Collectively the US and other western powers seem to believe that a former king, Mohamed Zahir Shah, is a possible future figurehead. They have paid for Northern Alliance representatives to visit the king, currently living in luxury in an Italian villa. Afghanistan was a monarchy until 1973 when a coup brought Mohammed Daud to power. Daud was, in fact, a member of the royal family and a cousin of Zahir Shah, whom he deposed. The 1973 coup, led by an air-force pilot, Lt Col Abdul Khadir, was the first stage in a process which led to the PDP coming to power in 1978: middle class military groups attempting to modernise Afghanistan. Zahir Shah had been king since 1933 and he had presided over extreme backwardness, poverty and illiteracy.

Is Islamic fundamentalism anti-imperialist?

Clive Bradley's Q&A on political Islam

How typical of Muslims in the Middle East are "Islamic fundamentalists"?

They're not. "Islamist" groups are a modern phenomenon, and a political one, not just "hard-line" Islam. Very many people in majority-Muslim countries in the region are opposed to them. Although some of the Islamist groups have achieved quite wide support, for example among Palestinians in refugee camps, they do not represent the population as a whole. In Iran, for instance, where an Islamist movement took power through the revolution of 1979, to consolidate its power it had to defeat the left, and a powerful workers' movement, which had toppled the Shah. The repressive, reactionary "Islamic Republic" was the result of a violent struggle within Iran, not an automatic consequence of the feelings of the people. In Afghanistan, the Taliban is the fruit of years of Russian occupation and opportunistic support from the West.

But they still represent the struggles and aspirations of the oppressed people, don't they?

Of course it's true that oppressed, poor, dispossessed and desperate people have signed up with the Islamists. But reactionary movements always find an audience, and recruits, amongst such people. And these groups are reactionary. They are opposed to all democracy, favouring a state based on Islamic law. There are large non-Muslim minorities in the region, and even most people who are Muslim don't want "Islamic" laws which are rigidly imposed. Some people, of course, have no religion. Islamists are violently opposed to women's rights; they are opposed to any independent movement of women, or workers, or any other section of the oppressed. They think the semi-feudal, vile regime in Saudi Arabia is too soft!

But they're fighting national oppression. So we should support them, right?

They're not fighting national oppression. There are oppressed nations in the Middle East, and of course the West dominates the region in some ways, economically, and by supporting oppressive states. The Islamists draw some of their support from the sense of national oppression many people have. But their programme is not for national, or any other kind, of freedom. The "Islamic republic" in Iran is a brutal oppressor of its national minorities. The Taliban has something of a "national" base, oppressing non-Pashtoon minorities in Afghanistan. The Islamists are not fighting "national oppression", but "the West", meaning also those aspects of Western culture which are good, as well as those which are bad - even the limited democracy and freedoms which we enjoy, and which people in the Middle East want too, the Islamists are opposed to. They are brutal oppressors of their own people.

Surely when they say they're against "the West", they mean they're against Imperialism, and so are we?

You can be against "imperialism" for reactionary reasons, and this is the case with the Islamists. They represent, in the main, reactionary social classes - whatever the mass base some of these groups have achieved - who are

opposed to capitalism because it threatens their power and privilege in their own societies, not because they want democracy and equality.

So you're saying they're fascists?

Properly speaking, no. Fascist movements emerge in advanced capitalist countries with powerful working class movements - which they aim to crush. But there is much about the Islamists which is "fascistic" in a broader sense. We don't have to imagine, hypothetically, what it will be like if they take state power: versions of Islamism took power in Iran and Afghanistan, and they have been profoundly repressive. In Algeria, where Islamists are a mass movement, very many democrats and leftists have had to flee the country; many more have been murdered.

Still, they gain their support because of the vile actions of America - and Israel, which America supports, and because of things like sanctions against Iraq.

This is true in a general sense. But the growth of Islamism wasn't the automatic result of American, or Israeli, policy. Other political forces, like old-style nationalism, had failed to bring tangible results to the masses. Socialists failed to win much of an audience at all. Struggles like those of the Iranian working class were defeated. And even if America had a different policy on Israel, it wouldn't immediately undercut the Islamists - who don't want a democratic settlement and justice, but the annihilation of the Jewish nation. The Islamists aren't just the inheritors of old-style nationalisms with a new ideological dressing, but something else, something reactionary. For instance, when the PLO began its hijackings and terrorist attacks in the late 1960s and 70s, they never attempted anything like the suicide attacks on America - not because they were technically incapable of it, but because, I think, such things would never have entered their minds. And we should not relieve the governments of the Middle East of all responsibility. It is of course true that Western sanctions against Iraq have had terrible consequences for the Iraqi people. But Saddam Hussein bears a responsibility also for that situation; his government is hardly innocent. The sense in which the US government is most guilty is that it, in Afghanistan for example, helped arm and train the Taliban and probably Osama bin Laden himself.

Even if you're right about all this, our "main enemy is at home".

Yes. But we need to make solidarity with democrats, workers, and socialists who are fighting oppression and the Islamists. It's a fake and contemptible "internationalism" which sees the people of the Middle East as incapable of genuinely progressive and democratic struggles, politics or ideology - as if any old reactionary movement is good enough for "them" and we don't have to bother our heads about it. The rise of Islamism is a disaster for the peoples of the region - who are its first and main victims. If we want to make solidarity with the victims of oppression, the Islamists are the oppressors, and our enemies. To think otherwise is patronising, if not worse.

So you're lining up with Bush, then?

Absolutely not! A war against Afghanistan, for instance, will - certainly in the medium to long term - make things worse. It will not solve any of the problems the people of those countries face, and will help the Islamists grow. The

indiscriminate slaughter of people is exactly what the Islamists did in New York.

Australian unions and the war

Leon Parissi

While thousands have marched in cities across Australia against the US retaliatory war the arguments for peace have yet to reach a vast number of workers. The Australian union response to the suicide plane attacks of Sept 11 was initially an outpouring of sympathy for the victims and their families. As the US retaliation moved into a period of "war on terrorism", seemingly unlimited by territory or time, some union leaders are already openly opposing the Australian government's unquestioning loyalty to US interests.

Union leaders such as Andrew Fergusson (CFMEU) spoke at the October 13 Sydney NOWAR rally and gave strong support to the anti-war organisers. Banners from a number of unions could be seen among the several thousand strong rally. In Victoria Craig Johnston, State Secretary of the AMWU, has openly spoken against the war. The Victorian Trades Hall Council web site is promoting anti-war meetings and rallies. Even the conservative NSW Labor Council carried the resolution reprinted below which, while not openly opposing the war, does call for a peaceful solution. The resolution also calls for a two state solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

"In terms of longer term stability in the Middle East we welcome the statement by US President Bush recognising the need for an independent Palestinian state to coexist with the state of Israel."

If the anti-war movement is to effectively counter the unquestioning "shoulder to shoulder" stance of the Federal ALP during this khaki election period and after, it must work to gain the support of the union leaderships and their members. The union movement played an important role in stopping Australian public support for the Vietnam War and can play that role again.

Given that more of the official union movement is openly against the US retaliatory war than was the case during the Gulf War the anti-war movement or initially during the anti-Vietnam war movement anti-war activists are in a good position to pressure the federal ALP to change its position from its current line of 'all the way with the USA'.

NSW unions combat workplace racism in the wake of September 11

From the NSW Labor Council's Workers Online issue 114, October 5 2001:

"A public campaign against racism in the workplace has emerged as a key plank of the NSW union movement's response to the terrorist attacks in the US and military action arising out of it.

A meeting of affiliates in Sydney this week passed a resolution condemning the attacks and urging a targeted and restrained response from the US and the international community.

But unions also agreed to take a leadership role in addressing racist attacks on Muslim workers in the wake of the events in New York and Washington.

They have resolved to develop a public campaign, which will include advertising and campaign materials.

Full Resolution on US Attacks

1. Labor Council condemns the attacks upon the US on September 11 that lead to a tragic loss of life.

2. We express our sympathies to all those who have suffered a loss as a consequence.

3. We condemn all acts of terrorism, whether state sanctioned or the actions of individuals or small groups, as indefensible. Labor Council reaffirms that terrorism has no place in our civilisation and reassert our commitment to combat the poverty and injustice that all too often provide unwitting recruits for the armies of the intolerant.

4. Labor Council calls for a calm and measured response to the attacks and seeks that a peaceful resolution to the terrorist threat be the primary objective.

5. Such response must not only seek to find those responsible for these acts of terrorism but to ensure that justice within the rule of law, not retaliation is the key objective.

6. The Labor Council reaffirms our condemnation of racially motivated attacks on Arabic and Islamic communities in Australia. We call on the international community not to allow the September 11 atrocity to increase hatred, racial and religious intolerance. We encourage our national leaders to view this as an opportunity to work with the UN, an international community, in its search for peaceful solutions to conflicts.

7. We add our voices to those people around the world who recognise that true security can only be obtained through social, economic and environmental justice.

8. In terms of longer term stability in the Middle East we welcome the statement by US President Bush recognising the need for an independent Palestinian state to coexist with the state of Israel.

9. The Labor Council of NSW will actively involve itself in campaigns and public forums in pursuit of the above objectives."

Trade union model motion against the war

Move this motion at your next union meeting

"We condemn the September 11 attacks in the USA without reservation. Thousands of working people and others were killed. We stand in solidarity with the working-class people who have borne the brunt of this atrocity and in particular with the workers and trades unionists who have performed dangerous and difficult tasks in rescue and recovery, in the course of which hundreds gave their lives.

We oppose Islamic fundamentalism. Regimes such as those in Afghanistan and Iran have persecuted trade unionists and socialists, and are anti-democratic, anti-woman and anti-semitic. We recognise that most Muslims are not fundamentalists, and that the first victims of fundamentalist repression are ordinary Muslim people. We are alarmed by the rise in prejudice against Muslims, Arabs, immigrants and asylum-seekers many of whom are fleeing from fundamentalist persecution. We have already seen increased racist attacks in our communities and workplaces and we will take a stand against this.

We also oppose the US Government's drive towards a war of revenge. This war will result in the slaughter of many innocent people. It will be accompanied by attacks on civil liberties and the repression of the workers movement and of socialists. It will galvanise support for fundamentalists and other reactionaries. **WE AS A TRADE UNION AND LABOUR MOVEMENT MUST GIVE NO SUPPORT TO THE USA'S WAR DRIVE.**

We are not prepared to back a murderous war by a US government which has carried out many atrocities itself. If we do this, we side with our own rulers against working-class people in other countries, and we betray the international solidarity of working people. We do not believe that the USA's motivation in such a war is to defend freedom or democracy rather, it is to reassert itself as the world leading power. Our unions must protest strongly against John Howard's policy of aligning Australia with the USA's war drive.

We do not accept the suggestion that in the current situation, it is no longer appropriate for trade unions to campaign for jobs, wages and conditions. The Government and the employers have not suspended their attacks on workers, and we will not suspend our fightback against them. We also commit ourselves to fight the job cuts in the air transport industry.

We pledge to ally with other trade unionists to protest against the coming war and to stop Australian government support for it. We pledge our solidarity to the democratic and working-class resistance across the world against both US military oppression and Islamic fundamentalism.

We restate our determination to work toward remaking the world on the basis of solidarity, democracy and equality, in place of the vicious world system which threw up this horror. Only international working-class solidarity can both stop this war and undercut the fundamentalists."

US unions respond to terror attacks and the war.

Local 1199 of the SIEU - a union primarily of health care workers, many of its members worked to save lives following the attack on the World Trade Center - was the first union to openly oppose the war in Vietnam. Their policy is against "launching a war against any nation because of the actions of a few", as well condemning terrorism and demanding that the perpetrators of terrorist acts be brought to justice. Local 1199 represents 220,000 members in the New York metropolitan area.

Washington State Jobs with Justice [a US Labor Party campaign group] joins the nation, and indeed the world, in mourning the devastating loss of life resulting from the vicious attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as well as the crashed plane in Pennsylvania. Many of those killed were union members and other workers killed on the job. We particularly honour the firefighters, police, and other rescue workers who continue to risk their lives to save others.

We demand that the perpetrators of these crimes be brought to justice. We understand that an endless cycle of revenge can only bring the deaths of more innocent civilians, both here and around the world. We reject the idea that entire nations should be punished for the actions of a few.

Within our own borders, we call upon all in our communities to join us in immediately confronting any anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, or other anti-immigrant hate speech or
Workers Liberty No.20 November 2001

acts of violence, whether in our neighborhoods, our workplaces, or in the media. We strongly oppose efforts to curtail the rights of immigrants and refugees, including expulsion of suspect foreign nationals without due process. Just as we insist that economic recovery aid benefit workers and not only corporations, we stress that while we may oppose specific war policies, we insist on adequate support for the working men and women in the armed services.

Militarisation of our society inevitably leads to erosion of civil liberties and workers' rights. We must remain vigilant in the defense of our democratic principles, including the protection of our civil liberties. In the past, national security has often been used to justify interference with our rights to freedom of association, to organize, to strike, and to picket. We encourage open discussion as to the most appropriate response to the atrocities that have taken place. Our foreign policy must be based on pursuit of global justice, and not on an endless cycle of civilian slaughter.

San Francisco Labor Council Endorses September 29 Antiwar Rallies

The following resolution was adopted by the S.F. Labor Council at its delegates meeting on Monday, September 24, 2001.

That the San Francisco Labor Council, AFL-CIO, endorse the mass anti-war rallies scheduled for Saturday,

September 29, 2001, at the White House in Washington, D.C., and in San Francisco and Los Angeles, joining community leaders, the Rev. Cecil Williams and family members of those who perished, to a) Mourn the victims; b) Stand together with our brothers and sisters who are victims of violence and scapegoating; c) Defend our civil liberties and stop the drive toward war in the Middle East -- under the banner "**War and Racism are not the Answer.**"

New York City Labor Statement on September 11 September 27, 2001

Therefore, the undersigned New York City metro-area trade unionists believe a just and effective response to

September 11 demands: *NO WAR. It is wrong to punish any nation or people for the crimes of individuals-peace requires global social and economic justice. *JUSTICE, NOT VENGEANCE. An independent international tribunal to impartially investigate, apprehend and try those responsible for the September 11 attack. *OPPOSITION TO RACISM-DEFENSE OF CIVIL LIBERTIES. Stop terror, racial profiling and legal restrictions against people of color and immigrants, and defend democratic rights. *AID FOR THE NEEDY, NOT THE GREEDY. Government aid for the victims' families and displaced workers-not the wealthy. Rebuild New York City with union labor, union pay, and with special concern for new threats to worker health and safety

Solidarity against terror of fundamentalist reactionaries and the US military machine

The Pakistan Labour Party, The Workers Communist Party of Iran and Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan each confront reactionary fundamentalism in their own countries, and have clearly condemned the fundamentalist attack on the USA. They also oppose the US retaliatory war, and see US attacks as increasing support for fundamentalism in the region.

The solidarity that the Australian anti-war movement, especially the International Socialists and the Democratic Socialist Party are offering against the US war, is insufficient to the needs of the people of Afghanistan suffering under the repressive rule of the Taliban.

The working class movement and the left need solidarity against religious fundamentalism, and these organisations do not hesitate to condemn it.

Pakistan: Where do we stand and some thoughts on perspectives

Farooq Tariq, General Secretary Labour Party Pakistan.
This statement made on 2 October has been edited for space.

The 11th September incident has had a devastating effect on the politics of different trends in Pakistan. It has polarized the politics of each group to an extent never seen before.

The Pakistan Peoples Party, the party of the Bhuttos, is now openly supporting the stand of the military regime to go for an all out help for the Americans. So is the case of the Mutihida Qaumi Movement (MQM) the party of the immigrants with a mass base in Sind cities. In the North West Frontier province, the National Awami Party, the largest party of the Pushtoons has also changed sides from opposing the military regime to openly supporting the regime.

The Muslim league of ex Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is trailing behind the religious fundamentalist and is half-heartedly supporting the Taliban and opposing the military regime for its support for Bush.

Some of the smaller alliances of the radical and Stalinist parties are also openly supporting the standpoint of the military regime. "The US must be supported to root out terrorism" is the cry from these ex-left parties justifying their support for the regime. These "left parties" include the National Workers Party and Communist Mazdoor Kissan Party (Communist Workers Peasant Party). They have now abandoned their anti-US sloganeering.

The religious fundamentalist forces are propagandising for all out support for Osama Bin Laden and an all out war.

It was Benazir Bhutto's power period which paved the way for the Taliban taking over in Kabul. The first act of the Taliban at the time was to hang the body of Dr. Najib Ullah in the main center of Kabul for a few days, after he was taken out of the United Nations office and killed by the Taliban. The UNO or the Americans or Benazir Bhutto had nothing special to say about this barbarian act of the Taliban. Dr. Najib Ullah was the head of Afghanistan government from 1988 to 1992. When he was overthrown by the Mujahadeen in 1992, he took refuge for four years at UN headquarters in Kabul

The Kashmir Mujahadeen has nothing to do with the national struggle of Kashmir, but plans to make Kashmir another Afghanistan controlled by a new Taliban. They had the full support of the Pakistani State under the military and under the previous civil governments of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. From a position of full support of the Taliban and Mujahadeen, the military regime has taken a U turn to support the even bigger terror, US imperialism, to carry an all out attack on the Afghanistan people.

The 11th September attack has also polarized the civil society organizations. Some are taking a position of No to War but yes to "a measured response". This position was taken by a group led by former chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and renowned human rights activist Asma Jahangir. Her article in the Daily Dawn on 30th September revealed her position quite clearly. On the contrary, many other are advocating a position of "No to War; No to Terrorism" condemning both and declaring

their solidarity openly with the international peace movement. Fareeda Shaheed of Shirkat Ghah and Nighar Ahmed of Aurat Foundation lead this trend within the civil society organizations.

"No to War; No to terrorism"

The Labour Party Pakistan position is very close to the position of "No to War; No to terrorism". The LPP will not have any confidence in the UN to solve this issue by legalizing the war on Afghanistan. It will not support the creation of International Criminal Courts (ICC), as this will be another institution for the cover of the crimes of the US government.

From the very first day, the LPP condemned the terrorist attack and the policies of US imperialism carried out in the past against the colonial countries. The LPP would never justify the terrorist attack for any reason. But it was consistent in its opposition to the methods and program of US Imperialism. It was already organizing the anti IMF and World Bank movement in Pakistan. It also started to build a peace movement as like others, it is anticipating a fully-fledged war on Afghanistan. The LPP has to oppose the religious fundamentalism and the powers that were harboring it, mainly the military regime of Pakistan in general and the ISI (Inter Services Intelligence) in particular.

Unlike the others it did not support the lesser evil philosophy. More and more political trends from right to left are justifying their betrayals in the name of having no choice but to support the lesser evil. The US is supporting the lesser evil (the Pakistan military regime) in comparison to Taliban. Pakistan is supporting the lesser evil (US) as was declared by general Musharaf in his televised speech.

The position of the official labor movement is also more and more to support the military regime. The Pakistan Workers Confederation main leadership has openly supported the military regime with an appeal to the US not to attack Afghanistan. The trade union leaders within the PWC who are members of LPP are waging a war within the labor movement for no support to war. These trade union leaders, including Yousaf Baluch, are receiving a good hearing from the workers.

The labor movement has to oppose the American intervention in the region. But also it can not close its eyes to the growing influence of the religious fundamentalists. The religious fundamentalist forces are in contradiction with US imperialism. But workers can not gain by siding with any one. They can only lose their independent identity by supporting one against the other.

Worker-Communist Party of Iran

The Islamic side in the war of terrorists will rely on an effective but old formula for justification of Islamic terrorism, a formula which has been one of the foundations of petit-bourgeois 'anti-imperialism' in the Third World, particularly in the Middle East. Seven years ago, in the wake of a wave of Islamic murders in Israel, Egypt and Algeria, we clearly exposed and condemned this reactionary defence of terrorism...

'A wave of Islamic murders has engulfed the Middle East and North Africa. The victims of this wave are the most ordinary of ordinary people. In Egypt and Algeria, they shoot at and behead foreign nationals - be they workers, tourists or pensioners. They bomb and kill school

children at school gates. They kill young girls who do not submit to forced marriages. In Tel Aviv, they murder unaware pedestrians - children, old and young - on streets and on buses. And heroically, from Israel to Algeria, they reassure a stunned humanity that this 'armed struggle' will continue.

'There was a time when the traditional and 'anti-imperialist' Left would look upon the blind violence and unrestrained terrorism of Third World and anti-western currents if not with admiration then at least with toleration. In their opinion, the injustice suffered by deprived nations and oppressed people justified this terrorism as a legitimate reaction. The terrorism of Palestinian groups, Islamic organisations and the Irish Republican Army - whose victims were increasingly unprotected and unaware civilians - were prime examples of this 'permissible' terrorism in recent past. A terrorism, which seemingly responded to past and present injustices; a terrorism, which seemingly appeared as a reaction to the inhuman and brutal policies of oppressive powers and governments. Interestingly, throughout the years, the Israeli government has also used this exact abuse-excuse rationalization; that is by alluding to the indescribable genocide carried out by Nazis and anti-Semitic groups in various countries against the Jewish people, they have justified the brutal suppression of the deprived people of Palestine and the daily killings of Palestinian youth.

'From a communist standpoint, this type of rationalisation and the blind terrorism erected on it in the Middle East - whether by Arab and Palestinian organisations or the state of Israel - is regarded as bankrupt and is condemned. There is not the slightest real and legitimate relationship between the appalling calamities that have befallen the Jewish people in this century and the suppression and crimes committed by the extremist right wing government in Israel against the Palestinians. There is not the slightest real and justified relationship between the sufferings of the deprived people of Palestine and the terrorism of Islamic or non-Islamic organisations attributed to these people. Bourgeois state and factions are exploiting and capitalising on the suffering of the deprived people. Condemning and eradicating this terrorism by the working class, particularly in countries of the region, is an essential condition for placing the workers in the leadership of the social struggle to end the age-old miseries of the people of the Middle East.

Despicable Jihad against humanity

'It seems the new wave of Islamic murders, particularly in North Africa does no longer even require such political justifications. A turban and a gun are sufficient to begin this despicable Jihad against humanity. This is Islamic gangsterism and its source is the ruling regime in Iran. And it will be in Iran where it will be smashed....'

With the intensification of this conflict and particularly with the imminent US and NATO attack on Afghanistan, the 'anti-imperialist' defence of Islamic groups and rationalisation of their terrorist actions by reference to Israel and America's crimes and oppressive acts, can once again gain foothold among the people and political parties of the Middle East and also among sections of the traditional radical and intellectual Left of western societies. The main ideological refuge of Islamic gangsterism and Islamic reaction in this power struggle will not be the worn-out and openly anti-human religious and Islamic slogans, but rather

the so-called 'anti-imperialism' of the religious-nationalist and petit bourgeois apologists.

No popular movement can succeed against the war of terrorists without exposing and breaking the ideological framework of this hypocritical war propaganda on both sides of this reactionary conflict. (*edited for space – Ed*)

(Worker-Communist Party of Iran, www.wpibriefing.com)

Statement of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan

On September 11, 2001 the world was stunned with the horrific terrorist attacks on the United States. *RAWA stands with the rest of the world in expressing our sorrow and condemnation for this barbaric act of violence and terror. RAWA had already warned that the United States should not support the most treacherous, most criminal, most anti-democracy and anti-women Islamic fundamentalist parties because after both the Jehadi and the Taliban have committed every possible type of heinous crimes against our people, they would feel no shame in committing such crimes against the American people whom they consider "infidel". In order to gain and maintain their power, these barbaric criminals are ready to turn easily to any criminal force.

But unfortunately we must say that it was the government of the United States who supported Pakistani dictator Gen. Zia-ul Haq in creating thousands of religious schools from which the germs of Taliban emerged. In the similar way, as is clear to all, Osama Bin Laden has been the blue-eyed boy of CIA. But what is more painful is that American politicians have not drawn a lesson from their pro-fundamentalist policies in our country and are still supporting this or that fundamentalist band or leader. In our opinion any kind of support to the fundamentalist Taliban and Jehadies is actually trampling democratic, women's rights and human rights values.

If it is established that the suspects of the terrorist attacks are outside the US, our constant claim that fundamentalist terrorists would devour their creators, is proved once more.

The US government should consider the root cause of this terrible event, which has not been the first and will not be the last one too. The US should stop supporting Afghan terrorists and their supporters once and for all.

Now that the Taliban and Osama are the prime suspects by the US officials after the criminal attacks, will the US subject Afghanistan to a military attack similar to the one in 1998 and kill thousands of innocent Afghans for the crimes committed by the Taliban and Osama? Does the US think that through such attacks, with thousands of deprived, poor and innocent people of Afghanistan as its victims, will be able to wipe out the root-cause of terrorism, or will it spread terrorism even to a larger scale?

From our point of view a vast and indiscriminate military attacks on a country that has been facing permanent disasters for more than two decades will not be a matter of pride. We don't think such an attack would be the expression of the will of the American people.

The US government and people should know that there is a vast difference between the poor and devastated people of Afghanistan and the terrorist Jehadi and Taliban criminals.

While we once again announce our solidarity and deep sorrow with the people of the US, we also believe that attacking Afghanistan and killing its most ruined and destitute people will not in any way decrease the grief of the American people. We sincerely hope that the great American people could DIFFERENTIATE between the people of Afghanistan and a handful of fundamentalist terrorists. Our hearts go out to the people of the US.

(*edited for space – Ed*)

More on RAWA on the web: <http://rawa.false.net/index.html>

Ireland and the fallout from September 11

By John O'Mahony

Against a background of the most serious inter-communal violence - in North Belfast - since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, and the new situation for the IRA created by the plane bombs in New York and Bush's "crusade against terrorism", Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble has put down a motion to exclude Sinn Fein from government. Unless the IRA makes immediate serious moves to decommission its weapons it will come to a vote two weeks when we went to press. If Trimble does not get a necessary majority - and he is unlikely to, because the second Catholic-Nationalist Party the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) will not agree to exclude Sinn Fein - then his party will itself withdraw from government. IRA/Sinn Fein are adamant that they will not accept Trimble's ultimatum. Devolved Northern Irish Government is thus on course for collapse.

In the many past crises, gestures and promises have been found to prevent collapse. Suspension has been used to gain time. This summer it has been used twice. Such options have now run out. Either the IRA will begin to

satisfy the demand to decommission weapons, or the Unionists will make devolved government impossible.

The SDLP disapprovingly says that the Unionists think they can have Belfast government without Sinn Fein and Sinn Fein think they can have it without the Unionists. The first might prove possible with SDLP support; the second, government without the main party of the Protestant majority, is inconceivable. If Trimble's party withdraws, then either there will be indefinite suspension or new elections.

To go by what happened in the recent election of MPs for Westminster, elections for the Belfast Assembly would bring gains for the Paisleyites and Sinn Fein at the expense of the "moderates" of the SDLP and the UUP. That way too lies an end to devolved government. The decision lies with IRA/Sinn Fein Movement here, though probably not within Trimble's timetable, is less unlikely than it was. The New York bombs have seriously changed the political world in which Sinn Fein/IRA operates.

The IRA bombed and shot its way to a pivotal position. Now someone else's bombs destroying the World Trade Centre have shifted the balance against them. In the

manoeuvring around the Good Friday Agreement, a lot of IRA/Sinn Fein's strength has come from international sympathy and support, in the first place American support. The "holy crusade against terrorism" creates massive pressure on them to decommission, under threat of loss of that American support. The pressure was already intense anyway. Yet it was a different sort of pressure.

When Trimble resigned as First Minister on 1 July, it signaled the start of a new drive by the Unionists and even the SDLP, backed by London and Dublin, to compel the IRA to keep its promises to decommission. Yet, remarkably, the drive against the IRA/Sinn Fein consisted of new concessions - on policing - and blandishments. The whole Good Friday Agreement has for IRA/Sinn Fein depended on Britain complying with their demand to act as "persuader" of the Unionists on behalf of the Nationalists. The limits of that, as events after July 1 showed, had not been reached.

But now in the era of the "crusade against terrorism" continual IRA intransigence on decommissioning cannot but lose it American sympathy. Trimble acts now to take maximum advantage of the new situation. So, though the IRA/Sinn Fein are capable of brazening it out, and may do that, they may decide that their best option is to "move" on decommissioning.

The fate of the Good Friday Agreement since Easter 1998 has already been shaped by spectacular violence other than that of the IRA. The dissident republican bomb in Omagh, which killed 29 people, was a major challenge to Gerry Adams' "Ballot box and Armalite" peace strategy.

On the Unionist side, at the same time, the burning to death of three children by Unionist bigots helped dishearten and demobilise the hardline Protestant opposition to the Good Friday Agreement that was building on the Unionist side. It melted away, though almost one in two Protestants continued to oppose the Agreement. As things had been going the interaction of a militarist Republican and anti-Agreement Unionists might have wrecked the Agreement. Now the New York plane-bombs are likely to affect the shape of the Irish "peace process".

Nothing short of a big and convincing IRA move on decommissioning will stop the withdrawal of the Unionists from the Belfast government. Looming elections in the South, in which Sinn Fein is expected to go from one Dail seat to five or six, may influence them in the other direction. After the election, IRA/Sinn Fein can hope for greatly increased leverage in the affairs of the south, perhaps even the balance of power in the Dail. Sinn Fein/IRA play on an all-Irish, not a Six County, chessboard.

Islamic fundamentalism: a secular activist's experiences in Iran

Lynn Smith interviews Cyrus Sarang, a founder of the Refugee Action Collective in Australia

Lynn: As an Iranian you were involved in the struggle to overthrow the Shah in the late 1970s, correct?

Cyrus: I was a freedom fighter in a left-wing guerilla organisation. We were fighting for democracy and socialism. We believed in Marxism/Leninism. We were not Stalinists.

Lynn: Why were Muslims fighting against the Shah as well?

Cyrus: There was a Marxist group. And an Islamic group.... like the mujahideen today. Some part of the Islamic group believed in socialism. They said "hey... I don't care about dialectical materialism which says there is no God everything is material. I reject this ideology completely. I believe in God and religion. That's my choice. But I do care about socialism." We got together because we agreed that our aim and target was the Shah who was the watchdog for the imperialists.

Lynn: What was it about the US that the Muslim fighters were most opposed to? Was it American culture or American capitalism?

Cyrus: First of all it was America, then capitalism.

Revolution against the Shah

Lynn: So these were Muslim people who hated the Shah because he supported American interests but they were not fanatics, is that right?

Cyrus: Yes. The fundamentalists built up later. It was illegal to organise... as it is today... everywhere in the Workers Liberty No.20 November 2001

Middle East. If you want to organise you have to do it underground. People don't understand what we mean by this. You had to get candles, torches and go to a mountain area or a very quiet spot in the city where the military can't see your lights or hear your voice while you are having a meeting. The mujahideen wanted to kidnap the Shah's son. Now that's when the Shah stepped in. One of them was a member of Savak, the Shah's secret police.

Lynn: Which were the parties of the left in the revolution?

Cyrus: There was the Tudeh Party (Moscow line). Tudeh was attached to the Soviet Union and sent its people to visit there. If it rained in Moscow, according to Tudeh, every Iranian should get out his umbrella.

Lynn: So there was not much independent thinking in the Tudeh Party. But what about the other leftists in the anti-Shah group?

Cyrus: They were the Marxist/Leninists... the Agaliet. They did not believe that revolution was a tea box to be exported from one country to another. They believed the revolution should be developed according to the history and geography of that country by the people of that country. They were not aligned with the government of any other country.

Lynn: With such big differences between these groups, how did they manage to organise and get things done?

Cyrus: The main enemy was the Shah. At first they all got together and worked together. But because Tudeh was among these people, their trust was gone. Tudeh was

penetrated by Savak. So there was a split. The Marxists/Leninists built up their own collective. The mujahideen built up theirs.

"The revolution went down the drain because of the fundamentalists"

Lynn: OK... the Shah is overthrown in 1979 and flees. Bakhtiar is put in and lasts a few weeks. He leaves the country. Khomeini flies back from Paris to Tehran airport to be greeted by a crowd of 2 million people. What happened next?

Cyrus: A revolution happened in Iran. All the chanting was about freedom... we were going to have socialism there. But something happened. The Marxists were not strong enough. They did not have the money and good leaders and members to send around the country from city to city and estate to estate. My opinion is that the revolution went down the drain because of the fundamentalists.

Let's not forget the recent history in Iran. When Mossadegh was prime minister (before he was deposed by the USA then kept under house arrest) he wanted a revolution. He said "America out! Britain out! This is Iran... the oil belongs to us. We have to decide what happens in our own country". Mossadegh was a good leader. He was not a bad man. The people came out in the street for Mossadegh and the Shah's father was banished to Mauritius.

Of course Savak and the CIA always spend money. The Middle East is a good region for them. For profit. Don't forget the oil. Don't forget the gold. Don't forget the aluminium... They don't want to lose the Middle East: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Oman - all the Gulf countries that are full of profit for them.

Why didn't the American finish off Saddam Hessein? They want to keep him there like a scarecrow in the Middle East. They could have easily gone in and picked him up if they wanted to. Or put someone else in his place. But they didn't.

Iran is like a bridge between Asia and Europe. It is full of oil. The Americans don't want to upset Iran. Religion is always a good topic for imperialists. They want to build religion up so they spend money on it. They don't want democracy in Iran.

L.S.: How exactly did the overthrow of the Shah actually take place? What made his military crumble?

Cyrus: The military crumbled because the nation found out what it was up to. The Shah's regime didn't suddenly collapse in 1979. It began in '75. For four years the people struggled with strikes, protests and running away. Protests were not allowed. People would gather in one area: when the police and military came, people would pop up in another.

When the Shah gave orders for helicopter gunships to fire on students at Tehran university and they started killing all these students (it was seen on TV and went mouth to mouth) he made his biggest mistake. Afterwards he said "ah.... it was the fault of my minister" and gave orders for him to be arrested. But it was too late. The Shah came and said "you have to give me a chance. I'm sorry. I'll do a better job". But his time was finished.

That's when the American government realised it was time for the Shah to go. The US embassy in Tehran packed up everything. They tried to get their secret

documents and faxes and chop them up. But a group of Hezbollah took over the US embassy and took 66 American hostages.

The CIA already knew about the Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris and they contacted him. "Listen... " they said "we will support you. You can go back. The Shah is gone." He was asked in the plane trip from Paris " how do you feel about coming back to your country after 15 years" and he said "nothing". He was a fundamentalist. This was the guy who came and took the power and made the decisions for 65 million Iranians. Before he had even arrived from Paris, the slogans around the country were in favour of Khomeini. I believe the CIA spent the money to get the fundamentalists onto the lunch tables of Iranians. They did it and they were successful.

Within a few months of Khomeini's return the fundamentalists had captured the whole of the power. Bani Sadr was Khomeini's appointee in the early stages after the Shah. He had been a student in Paris and he was a kind of Islamic type. He thought as president that Khomeini would listen to him. But they came into conflict and Bani Sadr was told to shut up. "Khomeini is the head of Islam... you have to listen to him". Bani Sadr was upset and made a noise about this and Khomeini said, "Catch him. Kill him!". Bani Sadr had to disguise himself as a woman to get through the airport check and was gone.

Too late for the left

Lynn: What was the left doing during this period when Khomeini and the fundamentalists were increasing in power?

Cyrus: The left was faced against the people... against the working class they believed in. All the slogans had changed! We were there in the protests. We tried to change the slogans. But it was too late! Everything was set up.

Take an example. Let's say we are protesting at Villawood Detention Centre in Sydney and we are all chanting "free the refugees!" when suddenly behind us there is a larger, stronger group chanting "Long live Phillip Ruddock! This is the system we have to follow!". Everybody has to turn around and we see a big crowd with more placards than us.

Lynn: Did the fundamentalists gather support by lying about the left saying you were not religious and you were against religious freedom?

Cyrus: Absolutely. Within a year or so after coming to power Khomeini began pointing to the Marxists and communists saying, "what are these people talking about? These people are nonsense. They do not believe in god. We shouldn't touch them. We shouldn't talk to them". He created something like racism on fundamentalist issues... that's why everybody tried to avoid left wingers and run away from them, pointing them out. Then it was "now hit them!"

Some Marxists were selling their newsletters in the street and groups of Hezbollah would get hold of the legs of the seller and tear them apart... men and women. They got one girl of 15 or 16 years old and they tore her apart... the whole group... one side on one leg and one side on the other. She was dying! That's what fundamentalism did... it got people to that point.

Lynn: Did the left say “we are atheists. But we support the right of others to practice whatever religion they choose”?

Cyrus: Yes. They did say this. But it was too late. They didn't have a base and a foundation.

Lynn: What was the fundamentalists' base? Which groups of people in Iran were happiest when the fundamentalists began to get more power?

Cyrus: There were farmers... they used to leave their farms and come to Tehran to pray for Ayatollah Khomeini. And all the shopkeepers of Tehran... they believed in Islam. Khomeini promoted them.

Lynn: What happened to the Shah's army and the revolutionary guards who took over from it in 1979?

Cyrus: The army command structure was destroyed. Khomeini chose his own people and put them in charge of the Shah's old army. The officers who remained grew beards. The revolutionary guards backed off... some of them died. Some gave up. They walked from their compounds that were surrounded by fundamentalists lifting up their guns and saying, “we will not shoot the people”. Some of the revolutionary guards became heroes... they actually turned around and shot their own officers!

Lynn: When did it become clear to you that you could no longer stay in Iran?

Cyrus: Within six months of the revolution happening it had changed. You can't talk. People come to know you are an atheist, a Marxist or a socialist. They knew the mujahideen were in this area. And the Marxist/Leninists were in that area. We had a foundation. We had our base office. That's why they came and attacked that area and wanted to burn it and kill some of the people they took to jail. So I realised this is not a country where I can stay and talk to these people. They are all fundamentalists. So I escaped to India at the end of 1979 or early 1980. Me and the students who went with me set up a group of freedom fighters there and in the USA.

Lynn: What about the role of the working class in Iran?

Cyrus: Many in the left in Australia says the revolution was led by the workers. It was not. It was students and white collar people. The workers were quiet until the very end. Yes... the oil workers went on strike in the last days of the Shah and turned off the taps. That was important. But they did not do much.

Lynn: You said before that the Marxist/Leninists did not have a base or a foundation so they were easily defeated by the fundamentalists. What if they had had the working class as their base?

Cyrus: You might have something there. The working class would have opened their arms and protected us.

164

Liz Macnamara

OVERLAND All the way to Woomera the refugees were shipped. The cage was locked day and night. They were given numbers to answer for food, for medicine, for presence. At Curtin the children were teargassed watching their fathers being beaten. Silenced, men sewed their lips tight.

I have a friend here. He is an air traffic controller. Yesterday he made a kite from a garbage bag and it flew. After this day, many many people made kites. The kites are made from plastic bags, black, yellow and green bags. I will never forget this day... Singing.

Today, Management posted a notice saying that we were not allowed to make any kites.

I phoned my family today. It was the first time since I arrived six months ago.

[From 'Nader's Diary', *Overland* 164, 2001]

Australia spends almost seven times more on incarcerating asylum seekers than assisting with international efforts at refugee sites.

Australia has abolished the rights of 'designated persons' whose internment is mandatory and without recourse to law.

Australia is right now calling for a review of the 1951 UN Convention on the Rights of Refugees to redefine the term.

If this is not where you live

VOTE 1 SOCIALIST ALLIANCE



Howard has money for war, but not Ansett workers' jobs

Leon Parissi

John Howard has announced a beefed up Australian involvement in the US 'war on terrorism' in Central Asia. Without the slightest hint of regret he warned that Australian service men and women are “highly likely to be killed or severely maimed” in a ground war against the Taliban being conducted during the bitter Afghan winter. ALP leader Kim Beazley again

declared that he stands shoulder to shoulder with the Prime Minister.

Meanwhile as a result of the increased commitment of military personnel, and the possibility of even more in the future, retired Army commander Adrian D'Hage aired the need for conscription if the war goes on for several years. As the war is being planned to go on for at least two years, according to US President Bush, the mounting economic

as well as the human cost will need to be met somehow. The customary attacks on government spending on welfare, health and education will increase as "we" are asked to tighten our belts in the name of the national interest and the war effort. Meanwhile bosses are already scheming to find ways to profit out of tragedy of Sept 11.

Workers should not pay the cost of Sept 11

The bosses of air transport are also using the fate of Ansett workers and the example of Virgin as weapons with which to try and beat down hard won union wages and conditions in both Ansett MarkII and QANTAS.

Former Ansett workers are waiting for the first round of 8,500 redundancies to be doled out by the Administrator, Mark Mentha, on November 9. The redundancy payout has been reduced to annual leave, long service leave and 8 weeks pay under a limited package of help from a Federal government mostly being paid for by an impost on air travelers. This is the same government whose Ministers who stood by and watched the Ansett collapse unfold with little more than a ritual wringing of the hands.

Already there are real pressures on Ansett Mark 2 staff to give up wages and conditions in order to compete with the low non-union rates paid by British yuppie capitalist Richard Branson to workers at competitor Virgin Airlines. This pressure is also rapidly flowing on to QANTAS. For the moment the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union head, Doug Cameron, and the Australian Services Union's, deputy head, Linda White, have declared that there is no reason for the profitable QANTAS to seek a wages freeze. But the pressure is only now beginning to be applied.

Just over a month has passed since Sept 11 and already there are calls from QANTAS CEO, Geoff Dixon for a wages freeze to be imposed on his 33,000 workers as a direct response to the impact of the plane attacks. He told the Sydney Morning Herald that :

"We need to make real productivity savings to maintain our position and hopefully at some stage grow".

Dixon didn't directly mention the war but found the shaky state of the airline industry after September 11 a useful excuse to ask workers to make sacrifices in the interests of the company.

If QANTAS if having financial problems let them open their accounts to union scrutiny to prove the case. Otherwise workers can only assume that this is another management trick to increase profits at their expense. If there are problems due to the downturn in air traffic then the solution should not be just a knee-jerk squeeze on workers while management continue to collect their million dollar share deals and bonuses.

Workers' Liberty's solution is the nationalisation of air transport under workers control. In the last issue of WL we said to Ansett workers:

"Workers' Liberty urges you to consider:

- staying at the airports and call centres, en masse
- meeting with your fellow-workers to decide what air services you would offer if you could run them yourselves
- publicising this to passengers and QANTAS and Virgin workers, asking them to support you
- demanding that the government allow you to run Ansett yourselves, under public ownership, and propose QANTAS and Virgin workers do the same.

We say:

Keep the airports public, renationalise QANTAS, nationalise Ansett and Virgin.

Cut out the parasitic profiteers who don't care about the service.

Hand the aircraft and the airports all over to the workers and the passengers to run.

Maintain union wages and conditions. Reduce hours with no loss in pay to secure jobs for all aviation workers."

Biting the bullet

Sydney Ansett Picket Line Sunday 7 October 2001 11.30am

Liz Macnamara interviewed several Ansett workers at the picket line

John, Transport Workers Union delegate at Gate Gourmet, one of the contract companies caught up in the Ansett demise: We all knew there was a problem. We've known that for many months actually. We've been waiting for it to happen. And it happened on the fourteenth of September. We were all gathered together and we were told that our jobs were no longer there, that the company had gone into voluntary administration and our jobs were terminated. As far as entitlements are concerned: we're sorry, we don't know anything about it, we don't think you're going to get anything, because there's no money.

The first interview is with Chris, he was with Ansett for thirteen years, 'before we were sold to Gate Gourmet.'

Chris: Being an aircraft dispatch checker for catering: all our flights were full. And if all our flights were full, I really

don't know how a fantastic company like Ansett would go broke.

I asked if it was possible, that you can't run an airline at a profit in Australia, because of the distance?

Chris: Of course you can. Of course you can. Remember the mid 80s, the productivity of all sections in Ansett doubled and they still maintain the same staff. So how can you tell me that it isn't profitable? ...We went to motivational reach out seminars, we went to all sorts of motivational and productive seminars to make sure that Ansett was a lean and very, very keen competitor... The staff made concessions, the staff rallied behind the management, they did everything they can, they cut costs for management, they bent over backwards for the Ansett management right around Australia...

Whatever happened in the back boardrooms - with Qantas, the government, Singapore Airlines, Virgin - whatever happened in the back boardrooms about how they would handle this, I don't know. I don't know what the hell happened here, because to get a profitable airline like Ansett and put the brakes on it, and turn the motor off in a single day is absolutely amazing. It is the lifeblood of tourism in Australia.

For a country that relies on its tourism. For a country that relies on its service industries for so much. How can a government let this happen? How can ministers sit up in the back of the benches and abuse Gate Gourmet employees for actually asking them questions? How can that happen?

Chris introduced me to John, and three women from international reservations at Ansett. One of them was Elizabeth who had been with Ansett six months.

Elizabeth: I was surprised. Up until the close of business we were told to tell customers that business was as usual and we were taking calls and taking bookings up until the day that we went bust. That was my day off. I wasn't notified by any management.... I watched the news in the morning and I called my girlfriend and I said, I think we'd better go in.

We went in there, we were just told to pack up our stuff and leave. That was it.

The day we went bust

Eric, has worked on the ramp for fourteen years. He was also on a day off that Friday.

Eric: I called my supervisor - we operate from international you know - he said, As of now we haven't been told anything, so we're still working... I called in the afternoon and there wasn't any answer. So, I took my car and I drove over there and the place had been shut down. There wasn't a single soul.

Les, was a porter on the ramp, he has been with Ansett for over thirteen years. Les worked the last shift on the Thursday night before Ansett closed.

Les: How I found out? Well I just surmised. When they pulled the catering out at 12.00 o'clock, I said, well it's gone, the place is gone.

We finished the night and then at three o'clock the next morning, that was the Friday, they announced it.

This was not Sharon's first job: she has been cleaning planes for Ansett for only five years, but her face is the work of time.

Sharon: I was getting dressed for work and I had a funny feeling that something was wrong. And I thought to myself, Oh, I wonder if I've got a job to go to today? So I got in my car and I came to work and I found out - half past five when I was driving into the car park - that Ansett planes had been grounded... It was a very scary, eerie feeling as you walked through the doors.

Sam, also an aircraft cleaner, has been working at the airport 18 years.

Sam: Well basically it just came out of the blue. I started a six o'clock in the morning, it was the last day, we had four days, we had the long weekend off. Pulled up at the carpark just at six o'clock and heard on the radio that Ansett had been grounded.

We just rolled up here. There was confusion everywhere; no one really knew what was going on. We were given papers on our entitlements and basically that's it. We hung round for a few hours, there was no operations, nothing at all. From there we were told to go into Martin Place and rally, and you know that day the opposition leader, Mr Beazley, addressed the employees.

Beazley's performance

Sam: Excellent, really supportive. He's been really, really good. He's got my vote for the election. And I'm sure a lot of other people's vote. I'm very disappointed in John Howard, he hasn't come to the party at all. It's like he doesn't even want to know us.

Sharon: I think it was very good, but the thing is, people - now that they've promised things - they've got to keep to their promises.

Eric: He spoke well. He spoke well. But you don't have to believe the politicians. You don't have to believe politicians. He spoke well, and if he can do what he said, that is fine with me, but I don't believe politicians, so...

Solutions

Elizabeth: There's plenty of solutions... It's just that they've got to get up off their arses and get it fixed.

Steve: Look at George Bush: he's really subsidising the American public for their airline. He's put in a lot of dollars behind his airlines and John Howard hasn't put any.

Les: Well, you've got taxi drivers. They work out how much it costs on a mile, and that's the price they charge, you can't get it any cheaper So why don't they work out what the fare costs and that's what they are, the airlines round their figures out at that? That's what's wrong with the place.

Eric: I don't have a clue [why so many airlines go belly-up], because it can't be bad management all around the world. There's something behind it. No one knows. But I think Ansett should still be flying.

Since they've brought out the deregulations - the so-called competition - they keep chopping their staff: retrenchment, retrenchment, giving redundancies for people to go. And you've no people to service the airlines. So, I think nationalization is the way to go.

When we had the two airline system things were more secured. You're not scared of your job. You get up in the morning, you know you've got a job to go to.

Les: It was done before, till they deregulated. I mean, people are saying it's good to fly cheap, but now they can't fly anywhere, where are they?

ACT nurses need the Socialist Alliance

Janet Burstall

Canberra - 18 October. Nurses at Canberra Hospital struck for the day over pay, conditions and numbers of staff. I spoke to some of the nurses protesting outside the Hospital. This is the answer I got when I asked one of the nurses if she would consider voting Socialist Alliance in the Federal election. She said she would probably vote Democrat or Green because she likes their social justice policies, especially she expects more from the Greens on the environment. She thinks voting Socialist Alliance would probably be a wasted vote, because the Democrats and Greens at least have people in parliament.

This is what the Socialist Alliance needs to say to win the votes of the striking nurses. You have been brave enough to take industrial action in defiance of a court order under laws that could see you fined individually \$10,000 per day, and see your union financially ruined. The Socialist Alliance is for the repeal of all laws which restrict your rights as workers to organise and take action together as you see fit.

We are for a government that will take the side of working people, especially people like yourselves who are acting together to take a stand for your own interests and the public interest of a decent health care system. The SA believes that we, the working people, organising together can really put the public interest first, and not, like the major political parties, bowing to the vested interests that put profit before people.

We are running for the federal election not just on a list of social justice policies, we are running to take a stand for our side in society, for the millions, not the millionaires, to say that we could achieve a just society, and ecologically sustainable society, if we had our own government, that always took our side.

We would tax the rich and scrap the GST to provide funding for public health and education, including more jobs, and better pay and conditions. We wouldn't be subsidising private insurance and private health operators. This is a rich country, we think that the riches can be redistributed in the public interest so that everyone can get the health care they need, when they need it, provided by workers who are properly paid and working without the stresses of overwork, understaffing and under-resourcing.

We are for welfare, not warfare. We are for peace, not the bombing of Afghanistan.

Vote for SA, not only because our social justice and environment policies are even stronger than the Greens.

Vote for us because we are on your side.

The Greens have many good policies, but they respect the rights of employers, which means that they cannot challenge the unfair distribution of resources that means that public services are poorly funded. They won't take your side in the way we will if the industrial laws are used to penalise you for your industrial action. We hope you won't even consider voting for the Democrats, who voted for the GST and the current industrial penalties.

Many of you will consider voting Labor, the alternative government to Howard. Labor is supposed to be the party of the unions, taking our side against the bosses and the wealthy. But they are not. Send Labor a message, by giving the SA your first preference.

A vote for the Socialist Alliance in the coming Federal election is a vote for the rights and interests of working people, of unions, against the rule of privilege and wealth, for public services and for peace, for a government for the millions, not the millionaires. Kick Howard out, Vote Socialist Alliance.

Workers' Liberty journal re-launched: *Reason in revolt*, No. 67,

"In an age of barbarism"

"Our neo-barbarism is characterised by the enormous and awesome but increasingly ruinous power over nature of a humankind that has not yet mastered its own social processes. We are still at the mercy of irrational social and political forces, even while our power to tame the irrational forces of nature, at whose mercy humankind has been throughout its existence, reaches an amazing and still increasing capacity."

Contents include:

In an age of barbarism; Elections in UK and France; The new turn of the SWP; Who are the anti-capitalists?

China and independent working class politics; Sylvia Pankhurst and democracy;

Lenin and the myth of revolutionary defeatism

Forum: Capitalist decline and progress? Kosova and East Timor

Reviews: Dreamworld and Catastrophe; Galileo's Daughter; Alas, Poor Darwin; Global Police and the Multitude

Send \$A45 for a subscription 4 bigger issues per year Send cheques to 'Workers' Liberty' P.O. Box 313
Leichhardt 2040 Australia. (please note current subscriptions will continue)

WL amendments to Socialist Alliance anti-war resolution

The Socialist Alliance National Executive adopted a position on the tasks of the SA in the anti-war movement. Workers Liberty moved 4 amendments which were disturbingly defeated. We think that our amendments advocated a concrete purpose to the movement, not just opposing but stopping the War. This purpose requires a focus on who has the power to force a government to change policy, specifically the working class movement. It clearly rejected both the USA's war plans, AND the plane attacks on the USA, siding with neither Bush nor Bin Laden. And we proposed that the SA should be advocating working class socialism as necessary to change the world so that there will be no more basis for war.

A number of members of the National Executive did vote for our amendments, but the DSP and ISO members all voted against them.

Draft resolution on the tasks of the Socialist Alliance in the movement against war and racism

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

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

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

It is the responsibility of the Socialist Alliance to define how it thinks this movement can best be developed

INSERT

to stop the war as soon as possible, and to produce a movement for socialist change that will end the material roots of war.

DELETE

and what its role should be within it.

To this end the Socialist Alliance National Executive is adopting this resolution.

2. The Socialist Alliance will devote itself to consistent, committed opposition to the impending war. It believes that the movement against the Bush war drive has to be driven by non-exclusionary, activist committees and/or networks that agree on clear, concrete demands and in the organised labour movement. The demands of the Sydney Network Opposing War and Racism (NOWAR)

exemplify the right approach. They are: (a) No US war! (b) No Australian troops or support! (c) No racist scapegoating! and (d) No attacks on democratic rights!

INSERT George Bush makes an ultimatum that you are either with the USA or with the terrorists. We reject this. The Melbourne ANSWER meeting both condemned the plane attacks, and rejected Bush's military response. A point to express this is:

(e) solidarity with victims of terror, in the USA, the Middle East and everywhere.

All who agree with such demands should be encouraged to join the movement and be given a place within it, regardless of their positions on other issues.

INSERT Winning the support of the organised labour movement - the unions - for the antiwar movement is essential to mobilising sufficient social power to move beyond protest to be able to take action to STOP the war.

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

The campaign will have the following features:

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

Socialist Alliance candidates will use every opportunity especially workplace and trade union meetings to explain why the war should be opposed, and why there should be no Australian involvement and support. We should build around slogans such as "Money for jobs/welfare, not for war" and argue to get the Liberals out and vote Socialist Alliance for a real alternative. The Socialist Alliance will vigorously argue that only socialism - the rule of self organised working people, where solidarity is raised to an organising principle of society - can create a world without war. We need to create a beacon of hope for the oppressed that can shine out against the reactionary politics of the US Government and of those who attacked New York and Washington.

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

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

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

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

(Responses from two WL readers are printed below - Ed)

The following letters are reproduced from the WL discussion list.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/workersliberty>

Socialist Alliance and the war

Dear Comrades,

The WL proposed amendments to the Socialist Alliance position on the war are very good. I especially approve of:

(a) The attempt to ensure that terrorism & US imperialism are rejected simultaneously. The terrorists are reactionaries in their own right & the working class, in defending its interests, has to set up its own camp.

(b) The attempt to get the Socialist Alliance to make a statement supporting socialism. If SA won't even mention the "S" word, it's bound to be no more than a temporary camp for nostalgic reformists & naïve idealists.

As someone famous (I forget who) once said, history repeats itself - the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. The ALP was a tragedy. If SA tries to follow it down the reformist path, it will be a farce. On the other hand, there are some things which WL didn't attempt to amend that I regard as problems.

I was disappointed that WL did not try to criticise SA's acceptance of the anti-war movement as a popular front. The SA position quoted approvingly the invitation to a principal of a Muslim school to join an SA anti-war platform. Even worse, the 30 September Melbourne anti-war rally was addressed by a Catholic bishop! Every time we invite bourgeois forces onto our platforms, we create problems for the working class forces which have been struggling against them. If these working class forces reject our manoeuvre, we have alienated them & set back the cause of working class unity. If they accept it, we have subordinated them to their enemies & set back the cause of working class independence. To take the example of the current anti-war campaign, it is a mistake, albeit understandable, to invite Muslim community leaders onto anti-war platforms. The intention is to ensure that the anti-war movement is anti-racist as well, but this tactic ignores the class divisions within the immigrant communities. If I am correct in my assumption, the Muslim school to which the SA position refers is the King Khalid Islamic College. This was set up with a grant from the Saudi monarchy and its school uniform forces its female students to wear a particularly severe version of the hejab. On the other hand, the majority of Middle Eastern women in Australia do not wear the hejab & would not appreciate the growth of community pressure to do so. How are they supposed to feel when a leading force for the Islamicisation of their community is accepted unquestioningly by SA? What would they conclude about socialism?

Further, while inviting Muslim clerics & principals onto SA platforms is an understandable mistake, no such excuses can be made in the case of Catholic bishops. How was the QUEER contingent at the 30 September rally supposed to feel? Or the many women in the crowd who have had abortions or want to

preserve their legal access to one? The best that can be said about this fiasco is that the bishop wasn't George Pell. The solution to the problems described above is the correct application of the principle of the united front. Rather than drawing bourgeois forces from within Middle Eastern immigrant communities into our movement, we should be seeking out working class forces within them. This would enable us to combine anti-racism (e.g. the right of women from Middle Eastern immigrant communities to wear the hejab without fear of harassment from racist thugs) with campaigns against social oppression (e.g. the right of the very same women NOT to wear the hejab without fear of harassment from family or community).

On a different topic, the SA statement said: "The abject capitulation of the Labor Party to this agenda is a major reason for Howard's rise in the opinion polls." While I am loathe to defend such an appalling organisation as the ALP, I think this statement is a little hard on them. In reality, the ALP is between a rock & a hard place over this war. If they support the war, they validate Howard's position & give him the chance to play at the leader of a united nation, something which gives him a solid lead over Beazley. On the other hand, if they oppose the war, a large proportion of pro-war Labor voters would desert, leading to a repeat of the 1966 Federal Election landslide. Of course, opposing the war would be the correct thing to do, but Howard's position on it won't start to come unstuck till well after the election. In any case, Beazley is supporting Howard on policy grounds, not on the basis of what will best limit the damage in the coming election. Let's give Labor a pasting over its pro-war stance, but don't imagine that it would do any better electorally by being anti-war.

In Solidarity,

Paul Conway

Regarding socialist responses to the "war on terror".

This should not just be a movement against war and racism. The issue is being used as a pretext for beefing up ASIO and other surveillance/security powers. For example it is proposed that the period for which they are able to arrest and detain without charge be increased from several hours to 2 days (without any accompanying evidence of increased need for these powers).

These changes should be of serious concern to the labour movement. It is conceivable that the definition of threat could cover actions such as NSW Labor Council's picket of Parliament. Already one person in the NSW public sector is being disciplined for viewing suspect sites on the internet at work.

In the meantime organisations like ASIO and ASIS remain relatively unaccountable. We should remember that it was the United States' and Pakistan's intelligence 'community' that resourced Islamic fundamentalists in the first place. They need to be held to account for their contributions to terror.

Paul Petersen

Workers' Liberty

Reject the politics of fear Throw the Liberals out!

Act against false fear and false hope.

John Howard set out to fight this election by escalating fear of refugees, with the refusal to allow the Tampa to land at Christmas Island. He has since shamelessly used the plane attacks on the USA, and his toadying admiration for George W. Bush, to create a siege mentality placing all hopes for protection from disaster in US military might. Beazley and Labor are all the way with the Liberals on "national security".

The escalation of fear – and the deflection of blame in Australian politics

Up to July 2001 Fear of

Losing our jobs (HIH, One.Tel, Mitsubishi, Arnotts)

An uncertain future for our children – will their education help them to succeed? Will they get jobs? Will there be a planet for them to inhabit?

August 2001 The Tampa Fear of

Refugees – and having to share those scarce jobs, and crowding our schools.

11 September 2001 Attack on New York Fear of

Islamic fundamentalist terror attacks. Howard appeals to reliance on US military response and wants us not to think about the consequences of US bombing of Afghanistan, and the human disasters that have been created by US military and foreign policy, shaped as it is by concerns for the wealthy, for oil, for profits and stable conditions for exploitation.

The real threat to our future

Our livelihoods are dispensable to those with the power to hire and fire, just one more statistic in the calculation of profitability, budget deficits and the price of social stability. Even optimistic budget forecasts say that unemployment will stick on 7%. Just in September, add 17,000 Ansett workers not knowing what will become of them. Pacific Dunlop plans to sack 890 workers in Melbourne, whilst their boss was paid \$2.54 million when he retired in March.

Our democratic freedoms, to organise in unions, to protest, to be heard in the media, are marginal, dispensable, subordinate to the so-called democratic right to own, hire, fire and make a profit or a loss. Unfair dismissal laws which give workers some legal protection, are targeted by the Coalition. Reith's Workplace Relations Act threatens big fines for workers and unions who take industrial action. Packer and Murdoch run the mass media, our stories do not get told.

Our peaceful security is dispensable to John Howard who slavishly follows the USA into war. While politics and economics is something that we let them do, in boardrooms, forums, in parliament house, and on TV – then we will be the victims of their fear-mongering, we will fear others, instead of blaming them, the true culprits

in the problems of jobs, health, education, the environment.

When we refuse to feel fear of refugees, when we challenge politicians' war-mongering manipulation of fundamentalist terror, and when we collect together to challenge the power and the decisions of the rich and powerful, whether they be the US government or religious fundamentalists, we can begin to remake a world that is free from fear, and full of all the freedom and creativity that we are capable of.

John Howard feeds fear, and reaps the benefits, while the world becomes meaner and harsher, and more hateful.

If you don't want to live a world of fear and hate, you want a world of human solidarity, then get out there and help build a challenge, support the Socialist Alliance election campaign, become active in your union, demand public spending on public health and education, welfare not warfare, jobs not profits. We can overpower the merchants of fear if we refuse to be their victims. We can win the victims of fear to our side, by taking our stand with vigour and passion, for a society based on human solidarity.

VOTE SOCIALIST ALLIANCE