

# Workers' Liberty



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

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## September 11 massacres

# Against this barbarism, we fight for socialism.



For working class solidarity to remake a world of freedom and equality.

No to Bush's war plans.  
No civil liberty restrictions.  
No to racism

**W**ith the plane hijackings and the destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September, a great dollop of the poison trickling down through a diseased and rotten world system to its worst depths of alienation and despair has splashed back in our faces. That it was probably carried out by people who thought they were fighting imperialism neither justifies nor excuses anything about the massacre. To use civilian planes, full of people, to attack buildings full of civilians, mostly ordinary workers, is a crime against humanity, whatever the supposed aims.  
(cont'd p.3)

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## 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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# September 11 massacres

## Against this barbarism, we fight for socialism.

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*(Cont'd from front page)*

If the attackers were "against imperialism", then they were only against imperialism as a function of being against the modern world. The modern world includes imperialism, but it also includes the elements of civilisation, technology and culture which make it possible for us to aspire to build socialism out of it. The attackers have not "gone too far", been "too extreme", or made a bad tactical choice. Only on the basis of a dehumanised, backward-looking world-view could they have planned and carried out such a massacre. Such people are enemies for the working class and the labour movement as much as the US government is, and more so.

Fascism recruits mass support from people who have been disappointed, ruined and oppressed, and often think they are combating "finance capital"; that does not make it any the less vile. Lenin, the great Marxist advocate of revolutionary struggle against imperialism, long ago drew a dividing line between that socialist struggle and reactionary backlashes. "Imperialism is as much our mortal enemy as is capitalism. That is so. No Marxist will forget, however, that capitalism is progressive compared with feudalism, and that imperialism is progressive compared with pre-monopoly capitalism. Hence, it is not every struggle against imperialism that we should support. We will not support a struggle of the reactionary classes against imperialism".

The attack could have been carried out by one of the hate-crazed far-right US groups which believes that their country has been taken over by a "Zionist Occupation Government", except that its suicidal nature points to Islamic fundamentalists.

In its scale, the massacre is in the same league as some of the worst imperialist atrocities of history. The US bombing of Cambodia, in 1970, killed several tens of thousands; the atom bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima killed 74,000 and 119,000 in the two cities in August 1945; the British and US fire bombings of Dresden and Tokyo, early in 1945, killed over 35,000 and about 80,000, respectively. At the time of day when the World Trade Centre was attacked, it usually has about 50,000 people in it.

In cold bloodedness, the New York massacre even exceeds its models. We, the socialists, cannot bring back the dead, heal the wounded, or assuage the bereaved. What we can do is understand the conditions which gave rise to the atrocity; see how they can be changed; and keep a clear critical understanding of the way that the US and other governments will respond.

Since we do not know who carried out the massacre, we do not know exactly what conditions and experiences impelled the killers. On the likely guess that the killers were Islamic fundamentalists, however, the recent history of three areas of the world is crucial.

### **Political disaster for the Palestinians**

Some Palestinian Arabs in the Israeli-occupied West Bank were among the very few people in the world who rejoiced at the massacre. The official Palestinian leadership

condemned it strongly, but since the 1980s radical Islamic-fundamentalist groups have gained ground among the Palestinian, groups to whose philosophies such massacres are not at all alien so long as they are directed against supposed "Zionists" or "imperialists", and who are likely to see any Jew as a "Zionist", any American as an "imperialist".

The Palestinians have been dispossessed, harassed, oppressed. In 1948 over 500,000 fled or were driven out when the Jewish community in what had been the British colony of Palestine declared independence and the surrounding Arab states went to war against it. The new state of Israel would not let them back in; the Arab states would not integrate them economically, or undertake negotiations with Israel which might get them a livable settlement.

The Arab states taunted them with promises that they, the Arab states, would soon "drive the Jews into the sea" and restore the Palestinians to their land. From those promises came only further catastrophes. Slowly and painfully, the Palestinians developed a movement of their own. From 1988 they launched an uprising in their territories which Israel had seized in 1967, and began to propose a positive programme to take the peoples of the region forward - two states for the two nations, Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews. In the early 1990s the Israeli government started negotiating. But it has double-crossed the Palestinians again and again, combining general promises that the Palestinians can eventually have their own state in the West Bank and Gaza with a vigorous drive to construct Israeli settlements in those areas and assert a framework of Israeli control. Out of the disappointments - and the pauperisation created by Israel's repeated closing of its borders to Palestinian workers - has come a current of rancid despair.

Two states for two nations - meaning, immediately, Israeli military withdrawal from the occupied territories, and an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel - is the only basis on which to begin to drain the poison. We stand in solidarity with the national rights of the Palestinian people, but we cannot be content with declaring merely "solidarity with the Palestinians". We have no solidarity with Islamic fundamentalists, Palestinian or otherwise, who carry out attacks on American working people like the one in New York, and might carry out similar attacks on Jewish working people in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

Immediately, the New York massacre is not only a human disaster, but also a political disaster for the Palestinians. The backlash against an Islamic-fundamentalist atrocity which so much outstrips, in its ferocity and scale, the Israeli military's crimes in the occupied territories, will create the most favourable political conditions for Israel to excuse those crimes and step up its pressure against the Palestinians.

For some time the Israeli authorities have been discussing plans for "unilateral separation" between Israel and the Palestinians, meaning that they would fence off selected areas of the West Bank and Gaza to be left to

Palestinian control, and enforce total Israeli control over the rest. This situation may give them the signal to do that. Socialists must reject the "politics of the last atrocity" and argue for Palestinian rights.

Iran became a centre of Islamic fundamentalism after 1979, when the Islamic clerics there took power on the back of a huge popular revolution against the Shah's dictatorship and then quickly consolidated total control. The dislocations, and taunting promises and deceptions, of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in the country; the fact that the Islamic clerics had been the only section of society able to organise autonomously under the Shah; and the failures of secular nationalism - those were the background. The clerics largely represented old social classes, like the bazaar merchants, threatened and displaced by the top-down capitalist reforms of the Shah: their regime is, to a significant extent, the revenge of the traditional ruling classes.

Throughout the Middle East, the rational use of the region's huge oil wealth, to enable a good life for all rather than to bloat some and taunt others, is the socialist precondition for undercutting the Islamic reactionaries.

In Afghanistan, an economically-underdeveloped, mostly rural society was thrust into turmoil in the late 1970s by a brutal attempt at reform from above by a government of the PDP, a military-based party linked to the USSR. Islamicists became the ideologues of a landlord-led mass revolt both against the PDP's brutalities and against such measures as some equality for women. In December 1979, seeing the PDP regime about to collapse, the USSR invaded. It spent eight years trying to subdue the peoples of Afghanistan with napalm and helicopter gunships. It was the USSR's Vietnam. The USSR's war had the same sort of regressive effect on society in Afghanistan as the USA's attempt to bomb Cambodia "back into the Stone Age", as part of its war against the Vietnamese Stalinists, had on that country. In Cambodia the result was the mass-murdering archeo-Stalinist Khmer Rouge government, which tried to empty the cities and abolish money; in Afghanistan, it has been the Islamic-fundamentalist regime of the Taliban.

The US government will respond to the New York massacre with bombing raids abroad and a clampdown at home. Its aim will be to make a show of retaliation and retribution. It will not and cannot mend the conditions which gave rise to this atrocity, conditions which the US government itself, capitalist and imperialist, has helped to shape. Probably ordinary working people who live in "terrorist" states will be the victims. The US-led sanctions against Iraq in recent years have killed tens of thousands of children while leaving Saddam Hussein's power and privilege intact.

## Civil rights

Civil rights will come under attack both in the US and in other countries, including Australia where civil liberty restrictions have already been mounting under the Howard government. The military has been given power to intervene in civil disturbance, increased powers to Victorian police followed S11, emergency powers have been given to Queensland police in preparation for CHOGM, and draft legislation is before parliament to further restrict asylum seeker rights. Britain already has the Prevention of Terrorism Act - rushed through a panicked Parliament as a "temporary" measure in 1974, after a pub bombing in Birmingham, but still on the law books - and new legislation

aimed at supporters or sympathisers of dissident and allegedly terrorist groups. Such blows at civil rights will do far more to hamper the labour movement, the only force which can remake the world so as to end such atrocities, than to stop the killers. Repression may well, on the contrary, increase support for the most desperate and dehumanised groups.

Public opinion will lurch towards xenophobia. The basic democratic truths must be recalled: not all Arabs are Muslims, most Muslims are not Islamic fundamentalists, most of those who are Islamic-fundamentalist in their religious views do not support Islamic-fundamentalist militarism.

The first, and still the most-suffering, victims of Islamic fundamentalist militarism are the people, mostly Muslim, of the countries where the Islamicists are powerful. In recent times Algeria has had more trade unionists murdered, as trade unionists, than any other country - many by their country's Islamic fundamentalists, though some also by the military regime which claims to fight the fundamentalists. The only way to defeat the Islamicists is by the action of the working class and the labour movement in such countries, aided by our solidarity.

To seek collective punishment against Muslims or Arabs is as wrong as thinking that indiscriminate slaughter of American workers is a good way of countering the crimes of US imperialism. Refugees seeking asylum in Britain do not in any way share blame for the New York massacre. In fact, many of them are refugees because they are fleeing Islamic-fundamentalist governments - regimes run by people like those who probably did the World Trade Centre massacre. To increase the squeeze on already-wretched refugees would be macabre and perverse "revenge".

And the "new anti-capitalist" mobilisations have nothing in common with the World Trade Centre attack, not even on their foolish anarchist fringe.

## Remaking the world

To drain the poison which splashed back in our faces in New York on 11 September, we must remake the world. We must remake it on the basis of the solidarity, democracy and spirit of equality which are as much part of human nature as the rage and despair which must have motivated the New York attackers. We must create social structures which nurture solidarity, democracy and equality, in place of those which drive towards exploitation, cut-throat competition and acquisitiveness, and a spirit of everything-for-profit.

The organised working class, the labour movement, embodies the core and the active force of the drive for solidarity, democracy and spirit of equality within present-day society. It embodies it more or less consistently, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on how far we have been able to mobilise ourselves, assert ourselves, broaden our ranks, and emancipate ourselves from the capitalist society around us. Our job, as socialists, is to maximise the self-mobilisation, self-assertion, broadening and self-emancipation of the organised working class. That is the battle to which we rededicate ourselves in order to prevent more atrocities like New York's. That is the battle in the name of which we will oppose all moves by the governments of the big powers to make spectacular retaliation or to restrict civil rights.

# Future dilemmas for the peace movement: early observations

By Janet Burstall

**A**ll round the world there are people organising to stand up for peace, against the threat of a revengeful war by the USA, waiting in anxious anticipation of the start of the attack on Afghanistan.

I want to defend freedom and liberty. But Bush's idea of freedom and liberty is actually at the expense of freedom and liberty for the people of the Muslim world, for members of cultural and ethnic minorities in the western world, AND for the working class of the USA and its allies, including Australia. The Australian Parliament only the week after the plane attacks passed 6 bills to further restrict the rights of asylum seekers. The fundamentalist fanatics who it seems are responsible for the plane attacks in the USA, are certainly being touted as our enemies by the US government, and the "all the way with George Dubya" Howard and Beazley. Yet the asylum seekers, who are overwhelmingly the VICTIMS of these fanatics, are being treated as if they might BE the terrorists. I worry about the propensity for fear mongering to cause ugly scenes of scapegoating and repression. Rising approval ratings for John Howard in this context show that there is a lot of work to do in Australia to counter a fearful siege mentality with a sense of human solidarity and recognition of genuine freedom. The peace activists need to reach people where they can learn to experience solidarity, instead of individual fear – in their workplaces, unions, and community groups.

There have already been peace rallies and meetings all round the country. One challenge will be to build solidarity against the war effort, effective enough to halt it, and to maintain solidarity with the people of the countries which will be attacked, both against the military attacks, and often against their own repressive governments too. But also, we should not forget the fear that working class Americans must now feel from the threat of fundamentalist terror, along with many of the people who live under fundamentalist regimes.

Someone on talkback radio said on September 12 that she wanted to see a world where noone wanted to launch the kind of attack that had just been made on New York.

A good starting point would be if we had a government which would give support to the people of the Middle East, build schools, hospitals, oppose Israeli attacks on Palestinians for GOOD (the USA has managed to order a fairly effective ceasefire by Israel, in order to "clear the decks" - they could have done this before), lift the blockade on Iraq, accept the refugees from fundamentalist terror instead of treating them as scum or terrorists, win hearts and minds by showing values of humanity. Instead we have governments in the western world committed to supporting global corporations to maximise profits via exploitation, causing misery.

The immediate demands being put forward by the peace movement, no to war, no to racism, are an important starting point. But the end to capitalism that is necessary to put an end to the US war machine also needs the mobilisation of the labour movements and the working class of the advanced capitalist countries. Most of the speaking at peace rallies that I have heard has seen the enemy as the USA and imperialism in general, against an alliance of people in general, and potentially including fundamentalists of the Middle-East. This

will not help liberate the people of the middle east, women especially, suffering under repressive Islamic regimes, and neither will it help to turn the US working class against the US capitalist class. These political questions will take a lot of sorting out in the growing peace movement.

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## September 11: The aftermath, a time to mobilise:

- For international solidarity against the war drive
- For equality, against the racist backlash
- For civil liberties, against restrictions on democracy

In most cities are well attended meetings to discuss a response to the events of September 11. Worker' Liberty encourages supporters to participate in these activities to protest the massacres and their inevitable warlike and undemocratic consequences.

# 'The bitter fruits of US policy ?'

By Clive Bradley, in London

Much of the Left has attempted to explain the atrocity in New York as the 'bitter fruits of US foreign policy' - the headline in Socialist Worker; or to claim that the 'root cause' of the attacks is 'imperialism', the desperation of the dispossessed masses, particularly in the Middle East, in the face of imperialism (and Israel, etc) and so on. Of course, any socialist understands what this means, and partly endorses the sentiment. The US is a big power used to throwing its weight around; its government is responsible for many deaths, many horrors. Certainly, in so far as some people in the Middle East, for instance among the Palestinians, evidently rejoiced - at first, anyway - when the news broke, it was because of deep frustrations and anger.

But this analysis is timeless. US imperialism has been doing awful things for a long time. And arguably, it has done much worse things in the past. To go back only within the limits of my own lifetime, the Vietnam War and the associated bombing of Cambodia were great horrors. The bombing of Iraq and the slaughter of unarmed Iraqi soldiers on the road to Baghdad was only 10 years ago, and a great horror. Yet these despicable imperialist acts did not result in a catastrophe like the attacks on New York and Washington.

The media repeatedly congratulates we British on being 'used to' terrorism. Yet no IRA attack was ever vaguely on the scale of what happened on 11 September.

For the argument that this was 'the bitter fruit of US foreign policy' really to explain anything would require us to believe that a) US foreign policy is substantially worse than it was in the past, and b) 'the masses', particularly in the Middle East, are qualitatively more 'desperate' than they used to be, and c) the latter is because of the former, or at least that the US symbolically represents the source of that desperation in a new way.

Yet none of these things, surely, are true. The US is distinguished now by being the only superpower, but its actions can hardly be construed as worse than in the past. It is unclear in what sense the masses of the Middle East are more oppressed by American imperialism than they used to be. If they are more desperate, for sure it is because there has been no progress, no real change, except for the worse - economically - for many of those masses, as the gap between the world's rich and poor gets wider all the time. The current fighting in Palestine is due to frustrations born of disappointments with what looked like progress and turned out not to be. And Israel is backed by America. But it is not clear why this alone might lead to the growth of 'Islamic fundamentalist' groups across the region - nor why similar groups, in different ideological clothes, do not exist in other parts of the 'third world' where things are equally desperate.

Something else must be at work to explain why groups like Osama bin Laden's exist, why they have an audience now among some of the masses of the Middle East but not before, and why an atrocity such as that on 11 September can occur.

## Post War decolonisation

At the end of the Second World War, the Middle East was still, largely, controlled by the old colonial powers. The creation of Israel in 1948, through war in which three quarters of a million Arabs were dispersed, threw an ideological fly in the ointment which has never been sorted out. As the colonial powers withdrew or were driven out, the USA, strong after the war, moved in as an economic force. The - also strong - USSR also moved in, in a different way. The two superpowers vied for influence. In the 1950s a powerful Arab nationalist movement emerged, which took on a Stalinistic flavour as it nationalised foreign capital - most dramatically in Egypt, where Nasser declared 'Arab socialism' the objective. There were political Islamic groups (again, primarily in Egypt, where they were persecuted), but there was little talk of Islam in these movements.

In Iran, too - not an Arab country except for a small national minority - there was a nationalist movement which confronted the colonial power, Britain, paying for its impertinence with a CIA-backed coup.

Nasserite Arab socialism was pretty much exhausted by the end of the 1960s, following a disastrous defeat by Israel in 1967. Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq (the bastard child of a powerful popular revolution in 1958) was the right-wing fag end of that nationalist revolt, taking power in 1968. By the end of the 1970s, the rhetoric of 'anti-imperialism' in the sense it was understood in the 'fifties was already decaying, as regimes - again, most strikingly Egypt under Sadat - made friends with the USA.

Then, within a year of each other, came two events. The first was the Iranian revolution, the second the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. Suddenly the phrase 'Islamic fundamentalism' was on everyone's lips. These events marked the collapse of the post-war picture of the region. Secular nationalism, allied to the USSR, disintegrated. On the one hand, regimes which had been the product of that phase of history moved closer to the United States; on the other, Islam proved an ideology which could oppose both US-backed regimes (Iran), and Soviet-backed ones (Afghanistan).

Then, of course, with the collapse of the USSR itself, the picture became different again. What I have described is over-generalised - certain regimes, like Syria and Libya, remained committed to 'fifties nationalism long afterwards; Iraq under Saddam Hussein was always peculiar. But this is the general picture, nonetheless.

Where did 'Islamic fundamentalism' come from? Khomeini's regime in Iran did not appear from nowhere; politicised Islamic groups go back to before the Second World War. Nor was Khomeini's victory assured: Stalinised leftist movements were extremely strong at the beginning of 1979; there was, briefly, the possibility of an independent working class movement, and even proto-workers' councils in Iran. But the mullahs, led by Khomeini, seized power and defeated other social and political forces. In Afghanistan, Stalinist forces were fantastically isolated as a result of top-down reforms, and soon faced a revolt which became dominated by Islamic groups.

## Failure of secular nationalism

Much of the Left was taken very unawares, for instance, by Khomeini - including ourselves. The movement led by the mullahs was interpreted as a version of the old-style

nationalism of the 'fifties (with a religious twist), rather than something new and deeply reactionary. The Iranian Left, trapped in a false image (which would have been false even if they had not misunderstood Khomeini) paid for their confusions with their lives and the destruction of their organisations. 'Islamic fundamentalism', however, was not merely an ideologically less attractive variant of old-style nationalism. The US-backed Shah had implemented various capitalist reforms which had enraged the traditional ruling class - especially the mosque. Although Khomeini was able to dominate a coalition of social forces, he and the mullahs themselves represented this displaced and furious old ruling class - taking revenge.

Even where some of the vocabulary of old-style Stalinised nationalism was used ('imperialism', for instance), the Islamists meant something quite different. They meant the whole of Western civilisation.

In the 1950s and '60s, with some justification, the socialist Left could support Arab (and also Iranian, etc) nationalism, even though the regimes involved were not in the slightest democratic in the parliamentary sense. That phase of nationalism - along with such movements elsewhere - included, at their heart, an effort by the peoples of colonial or semi-colonial countries to throw off oppressive foreign yokes in the name of freedom. In the advanced capitalist countries, socialists could reasonably suppose that in supporting such movements they were contributing to the greater good of humanity, a world of greater equality between nations, and so on. Within, for instance, Arab countries - hypothetically, for there have never been any genuinely socialist movements there - socialists could see themselves as part of the general movement, a critical, independent movement fighting for working class independence and leadership, and never simply subsuming themselves into nationalism, but still, adopting part of the national movement's programme as their own.

## Rise of fundamentalism

Movements like Khomeini's were something else entirely. The Iranian Left's error in supporting Khomeini, which most of them did, was not merely an old-fashioned Stalinist popular frontist error, lining up behind a treacherous bourgeoisie. Rather, they supported the old, anti-capitalist in a reactionary sense, ruling class. From the Khomeini-ite perspective, the Left was part of 'imperialism', because socialism is part of Western civilisation, consequently to be massacred with relish. There was no part of the Khomeini-ite project which overlapped with socialism.

This aspect of Islamism is writ large in the attack on America - a profoundly chauvinistic assault in which not only is no distinction made between government and people, but any such distinction would seem, to them, conceptually beyond comprehension.

It would not be true to say that old-style post-war nationalism was not chauvinistic; far from it. But the Islamist movements which have gained substantial ground in Palestine, Lebanon, and so on over the last twenty years are a different beast entirely. (Sudan, for example, has a long 'fundamentalist' tradition; but as in Egypt, the Islamic groups are quite different to the old Muslim Brotherhood).

The question is how such groups could have grown. 'US foreign policy' doesn't explain this at all. If one were to take the 'desperation' of the masses as a constant, the

growth of 'fundamentalism' is to be explained by events within the Middle East, not by 'imperialism'.

Secular nationalism, from Nasser to Arafat, proved to be an unmitigated failure. Political independence did not improve the lot of the masses. 'Arab socialism' and its imitators ran out of steam. The Middle Eastern bourgeoisies, on the whole, turned to Western capital as a way out of their economic impasse. Even the vast wealth generated by oil, especially in the 1970s, resulted only in a handful of rich sheikhs, not an improvement of the lot of the dispossessed poor. Stalinism failed, and then the USSR itself collapsed, leaving those USSR-oriented 'communist' movements in disarray. For example, among the Palestinians, in the 1970s and '80s there were various relatively strong Stalinoid groups; all of these have collapsed.

The Middle East - meaning the Arab world from Morocco to Iraq and eastwards to Afghanistan - has never had any working class movements as such a thing might be understood in, for example, Latin America, let alone in Western Europe. The only exception, and it is a partial one, is Iran. There has never been, in any of these countries, a movement of any size based on the working class. Such groups as have called themselves 'socialist' have been Nasserite-nationalist or Stalinist or a mixture of the two. For sure this is partly because of the lack of a social base for such a movement. Egypt has a large working class; Iraq also. Only in Iran have there been movements which are recognisably the kind of movement out of which a socialist tradition might emerge, and it has failed to do so there as well.

The flowering of secular nationalism after World War Two shows that the power of Islam now does not derive from the intrinsic piety of these societies. 'Muslim' countries are complex things; 'Islam' is a complex thing. The image in the West of all these millions of people as obsessively mosque-going fanatics is indescribably false. 'Islamic fundamentalism' is the tragic marriage of, on the one hand, a section of the poor who were failed by secular nationalism, and on the other, a section of the mosque embittered by the encroachments of capitalism which seized its chance. Within this marriage, the latter - the reactionary social classes - are wholly dominant.

The oppressiveness of US (and other Western, such as British) imperialism is a constant factor in the lives of the people of the Middle East. So too the oppressiveness of their own undemocratic regimes. The attack on America cannot be explained by 'imperialism', except in the sense that this can explain anything and therefore nothing. Much more accurately, the growth of Islamism has to be explained by the failures of nationalism, therefore of the local bourgeoisies - and in a profound sense, the failure of democratic socialism to make the slightest inroad into the region.

The world is disappearing into a black hole of mutually exclusive chauvinisms. Bush talks of 'good against evil' precisely mirroring the worldview of the Islamists. In Israel/Palestine, as the lamentable 'peace process' has collapsed, you find a microcosm of this whole thing: most Israelis don't seem to want to know why poverty-stricken Arab youth might enlist with Hamas, they just want to make sure they don't get blown up by suicide bombers; the poverty-stricken youth have given up on any rapprochement with the 'Jewish state' and want to destroy the Jews. It would be a dialogue of the deaf, except a

dialogue presupposes at least a few words that both can understand.

Nowhere do the prospects for socialism seem bleaker than in the Middle East. But as the Middle East becomes the epicentre of a global 'war against terrorism' this is not only a comment on the region itself. The task of finding a way to speak to those dispossessed masses, especially the youth, and break them from the reactionary Islamist forces, is of incalculable importance. If the Left continues to be irrelevant to events in the Middle East, the future of the world is bleak. On the other hand, if the Left talks banally and timelessly about the crimes of imperialism, it will fail utterly to win the hearts and souls of workers in rich countries. The socialist Left has never been so weak. Yet we are, potentially, a voice of sanity and in a sense of moderation, desperately needed.

## Socialist Alliance conference report

By Martin Thomas

On 4-5 August the Socialist Alliance met in Melbourne for its founding conference. Craig Johnston, state secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, greeted us and declared: "The working class must have a political party and a political voice. The Socialist Alliance is an opportunity to fill the void that has been left by the Australian Labor Party".

The conference voted support for the "Skilled Six" - Craig Johnston and five other union activists who have been charged with "riot, affray, aggravated burglary and criminal damage" after a protest on 15 June at the offices of Skilled Engineering, a labour hire firm supplying scab workers to Johnson Tile, a company which has sacked AMWU members.

It was a delegate conference - one delegate for every nine members, elected branch by branch with proportional representation. The 114 delegates represented nearly 1000 members. They were a bit younger on average, I think, than English Socialist Alliance activists. Over a third were under 30, and the great majority under 40. The unions most represented were the CPSU (public services) and NTEU (university staff), and then the AMWU. The conference was more Anglo-Celtic than the cosmopolitan average of Australia's big cities, but almost a third of the delegates originated overseas, from 13 different countries. The Alliance's basic recruiting leaflet is being translated into 14 different languages.

Although the majority of Socialist Alliance's members must be unaffiliated, most of the delegates who had made the journey to Melbourne were members of one or another of the socialist groups which took the initiative in February this year to start the Alliance - the Democratic Socialist Party, the International Socialist Organisation, Workers' Liberty, Workers' Power, the Freedom Socialist Party (linked to the US group of the same name), Socialist Democracy, and the Workers' League. Socialist Alternative, a splinter from the ISO, supports the Alliance, but did not attend the conference. The Socialist Party in Australia (linked to the Socialist Party in England) has not joined the Alliance, and neither has the Progressive Labour Party (a small group, mostly ex-Labor Left or Communist Party).

The Socialist Alliance is running in the Northern Territory

elections on 18 August, but its eyes are mainly focused on the federal elections due later this year. The Liberal-National coalition which has governed since 1996 looks almost certain to be defeated by Labor. There is widespread anger against its new Goods and Services Tax. Although the Australian Labor Party has not gone Blairite in structure - its links with the unions are still strong - it pioneered many Blairite policies in government between 1983 and 1996, and offers very little to working-class voters. It promises only a very limited and partial rollback of the GST, and no clear repeal of the Liberals' anti-union laws.

Alliance convenor Dick Nichols talked at the conference about "one per cent, or 0.5 per cent" as a likely average score in the federal election. In its one by-election effort so far, the Alliance gained 0.45% in the Melbourne electorate of Aston. However, the conference felt it would be worthwhile to put down a marker.

It adopted a political platform, "priority pledges", and a constitution. It elected a National Executive (two representatives each from the Democratic Socialist Party and the International Socialist Organisation; one each from the smaller groups; and one each in addition from each state or territory) and three National Convenors (Dick Nichols of the DSP, Ian Rintoul of the ISO, and Riki Lane of Workers' Liberty).

The thoroughness of the discussion compared very favourably with the English Socialist Alliance. Eight thick pre-conference discussion bulletins were circulated, and additional amendments were accepted during the conference. The proceedings of the Alliance's National Liaison Committee were carefully prepared and meticulously minuted. Their minutes were circulated promptly in the discussion bulletins, so that every member could know who had proposed what and who had voted what way. The conference itself lasted two days, with about eight hours' discussion on each day.

A proposal to include debate in the Alliance's public broadsheet (of which one issue has been published so far) was voted down, but generally the Australian Alliance has a much more positive attitude to political debate than the English. Alliance branches were called on to organise regular political discussion and education, and to have all the left press on their street stalls, with none of the protests that heard in England that these things will "put people off". The Alliance will continue to produce a discussion bulletin. Australia's "Marxism 2001", unlike its British equivalent, includes a session on the Alliance where the ISO will debate perspectives with representatives of clearly different views, Dick Nichols of the DSP and Janet Burstall of Workers' Liberty.

The discussion produced some progress, I think, on the Alliance's relation to the mass labour movement, and some untidy advances in the platform debate.

The DSP has a longstanding attitude of assessing the Australian Labor Party as a "big-business" or "liberal-capitalist" party essentially no different from the Liberals. It directs preferences to Labor before Liberals, on the grounds that a Labor government is a lesser evil than a Liberal-National administration, but to the Greens and any minor party that can half-plausibly be called progressive before Labor.

It was a welcome shift, therefore, when in the first talks on forming the Socialist Alliance, back in February, the DSP agreed that the Alliance should be clearly for a Labor government.

The DSP has also long campaigned for unions to



disaffiliate from the ALP. It was encouraged by the New South Wales firefighters' decision in June to disaffiliate. The DSP called for the Alliance conference to launch a new drive for unions to disaffiliate.

Opposition from others in the Alliance was strong. Eventually the DSP withdrew its proposal "in the interests of unity". Although the conference defeated a Workers' Liberty motion positively advocating new union affiliations to Labor, it carried a motion from the ISO clearly opposing disaffiliation.

Alison Stewart of the ISO pointed out that disaffiliation had been used as an alternative to an industrial fight - and, at the firefighters' meeting, as a pointer towards support for the Democrats, the Greens, or the far-right One Nation party. "We are for the unions having a political voice, and there is not an alternative at present to Labor". Only recently, union opposition has forced the right-wing Labor government in New South Wales to back down from its plans to privatise electricity supply.

The debate on exactly how the Socialist Alliance should advocate that its voters use their second, third, and other preferences was lively. It revolved around the question of when we might transfer preferences to the Greens before Labor.

A Workers' Liberty motion sought to have the Alliance act positively and programmatically, by laying down core political demands with which the Alliance would approach Green candidates seeking transfers of preferences - union rights, support for workers' struggles including struggles to save jobs in environmentally damaging industries. That was defeated; so was a Workers' Power proposal that we should always transfer preferences first to Labor and never to a Green.

The actual difference in wording between the ISO and DSP proposals around which most argument revolved was small; but the DSP accused the ISO of offering a "blank cheque" to Labor; the ISO charged the DSP with giving a blank cheque to the Greens.

The ISO advocated that we "preference progressive left candidates first, then Greens, then Labor" - if the Green (or "progressive left") candidate have "pro-working-class credentials" and pass on preferences to Labor before the Liberals and Nationals. Otherwise we should direct preferences straight to Labor. The DSP wanted to preference all Green candidates before Labor for the upper house, the Senate, and all "pro-working-class" Greens (with no requirements about how they pass on preferences) before Labor for the House of Representatives.

The DSP's argument is that the Senate does not decide who will form the government, so it is more important to get any sort of halfway leftist dissident elected there than to take a stand for Labor against the Liberals.

The DSP won the vote, 55 to 38. Alison Stewart of the ISO linked this debate to others by arguing that it was about the audience the Socialist Alliance should look to. "The new anti-capitalist activists are not our principal audience", she said. "If the Socialist Alliance is to become a force, the people we have to win are those who are in or around the Labor Party. We must find ways of connecting anti-capitalism to that much broader range of people who are moving to the left on more immediate issues, but it is not true that the anti-corporate activists have all broken with Laborism".

Although, or perhaps because, the "new anti-capitalism" is expressed much more in Australia than in Britain as an actual movement, not just a diffuse mood, the ISO was

more sober about it than the British SWP is. The DSP, too, presented the argument as one about audience. We have no chance of winning any but the most disenchanted Labor voters, they said, but we can win over left-wing Greens if we can get close to them. However, speculations about our audience - as distinct from argument about the basic politics we should propose to whatever audience we get - are not really decisive here. The DSP had its pro-Green preference policy long before its current enthusiasm for the new anti-corporate movement as a force "free of the shackles of Laborism".

And the elevation of hypothetical audience-catching above substantive politics skewed the debate on the Socialist Alliance platform. The ISO argued for extreme minimalism, in the name of appealing to "old Labor" voters. Pretty much any sort of demands would do, according to the ISO, so long as they could be a lever for turning people against Labor. "Why do we want an old-Labor set of demands?" asked Phil Griffiths of the ISO. "There is a real cleavage opening up, and a possibility of turning a section of the working class against the Labor Party". "I'm not interested in demands", declared another ISOer, Brian Webb. "I'm interested in connecting with people who want change".

Janet Burstall, from Workers' Liberty, commented that the ISO talked a lot about "putting the 'S' word back into mainstream politics", but opposed any explanation of socialism in the Alliance platform. More crucially, we have to put the "C" word into politics - class. Not just the word, but the idea. To draw clear class lines, and gear our programme to the requirements of working-class struggle, is not abstruse maximalism - but it is also something stronger than recycling "old Labor" catchphrases! Lynn Smith, also from Workers' Liberty, argued that the ISO was treating the platform as a mere "marketing exercise", rather than a serious effort to offer political substance.

The DSP argued against the ISO's approach on a number of points. Graham Matthews of the DSP commented aptly that the ISO had got itself into a mindset where it would denounce any demand reaching beyond defence of what already exists (or what very recently existed) as excessively revolutionary! Generally, however, the DSP tended to argue for more radical demands not so much on their merits, or as part of a more class-based overall approach, as on the grounds that they would be supported by the new anti-corporate activists.

Workers' Power, and some Australian sympathisers of the CPGB (Weekly Worker), put full-scale alternative platforms to the conference, rather than amendments as their counterparts in England did at the English Socialist Alliance conference. Those alternatives defeated, there were several debates on particular issues. The results were mixed.

The most hard-fought was an attempt by the ISO to delete "open borders" from the platform. That demand was too revolutionary, they said. We should demand only a better deal for refugees. They lost the vote 37 to 61, after a strong speech by Alison Thorne of the Freedom Socialist Party for "open borders".

Australia, despite the cosmopolitanism today of its big cities, has a long history of protectionist and nationalist politics in its labour movement. Today, support for restrictions on immigration is given a "left" twist in Australia by Greens who argue that those restrictions are necessary to protect the continent's fragile environment from being damaged by too many people. Maybe undercurrents of that sort influenced the ISO. In any case, the platform was given an undesirably nationalist twist by the inclusion in it

of a call for Australia to withdraw from the World Trade Organisation. Riki Lane from Workers' Liberty argued that this demand - in context, a call for a bourgeois Australian government to withdraw from international capitalist arrangements to negotiate free trade, and not a projection about the relationship of a future Australian workers' government to the world market - actually amounted to a call to restore tariffs, and had "reactionary implications". It was, however, adopted with support from both ISO and DSP.

The ISO tried to delete opposition to government subsidies for private schools (they wanted instead only to oppose subsidies to wealthy private schools); to remove a call for the police to be disarmed; and to resist inclusion of workers' control in the platform (in amendments from Workers' Liberty, on the environment, and from Phil Sandford of the Workers' League, on the fight for jobs). On all those they lost the vote heavily.

In England, where the SWP is the biggest group in the Socialist Alliance, it makes some pragmatic, if not political, sense for it to adopt there an approach similar to what the Communist Party did in its "broad movements" of the 1950s and '60s. It can push in the broader movement for political minimalism ("don't disrupt the united front") and against "sectarians" (what the CP used to call "Trotskyist splitters"), yet at the same time present itself as "the party" (Marxist, revolutionary, the works) to people in that movement who want something more than the minimum. Translate this "steering to the right" to Australia, make it a tactical prescription for the ISO, which is a tad smaller than the DSP, and it becomes not just politically dubious but pragmatically embarrassing.

The ISO did, however, with the support of the DSP, secure adoption of their version of "priority pledges" for the Socialist Alliance, a list of 17 demands - extremely miscellaneous, and some of them very odd things to find in a select socialist platform (not only "withdraw from the WTO" but also full funding for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and support for the Kyoto protocol on global warming). The alternative was a draft from Workers' Liberty, organised more tightly around four basic ideas (taxing the rich to rebuild public services, union rights, a democratic Republic, workers' control against the profiteers to secure jobs), but with more class anchorage and indication of working-class struggle as the agency to win the demands. The Freedom Socialist Party and the Workers' League supported the approach of the Workers' Liberty draft, but the ISO and DSP argued that it was too elaborate and too revolutionary.

The closest vote in the entire conference was on a proposal from the floor to add to the platform a demand to "stop" negative media portrayal of women. It was defeated 37 to 41 after Janet Burstall from Workers' Liberty had pointed out that, however offensive the current media portrayal often is, socialists could not support any demand implying broad rights of media censorship for the capitalist state. That the proposal got so much support, and that the demand to "withdraw from the WTO" got through, reflects, I think, the degree to which many delegates thought of the platform as a series of statements of oppositional feeling - stop this, end that, scrap the other - rather than as a programme for working-class political self-assertion.

The end result of the platform debate is a patchwork. In some clauses the platform declares that: "Every major industry should be re-organised on the lines of social provision for need - publicly-owned and democratically controlled by workers and the community". It states the aim

of the Alliance as "to give a voice to working-class struggle, to the need for working-class political representation". It calls for "worker-community-green alliances to take control of production for human need and sustainability, not profit" and for the nationalisation under workers' control of companies that threaten mass sackings. Other sections reflect the ISO desire for, as they put it, "a list of 'old-Labor' demands", or "an achievable alternative to the market consensus between Labor and Liberal".

The debate is not closed. The Alliance has agreed to follow up its conference with a series of seminars and forums in different cities to debate policy in more detail. It is particularly important that sympathetic activists from the Labor and trade union left are drawn into these seminars.

## Workers' Liberty conference

Our Workers' Liberty conference, in Sydney on 25-26 August, set our main tasks as developing our own political education, and helping the development of the Socialist Alliance.

The conference opened with a review by Janet Burstall of our basic political platform, adopted in 1997. We noted points for amendment, and decided we need substantial additions on globalisation and the "new anti-capitalist" movement, but left the details to be sorted out in the next couple of months.

Martin Thomas introduced a discussion assessing the current situation of the labour movement and the left in Australia. "The level of confidence and assertiveness of the working class, as expressed in trade union action, has generally continued to rise - slowly, undramatically, but significantly"; but a "fatalistic" view that the labour movement cannot hope for much from politics continues to "smother" the organised working class.

The "new anti-capitalist" movement is an important area where "a new generation of activists, or at least an important fragment of a new generation of activists" can be formed, but it is neither broad enough, nor politically coherent enough, directly to reshape working-class politics.

Leon Parissi presented an overview of the historical development of the Australian labour movement, pointing to the conclusion that long-term work to build a class-struggle left wing within the movement remains crucial. Spurts and splashes of radicalism outside the movement may be very important, but can never be a substitute.

Riki Lane reported on the Socialist Alliance which was launched in February by nine left-wing parties, including Workers' Liberty, held its founding conference in Melbourne on 4-5 August, and plans to contest the federal elections likely in November or December. We also took a break from our conference to attend a session of the ISO's Marxism 2001, held the same weekend, where Janet Burstall of Workers' Liberty debated the future of the Alliance with Dick Nichols of the DSP and David Glanz of the ISO.

We see the Alliance as a very welcome and hopeful development. It has potential to give a political fillip to the labour movement by taking class-struggle politics into the electoral arena. And it opens up collaboration and dialogue within the left. For too long we have had a string of separate groups each with its own activities and its own

periphery, and very little real interchange of ideas. Now we can develop a movement where all the factions have to argue their ideas to a common audience, and where our effectiveness on that broad range of issues where we have agreement is greatly increased.

We resolved to put effort into developing the Socialist Alliance, and identified priority issues for the political debate in the Alliance over the coming months. We are particularly concerned to see the Alliance do grass-roots campaigns and establish working-class roots, rather than just being an electoral front.

We also want to see the Alliance develop serious dialogue with the left within the established labour movement. The Labor Left has been very quiet in recent years – except on issues of who-gets-what-job within the ALP – but we resolved to explore the possibilities of developing a Labor Left grouping, however small to start with, on a class-struggle stance which could subsequently develop collaboration and dialogue with the Socialist Alliance.

Melissa White spoke on recent developments in the “new anti-capitalist” movement, and especially on the arguments around the protests planned at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Brisbane in October, and the Commonwealth Business Forum in Melbourne just before it. There is a united left mobilisation to mount a “blockade” of the Business Forum on similar lines to the September 11 protest last year at the World Economic Forum (also in Melbourne), but the left is divided in CHOGM. The ISO and some direct-actionists argue that it is almost a principle to blockade it, and anyway an ever-escalating series of blockade-type actions is necessary to take the movement forward. The extreme wing of this school of thought is Socialist Alternative (a splinter from the ISO), whose attitude was summed up by one speaker at our conference as: “One tactic, one solution: shut the fuckers up!” The DSP and some others, however, argue that a march is a better form of protest at CHOGM.

We concluded that blockading is not a principle. There is a role for spectacular actions and repeated attempts to emulate the “spirit of Seattle” (the November 1999 protest at the World Trade Organisation meeting which sparked the recent round of “new anti-capitalist” demonstrations across the world), and we should be wary of pouring premature cold water. But the series of “alphanumeric” responses to ruling-class conclaves does not amount to a self-sufficient strategy. If the movement is to progress, it must widen out to more sustained, class-struggle-oriented activity. We saw the regular Nike pickets organised in Melbourne, and now in Sydney, as a welcome move in that direction.

A blockade of CHOGM looks more like a tactic for narrowing down the movement to a minority dedicated to a single form of combat with the state than one for broadening it. The forces involved will be fairly limited. Almost certainly there will be little labour movement support. The site makes a blockade logistically difficult. The political basis for the blockade – the argument that CHOGM discussions will lead into the next WTO meeting, and thus blockading CHOGM can help stop the proposed General Agreement on Trade in Services – is long-winded and a bit abstract.

Workers’ Liberty members will participate in the blockade, but to us it does not look like a wise tactic.

The rest of the conference reviewed our constitution – adding provision for a new formal category of “sympathisers” alongside our full members – heard a report on our finances, and elected a committee to coordinate and lead our activity. Finally, Lynn Smith initiated a discussion on policy for rural Australia, and we commissioned studies to take that discussion forward.

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## *WL Conference papers*

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# Socialist Alliance, ALP and the unions

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**T**he Socialist Alliance (SA) is a great opportunity for us – a step forward for the left on at least two fronts where we have long argued our case, left unity and dialogue and the importance of the political front of class struggle as well as the economic and ideological fronts. Let’s hope the conference has equipped and oriented us to seize that opportunity.

1. The main significance of SA thus far has been the unprecedented cooperation and debate by the founding groups. The prime influence of DSP/ISO over SA was not really changed by the conference and can be seen in the fact that their members are most of the candidates. This was quite pointed in the case of Wills.

2. The conference marked a turning point. The platform, however inadequate from our perspective, is now a basis to approach independents, community groups, unions etc.

3. A significant wave of recruiting and broadening out is therefore possible. There are some signs that this is becoming a reality. Eg. the Northern Territory election campaign and result; Victorian unions are interested in having discussions; some long time independent activists have joined. Even the rather weak Aston vote has resulted in a branch of 25 or so people in an area that the left have never really organised in before

4. In some ways SA’s logical approach now is hectic campaigning in the lead up to the elections. Political discussions are likely to be about concrete local issues. Eg. Wills branch has scheduled discussions on: airport-rail link (opposed by residents, supported by union); Essendon airport closure; Merri Creek freeway proposal.

5. This connection with local issues has positive and negative sides - it forces socialist groups (including us) to be concrete and actually talk to local working people, but it can lead to a reformist depoliticisation.

WL made a strong impression at the conference. Although we did not win many votes, we did not seem irrelevant and had a member elected to a National Convenor position.

5. WL wants there to be continuing discussion in SA about general political issues. We also want to push for a clearer working class orientation, socialist vision etc. Although we lost on the latter issues at the conference, we

can raise them concretely in relation to campaigning issues.

6. One area where there are clear openings is around workers' control issues. The platform has some good formulations, so there is a lot of room to raise workers control on concrete issues.

7. Janet Burstall previously outlined what the SA can hope to achieve.

- A good enough vote in the federal election to motivate us all to continue - attracting union activists, militants, anti-capitalist and green activists and the non-aligned left - not just as members, but as active contributors to the SA.

- A start to the reshaping of the politics and the expectations of unions with regard to government - especially encouraging them to demand more than any ALP government has offered working-class people.

- A program to educate working-class people, through our campaigns, to the idea that socialism is something that we can take steps towards via a government that takes their side - especially whenever workers organise, campaign, picket or strike, and that simultaneously takes a stand against the power, wealth and demands of the ruling class - i.e. a workers' government.

- Learn from the campaign how better to respond to working class voters, what issues really matter, how to discuss class politics and how to win support.

## Relation to ALP.

We want SA to approach left ALP branches for debate, joint work in campaigns, policy development etc. Many on the ALP left will see SA as potentially a useful spur against the right.

Where we have support in the ALP, we try to organise around our politics, and also SA's politics. The SA platform and priority pledges could probably be supported by many ALP branches and some parliamentarians. We should organise to get these sorts of endorsements and to build ongoing relations with those in SA who are willing to talk to the ALP.

This, then, relates to the approach to unions. It seems likely that some Victorian unions will give support to Socialist Alliance candidates (how publicly remains to be seen) while maintaining their ALP affiliation. This is strongly to be supported. Our approach to sympathetic unions - "we welcome your support and recommend that you also organise around these politics in the ALP" - is something we can fight for in SA and outside of it.

## Perspectives:

It is a new situation - the pressures are to just accept the outcome of the conference and go along with minimalism or to drop our level of involvement.

We should be strongly involved, try to draw in independents and people around us, and build the Alliance as effectively as possible.

Although it was obviously premature to call for a "new party" out of the conference, we should encourage as much work as possible to be coordinated through SA rather than through the member organisations' structures - this

gives a chance to have real political development around concrete issues.

We will continue to push for ongoing debate/forums in publications etc. and engage in concrete discussions about local issues, relationship to unions and other struggles etc.

## The Fate of the Russian Revolution



Left Oppositionists in Siberian exile 1928.

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## Workers' control and nationalisation

By Leon Trotsky – from *The Transitional Program*

**T**he abolition of "business secrets" is the first step toward actual control of industry.

Workers, no less than capitalists, have the right to know the "secrets" of the factory, of the trust, of the whole branch of industry, of the national economy as a whole. First and foremost, banks, heavy industry and centralized transport should be placed under an observation glass.

The immediate tasks of workers' control should be to explain the debits and credits of society, beginning with individual business undertakings, to determine the actual share of the national income appropriated by individual capitalists and by the exploiters as a whole; to expose the behind-the-scenes deals and swindles of banks and trusts; and finally, to reveal to all members of society that unconscionable squandering of human labor which is the result of capitalist anarchy and the naked pursuit of profits.

No office holder of the bourgeois state is in a position to carry out this work, no matter with how great authority one would wish to endow them. To break the resistance of the exploiters the mass pressure of the proletariat is necessary. Only factory committees can bring about real control of production, calling in - as consultants, but not as "technocrats" - specialists sincerely devoted to the people: accountants, statisticians, engineers, scientists, etc.

The struggle against unemployment is not to be considered without the calling for a broad and bold organization of public works. But public works can have a continuous and progressive significance for society, as for the unemployed themselves, only when they are made part of a general plan worked out to cover a considerable number of years. Within the framework of this plan, the workers would demand resumption, as public utilities, of work in private businesses closed as a result of the crisis. Workers' control in such cases would be replaced by direct workers' management.

The working out of even the most elementary economic plan – from the point of view of the exploited, not the exploiters – is impossible without workers' control, that is, without the penetration of the workers' eye into all the open and concealed springs of the capitalist economy. Committees representing individual business enterprises should meet at conference to choose corresponding committees of trusts, whole branches of industry, economic regions and finally, of national industry as a whole. Thus, workers' control becomes a school for planned economy. On the basis of the experience of control, the proletariat will prepare itself for direct management of nationalized industry when the hour for that eventuality strikes.

To those capitalists, mainly of the lower and middle strata, who of their own accord sometimes offer to throw open their books to the workers – usually to demonstrate the necessity of lowering wages - the workers answer that they

are not interested in the bookkeeping of individual bankrupts or semi-bankrupts, but in the account ledgers of all exploiters as a whole. The workers cannot and do not wish to accommodate the level of their living conditions to the exigencies of individual capitalists, themselves victims of their own regime. The task is one of reorganizing the whole system of production and distribution on a more dignified and workable basis. If the abolition of business secrets is a necessary condition for workers' control, then control is the first step along the road to the socialist guidance of economy.

### Expropriation of Separate Groups of Capitalists.

The socialist program of expropriation, i.e., of political overthrow of the bourgeoisie and liquidation of its economic domination, should in no case during the present transitional period hinder us from advancing, when the occasion warrants, the demand for the expropriation of several key branches of industry vital for national existence. Neither does it preclude the demand for the expropriation of the most parasitic group of the bourgeoisie.

Thus, in answer to the pathetic jeremiads of the gentlemen democrats anent the dictatorship of the "60 Families" of the United States or the "200 Families" of France, we counter pose the demand for the expropriation of the assets of those 60 or 200 feudalistic capitalist overlords.

In precisely the same way, we demand the expropriation of the corporations holding monopolies on war industries, railroads, the most important sources of raw materials, etc.

The difference between these demands and the muddleheaded reformist slogan of "nationalization" lies in the following: (1) we reject indemnification; (2) we warn the masses against demagogues of the People's Front who, giving lip service to nationalization, remain in reality agents of capital; (3) we call upon the masses to rely only upon their own revolutionary strength; (4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of seizure of power by the workers and farmers.

The necessity of advancing the slogan of expropriation in the course of daily agitation in partial form, and not only in our propaganda in its more comprehensive aspects, is dictated by the fact that different branches of industry are at different levels of development, occupy a different place in the life of society, and pass through different stages of the class struggle. Only a general revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat can place the complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie as the order of the day. The task of transitional demands is to prepare the proletariat to solve this problem.

## Expropriation of the Private Banks and State-ization of the Credit System.

"Imperialism means the domination of finance capital. Side by side with the trusts and syndicates, and very frequently rising above them, the banks concentrate in their hands the actual command over the economy. In their structure the banks express in a concentrated form the entire structure of modern capital: they combine tendencies of monopoly with tendencies of anarchy. They organize the miracles of technology, giant enterprises, mighty trusts; and they also organize high prices, crises and unemployment. It is impossible to take a single serious step in the struggle against monopolistic despotism and capitalistic anarchy - which supplement one another in their work of destruction - if the commanding posts of banks are left in the hands of predatory capitalists. In order to create a unified system of investments and credits, along a rational plan corresponding to the interests of the entire people, it is necessary to merge all the banks into a single national institution. Only the expropriation of the private banks and the concentration of the entire credit system in the hands of the state will provide the latter with the necessary actual - that is material and not merely paper and bureaucratic - resources- for economic planning.

The expropriation of the banks in no case implies the expropriation of bank deposits. On the contrary, the single state bank will be able to create much more favorable conditions for the small depositors than could the private banks. In the same way, only the state bank can establish for farmers, tradesmen and small merchants conditions of favorable, that is, cheap credit. Even more important, however, is the circumstance that the entire economy, and most significantly large-scale industry and transport directed by a single financial staff, will serve the vital interests of the workers and all other toilers.

However, the state-ization of the banks will produce these favorable results only if the state power itself passes completely from the hands of the exploiters into the hands of the toilers."

### From Daniel De Leon, 'Reform and Revolution'

"The Socialist revolution demands, among other things, the public ownership of all the means of transportation. But, in itself, the question of ownership affects only external forms: The Post Office is the common property of the people, and yet the real workers in that department are mere wage slaves. In the mouth of the Socialist, of the revolutionist, the internal fact, the cardinal truth, that for which alone we fight, and which alone is entitled to all we can give to it - that is the abolition of the system of wage slavery under which the proletariat is working. Now, up step the Populists - the dupers - not the duped among them with a plan to nationalize the railroads. The standpoint from which they proceed is that of middle class interests as against the interests of the upper capitalists or monopolists. The railroad monopolists are now fleecing the middle class; these want to turn the tables upon their exploiters; they want to abolish them, wipe them out, and appropriate unto themselves the fleecings of the working class which the railroad monopolists now monopolize. With this reactionary class interest in mind, the duper-Populist steps forward and holds this plausible language:

"We, too, want the nationalization of the roads; we are going your way; join us!"

The reform straws are regularly taken in by this seeming truth; they are carried off their feet; and they are drawn heels over head into the vortex of capitalist conflicts. Not so the revolutionist. His answer follows sharp and clear:

"Excuse me! Guess you do want to nationalize the railroads, but only as a reform; we want nationalization as a revolution. You do not propose, while we are fixedly determined, to relieve the railroad workers of the yoke of wage slavery under which they now grunt and sweat. By your scheme of nationalization, you do not propose, on the contrary, you oppose all relief to the workers."

While we, the revolutionists, seek the emancipation of the working class and the abolition of all exploitation, duper-Populism seeks to rivet the chains of wage slavery more firmly upon the proletariat. There is no exploiter like the middle class exploiter. Carnegie may fleece his workers -- he has 20,000 of them -- of only fifty cents a day and yet net, from sunrise to sunset, \$10,000 profits; the banker with plenty of money to lend can thrive with a trifling shaving of each individual note; but the apple woman on the street corner must make a hundred and five hundred per cent profit to exist. For the same reason, the middle class, the employer of few hands, is the worst, the bitterest, the most inveterate, the most relentless exploiter of the wage slave."

## Leon Trotsky and workers' control

1. Trotsky, in the Transitional Program and elsewhere, uses "workers' control" to mean supervision by workers of still-capitalist workplace management, and contrasts it with "workers' management". The words *contrôle* in French, or *Kontrolle* in German, have that nuance. "Control", in English, is a matter of degree, and full "control" is no weaker than "management". General usage in English, therefore, is to discuss the issue only in degrees of "workers' control". The sharp distinction to be made is between control of any degree and workers' *participation* in capitalist management, of the type of German "co-determination".

2. Trotsky's exposition places workers' control as prior or preliminary to expropriation/nationalisation. The same approach is taken, for example, in Lenin's "The Impending Catastrophe", and in early Comintern documents. The contrast with the usual neo-Trotskyist formula, "nationalisation under workers' control", where "workers' control" appears as an after-thought or add-on, reflects a real political nuance - a focus on working-class self-mobilisation (Trotsky, Lenin, Comintern) as contrasted to a focus on placing propagandist demands on parliamentary reformist-labour parties and hoping that such activity will help encourage workers' self-mobilisation.

2. The contrast, however, should not be overstated. In part it is a matter of the neo-Trotskyists legitimately seeking alternative paths towards the same idea in different circumstances. An over-valuation of "workers' control" in the abstract - as in the politics of the British USFI group in the early 1960s, for example, and partly also the IS/SWP in that period - can be as disorienting as an over-

emphasis on the "demand on the leaders", "nationalisation under workers' control".

4. Marxists have always argued that state ownership, or nationalisation, is not necessarily working-class or socialist. As far back as the late 19th century, Marxists sharply counterpoised/counter posed their democratic working-class socialism to what they variously called "state capitalism", "state socialism", or "bureaucratic collectivism". The argument acquired additional edge with the experience of Stalinism and of many bourgeois-nationalist regimes in poorer countries which took almost all industry into state ownership, only to establish the state as an exploiter.

5. It is also valid, in general, as a criticism of the state ownership established in many advanced capitalist countries after the Second World War. Differences of degree and angle should however be noted here.

6. When Engels or Kautsky poured scorn on the nationalisations in late 19th century Germany by Bismarck's bureaucratic-Junker state, they highlighted the facts that state ownership was a tool to suppress workers' rights (the railway workers, for example, as state employees were not allowed to join trade unions or the Social Democratic Party) and to augment state revenue.

7. In the early 20th century, socialists such as Daniel De Leon played "middle-class" schemes for nationalisation, such as the demand of the US Populist Party (mainly based on small farmers) for the nationalisation of the railway companies (which charged them high rates to transport their produce). In this case nationalisation would have only succeeded in promoting middle class interests as against the interests of the upper capitalists or monopolists. "The railroad monopolists are now fleecing the middle class; these want to turn the tables upon their exploiters; they want to abolish them, wipe them out, and appropriate unto themselves the fleecings of the working class which the railroad monopolists now monopolize". They wanted to do that by utilising the machinery of bourgeois democracy, accessible to them – they were moving not directly against the working class, but at a tangent to workers' interests.

8. Nationalisations in relatively stable bourgeois democracies with large legal labour movements, as in Western Europe after 1945, have generally exemplified a different nuance again. Nationalisation has often been used as a means to bail out the capitalist owners of industries which are running at a loss or a poor profit but nevertheless the government has considered important for infrastructural or strategic reasons. The government then uses public funds to cover the costs of restructuring which private capital might otherwise have to pay. Such measures are far from socialist. Yet, in contrast to Bismarck's, the state sectors created by such measures are usually places of relatively strong union organisation, and often provide public services under less immediate profit-drive compulsion than private companies. The experience with privatisation over recent decades highlights this fact. It would be very wrong to dismiss privatisation as a mere change of capitalist ownership which makes no great difference to the workers. Conversely, the demand for nationalisation or public

ownership often has a more positive significance – in itself, even without taking into account any demands for workers' control which can precede it or be linked to it – in the hands of a labour movement operating within more-or-less stable bourgeois democracy than it has had in the hands of populists or Bismarckians, let alone Stalinists.

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## August 2001: assessing the labour movement and the left

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1. A working-class defeat can sometimes be almost a victory. When a defeat is of limited scope, with the limitations secured by a courageous and sustained struggle, the struggle itself can give working-class assertiveness a boost outweighing the substantive defeat. That has happened with the Maritime Union's defeat in 1998. Since then, and up to the present day, the level of confidence and assertiveness of the working class, as expressed in trade union action, has generally continued to rise – slowly, undramatically, but significantly. The trade-union bans imposed against the Indonesian army's massacres in East Timor, and in solidarity with the Fiji trade unions' resistance to the coup in Fiji; the AMWU's Campaign 2000-2001; Reith's retreat from further anti-union legislation; the Tristar and Metroshelff struggles – these are some examples.

2. The New South Wales Labor Council's blockade of the NSW Parliament in June, over workers' compensation, showed unions taking and adapting for their own purposes an idea from the "new anti-capitalist" movement. That sort of cross-fertilisation has not happened in other countries. It signals both the (limitedly) rising assertiveness of the Australian workers' movement, and the significant buoyancy of the "new anti-capitalist" movement.

3. Via the alliances for S11, M1, and now CHOGM, the "new anti-capitalist" mood has crystallised into an actual organised movement maybe more in Australia than anywhere else. That is a plus. A new generation of activists, or at least an important fragment of a new generation of activists, can be formed in that movement. The fact of crystallisation also, however, brings into view weaknesses and limitations which can more easily be shrouded in wishful thinking where the mood remains more diffuse. The movement and its periphery are fairly small and mostly student or similar. The activists are by no means necessarily revolutionary, or "broken from reformism", in terms of working-class politics, and yet they are locked into anarcho-populo-"revolutionary" tactics of successively huffing and puffing until the house of the bourgeoisie's evil conclaves falls down. It remains crucial to turn the movement, or at least sections of it, towards longer-term, more programmatic, more worker-related, activity.

4. Labor has won state elections in Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory. It looks likely to win the federal election due later this year.

These repeated electoral reverses for the Liberal-National coalition must also reflect a rise in working-class assertiveness. The political dimension of that assertiveness remains, however, thin. The NSW unions have asserted themselves over electricity privatisation and now over workers' compensation, but in both cases defensively and reactively. Nationally, Labor has not felt obliged to make any greater left shift, nor to offer more programmatically, than just to backpedal towards traditional social-democratic themes and away from the hard-edged free-marketeering of 1983-96. In Queensland, Victoria and WA the new Labor governments have been complacent, tame administrators of capitalism, without visible pressure from inside the core labour movement for more radical measures.

5. As Bob Gould summarises it – in a paper advocating a primary orientation to the Labor left – "the official Labor Left, which will be part of [the probably forthcoming federal Labor] government, has in recent years been totally quiescent. The existing Left shows little sign of putting forward an alternative socialist policy". The Labor Left in Queensland and Victoria have been more focused on getting a few ministerial posts (where they can do their bit to help right-wing Labor governments carrying out right-wing, pro-capitalist Labor policies! what a victory!) than doing anything recognisably left-wing.

6. Musing over the fact that the Carr administration has been "a government distant from the trade unions", the NSW trade-union right offers the fatalistic theory of a "natural" shortfall in labour-movement politics. "One explanation could be that these are the natural tensions that exist between a professional political office managing the day by day crises and an active union movement trying to push the envelope for the workers. At the end of the day, the movement's two arms have different objectives. The political arm must succeed electorally, while the industrial arm must represent its members. Where that balance falls is a question of ongoing and necessary debate". The evidence suggests that such thinking smothers the left, too. Left-wing unions – or broad left oppositions and rank and file movements within unions, which continue to develop – distinguish themselves, not by making sharper, bolder, more active, positive demands on Labor, but by expressing greater reservations about the polities and putting more emphasis on industrial direct action as a necessary counterweight. The dead weight of the defeat of 1975, when the Governor-General's coup extinguished a (mildly) reforming Labor government, still stifles the political ambition the labour movement.

7. The ALP's official "priority pledges" for the federal election are:

"Rebuilding Medicare and our public hospitals.

"Better living standards for everyone, whether they live in the country or the city.

"Quality education for all Australians, not just the rich.

"Building a Knowledge Nation, investing in the skills and knowledge of all our people."

That a politician can propose such piffle without being driven out of public life by hoots of coarse laughter is a measure of the state of things. The ALP's more detailed

policy announcements do not fill the gap. They will make some cuts in the GST. They will spend some money on health care and education. They will move back to the Industrial Relations Commission some powers transferred by Reith to the courts.

That's it. That is the sum-total of their programme for dealing with a situation where there is chronic mass unemployment; steadily-widening economic inequality, with the conditions, security and relative wages of large sections of the working class steadily diminishing; a long-term bosses' offensive, which the trade unions have resisted well in some areas but always with great disadvantages imposed by law; and rampant privatisation.

8. Marxists should strive to rally the more assertive elements of the labour movement around the axis outlined in the main themes we proposed to the Socialist Alliance conference: tax the rich to improve public services, legislate for union rights, a democratic Republic, workers' control against the profiteers. We should seek to draw as much as possible of the "new anti-capitalist" energy around this axis, too.

9. The electoral arena provides openings for socialists to stir up the working class to greater political assertiveness, to popularise the idea of a workers' government, and to promote socialist responses to the big current issues of society and politics. All other things being equal, we should use those openings. Exceptions arise from resources being too small, or from activity in or around the ALP which contesting elections would destroy or damage.

The "totally quiescent" Labor left, and the possibility under preferential voting of running independent left candidates without damaging Labor's cause against the coalition, make a case for the Socialist Alliance contesting elections. And our "lever of a small group" (to use Trotsky's phrase) has more grip in the Socialist Alliance than, on the whole, it can foreseeably have in the near future in a diffuse and low-intensity Labor left.

10. The ISO and DSP have foisted on the Socialist Alliance the prioritisation of a miscellaneous shopping list of mild demands, sauced up only by squirts of arbitrary, thoughtless posing-as-militant on issues they consider catchy (like "withdraw from the WTO").

Fortunately, perhaps, voters generally listen to the background tune in election material rather than the detailed words. If the Socialist Alliance achieves a passable level of visible activity in support of the various struggles of the working class and the oppressed, and of basic socialist agitation, then its candidates will be seen as voices of working-class and radical struggle whatever the detail.

However, protest votes won on that level cannot be built up into much. The point of leaflets, speeches, broadsheets and so on should be that they educate and focus the more thoughtful voters, thus making it possible to build something more solid out of election campaigning.

On that level the ISO/DSP shopping list – the message, to any halfway thoughtful reader, being that "we want more" on a long list of broadly old-Laborite axes (including the protectionist one!) – is thoroughly inept. The thoughtful reader will reflect, first, that the Socialist Alliance



is not being straight with the voters – they would scarcely bother with all the activity they do if their proclaimed "shopping-list" agenda were their real one! – and, secondly, that voting Socialist Alliance is a poor way to get the goodies on the shopping list.

### Why not just vote Labor?

They will not deliver all the goodies, but, since they will probably become the government, they might well deliver a bit here and there. A central part of the problem that we must confront is that most workers see "a bit here and there" as the best result achievable from politics. For socialists to respond by yelling that we want bigger bits, and in more areas, is not to come to grips with the problem at all.

Or why not back the Labor Left? They may have a more radical platform than the Socialist Alliance. They have those few ministerial seats and, who knows, some day they might summon up some energy and courage.

Or, then again, why not vote Green? The Greens promote most of the shopping list, and they have a good chance of sway in the Senate.

In short, if you have a shopping list, why not take it to the large, well-stocked stores? And why take it to a small bare-shelved shop where the shopkeeper will only tell you that you must make what you want yourself? The Socialist Alliance is not going to have the government, the ministerial seats, or even the places in the Senate. It makes sense to vote for the Socialist Alliance not on pragmatic we-want-more grounds, but only on grounds of making a statement of principle and putting down a marker. Which requires a punchy platform based around a few clear, radical, and positive ideas.

The shopping-list platform is deficient as a basis for fighting for the unions to make demands on the ALP; worse, the DSP understands the need for such demands on the ALP not at all, and the ISO grasps it only dimly.

We must continue to argue about the Socialist Alliance's programmatic approach.

11. The tiny minority vote for the Workers' List in South Africa's first post-apartheid elections was important – however tiny it was, and however many tactical mistakes its activists made in the election campaign – because it signalled a great principle, working-class political independence. A big vote which really represents organic working-class self-assertion may be important too, even when the formal platform is poor.

A small vote for a weak and vague platform, however, signifies nothing on either count.

That is a danger for the Socialist Alliance. The DSP's line, at the SA conference, that the SA's vote tally doesn't matter much and is fairly sure to be small anyway, is destructive. Of course socialist election campaigns are not just about vote-getting; but they are about vote-getting. The result should give our voters the sense of being part of a strong collective committed to fighting for a principle, not of a thin scattering of protest votes. Trade union action is not just about wages; but we would have little confidence in a trade union leader who declares before starting a wages

campaign that the campaign is what matters, not the extra money won.

12. If the SA can become effective, one of its effects should be to galvanise the Labor Left and force it to raise its act. Again, an SA platform organised around posing as militant on a random selection of causes judged to be popular is a very poor weapon here. We should explore what we can do to create an inverse dynamic, by grouping better elements of the Labor Left round a platform which could push the Socialist Alliance to raise its act.

13. All perspectives – in the Labor Left, in the Socialist Alliance, in the trade unions, and in the "new anti-capitalist" milieu – are null and void without a force, an organised political grouping, to fight for them. In all these areas it is vital that we combine our general advocacy with more specific argument aimed at persuading the best and most thoughtful activists to join Workers' Liberty.

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## The Australian labour movement

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By Leon Parissi

The Australian labour movement is made up of the union movement, the Australian Labor Party and the many diverse campaigns and organizations of the working-class. Up to the present its most important characteristic for us is its resistance to socialist ideas and ways of organizing. Reformism, the idea that you can or must compromise with capitalism, that it is the natural order of society that there is a boss class and the workers below, is a strong feature of the official labour movement. Unions do deals and negotiate with the boss every day because they are the main defence organization of the class. From the daily grind of defending past gains and sometimes trying to get a little more out of the boss comes an ingrained conservative reflex.

Reformism was brought into the ALP from day one through the union movement. The defeat of the great strikes of the 1890s led to thinking about a political solution for achieving the union movement's objectives. That is, a better deal under capitalism. But also from day one there have been socialists of various stripes battling within the labour movement for leadership – both in the ALP and in the unions.

Historically the Australian labour movement was one of the most unionised and militant. There were unions and strike movements before the 1890s, but the labour movement we see today was formed out of struggles and defeats over one hundred years ago. Prompted by an economic depression bosses attacked wages and conditions and workers fought back. But it was the great defensive strikes of shearers and wharfies in response to these attacks which were the early experiences of the Australian labour movement with the most long lasting effects.

Defeated though they were, these strikes by shearers and wharfies taught workers important lessons. One of these lessons was the importance of giving a political expression to workers aspirations, and so the Australian

Labor Party was created by strike leaders in Barcaldine Queensland in 1891. Parliamentary candidates had been supported by unions before this, but on the whole these were not parliamentarians bound by party discipline.

By 1902 ALP "caucus solidarity" was imposed in an attempt to secure implementation of the party platform. Parliamentarians were also obliged to sign a pledge to this effect. Caucus is the Parliamentary Labor Party, the MPs who elect the Parliamentary leader and the Ministry. Unions have up to 60% of the votes in state and federal policy making ALP conferences.

"Nationalisation of all sources of wealth and all means of production and exchange" was in the ALP Platform in the early days. The main problem with this platform was that the Parliament was the chosen means of achieving this objective. There was no thought in the ALP mainstream then or now of the self emancipation of the working class.

As we have seen over the years since, parliament is a very poor choice of tool for achieving the overthrow of capitalism. The socialisation objective of the ALP has since been watered down several times. None the less, Parliament has always been an important battleground for socialists.

### **Rise and fall of the CPA**

The period between the wars, up to the 1949 coal strike, and the defeat of Menzies' anti communist legislation, was characterised by a battle between the increasingly rigid, sectarian and Stalinised CPA and the ALP parliamentarists for leadership of the organised working class.

During the 1930s the CPA gained considerable ground among the unemployed with campaigns against evictions and against work for the dole. They also gained ground during the WW2 when they supported the "patriotic war to save the USSR".

But, during this period the CPA also squandered opportunities by adopting the view after 1935, under the direction of Moscow, that the ALP were 'social fascists' and should be treated as the main enemy.

During and after they war the CPA gained the leadership of a number of important unions. Something the left in this country has not since achieved.

By the 1950s the policy of peaceful coexistence with the ALP slowly crept into their thinking, as this mirrored Stalin's foreign policy of Cold War coexistence. In effect, the CPA no longer vied for the leadership of the working class in any way which challenged capitalism; though they did at times lead various fights against the boss.

The CPA suffered a downward spiral of membership from about 20,000 to 2,000 over the next 30 years. Much of these losses were marked by the international splits over the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia 1968, with the creation of separate pro-Moscow and pro-Peking line CPs.

The action in the labour movement was not all on the left. The 1950s also saw the ALP split with the anti-communist right wingers formed into the "Industrial groups". These eventually split away from the ALP into the Democratic Labour Party. The split was much more

pronounced in Victoria than NSW. The effects of this split also echoes to this day. The difference between the relatively more radical political climate of Melbourne compared to Sydney is partly explained by this.

### **Men of honest intentions**

There has been only one official communist in Parliament, Fred Paterson (CPA) from Townsville. But there have been a number of socialist 'renegades' in the ALP ranks such as Percy Brookfield, NSW MP from Broken Hill, who was expelled for defending Wobblies accused of torching Sydney. George Petersen, NSW MP, who was expelled for voting against labour/Labor attacks on Workers Comp, and George Georges, Senator from Qld, who resigned rather than be expelled for voting against both the legislation outlawing the BLF and the proposed ID card.

They, and many other radicals, either left or were expelled from the ALP in the 1980s. It is this great exodus of the left from the main party of workers which has meant that the left as a whole has been much weakened since. This exodus was characteristic of the ebb of the great upsurge of workers and radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

### **Labor since the Accord**

#### **The legacy of 1975 and 1983-96**

The Prices and Incomes Accord signed between the unions and the ALP government of 1983-96 was a reaction to many things. Principally the ALP and other social democratic governments of the time adopted the economic rationalist agenda of big business. This agenda consisted in 'freeing up' the economy for more intensive exploitation by capital and an intensification of work. A wide variety of government regulatory functions from tariffs, to financial regulation, to labour market regulation were decreased or abolished. Huge amounts of publicly owned enterprises and services were sold off. In exchange the working class was to receive benefits in greater social provision, or the 'social wage'. This of course never happened, or only sporadically.

Steel workers productivity, or rate of exploitation, doubled in the 1980s as thousands of jobs went.

Could it be that the union movement has had enough of the modernising of capitalism undertaken by Labor under Hawke, Keating and the State ALP governments since the 1980s? Many thousands of jobs have gone in manufacturing, the public sector and the finance sector. These jobs have been replaced with a strong and even growing trend towards a casualised and part-time workforce. Huge sections of what were publicly owned enterprises have been privatised, tariffs have been slashed and the financial system largely deregulated. Profits soared and real wages fell. Increasing disillusion with Labor led to their fall from office in 1996.

Since then a Liberal/National government has carried on essentially the same policies in an even more brutal fashion. Yet the industrial world after the defeat of the Reith/Howard attack on the MUA has left the unions in a

relatively strong position, if smaller in numbers as union membership has fallen from 50% to 33% of the workforce. The next wave of attacks on labour will probably come under a federal ALP government.

Union leaderships from Bill Kelty to Sharan Burrows say that the days of the Accord are gone. But what is to replace it? Unions are displaying signs of militancy in the AMWU's Campaign 2001 and the fight for entitlements protection. The NSW Labor Council organised an unprecedented blockade/picket of Parliament House against the ALP government's attack on Workers Compensation entitlements, and recently defeated the proposed privatisation of electricity in NSW. This does not mean unqualified class war has broken out, but it does indicate that the old rules have been shaken up.

Neither of these two recent NSW fights against the Carr government could have taken place if there was not substantial support from traditionally rightwing union leaderships. It has always been easier to put up a fight while the Liberals were in government. The real test is always whether the union leaderships, both left and right, will fight a Labor government. Or, to put it another way, whether there are union leaderships willing to call the ALP to account when in government. Labor in government is always more conservative than when in opposition. Perhaps the workers' compensation struggle, which is not yet over, is a sign of things to come. That is not yet clear.

The pressure to continue with the 'modernising' that began with Hawke and Keating will not abate as capitalism seeks more ways of improving its profits. The coming round of talks between national governments on a General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) will demand further slashing of public expenditure and public sector services. Even an old right wing union power broker like Bill Mansfield is sufficiently frightened by the prospect of GATS that he sounded a clear warning at the NSW PSA Annual Conference last May. Unfortunately Mansfield's unequivocal warning fell on deaf ears.

It is entirely possible that the ALP will adopt a more avowedly pro-capitalist and anti-union leadership and platform. There are leaders such as former WA Premier Carmen Lawrence who would like to cut ALP ties with unions. Others, like current black sheep MP Mark Latham, are pushing what has been described as "economic rationalism with a human face" also in line with a Blairite "New Labor" approach.

The union response to this escalating pressure will be the key. Our job is to use whatever means we have at hand to get organised labour to call Labor to account. If the unions do not take up key issues like health, education, welfare, and union rights then the coming period will be bad indeed. The signs are there, maybe just straws in the wind, that some union leaderships, such as the Victorian AMWU and some in New South Wales, are willing to put up a fight. If that is so the period ahead will be very exciting and full of opportunities. Through our involvement in projects like the Socialist Alliance, and in the union rank and file groups, we can exert greater influence than our numbers alone would suggest.

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## The anti-capitalist movement

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By Melissa White

One of the most decisive moments for the anti-capitalist movement in Australia came in Brisbane in early June when the DSP and ISO decided whether they were going to continue working together in the movement under the guise of "direct actionists" with little political difference from either the saboteur politics of anarchists or the militant reformism of 'issues activists' that comprises the other particles of the movement. Unfortunately this decision was altogether trivial since it missed the point of putting and securing the anti-capitalist movement on a working-class footing in favour of a chosen orientation of the DSP to third-worldism and the chosen orientation of the ISO to showy militancy.

Formerly the differences between the ISO and DSP had been expressed in name only. The ISO had gone with using term "anti-corporate" movement, thinking it provided better opportunities to cash in on Naomi Klein's "No Logo", which outlines the secretive nature of how corporate hegemony is maintained through advertising. Indeed, when the ISO launched their "Global Action" cells on campuses, this was the "manifesto" they spoke of. The DSP went with the rather cumbersome "global movement against corporate tyranny" title.

The media has consistently labelled the movement and its demonstrations "anti-globalisation", and both groups have been keen to distance themselves from the regressive and reactionary connotations in that title. For what the observation is worth, I think it is primarily Workers' Liberty, Workers' Power and Love & Rage who have most regularly referred to an "anti-capitalist" movement.

The DSP and ISO jointly do not make up the sole force of the anti-capitalist movement in Australia, but they have played a leading role in the anti-capitalist movement here. This is different to other countries in which hard left groups are more like "affinity groups". The fact that the hard left groups have held positions of leadership has opened up some possibilities for that movement to become organised around a political programme that is able to sustain a view that is longer in range and larger in scope than the blind enthusiasm for the next demonstration. The question, then, about their new attitude to work separately is not a small one because it will set things back.

CHOGM was decided upon as the next focus for a movement largely driven by external events and outward militancy. Given the low level of political unanimity in the movement, the primary argument took the form of what to do during CHOGM. And so there was a great to-do about the issue of blockading. Should CHOGM be shut down, as the WEF had been (partially) at S11?

This issue of "blockading" as a political principle was raised for the first time in these CHOGM meetings. Was it a political principle to blockade? The question was an important one considering the threats of the police to make mince meat of such a "principle". But it was a weird question. The question to blockade or not had not really

been elevated to the status of central political issue before, and it had certainly not been a matter of "principle". In September 2000 and May 2001, the "principled" issues had revolved around whether to try to cohere all elements of the movement around lists of demands. The ISO would not agree to the DSP's suggested demands, and so that effort fell flat.

The question of blockading had been one in which clearly the balance of anti-capitalist forces and police forces would determine whether it was safe and practicable to blockade. The question of the practicability of a blockade became real when the police smashed the S11 demonstrations. People were injured, and wanted to make sense of their injuries. Subsequently the question about the practicability of the blockade began to be expressed as a matter of "principle", especially in the slanging match between anarchists and socialist groups that ensued. Since blockading can only be a "principle" to a committed direct actionist who acts (so he or she believes) from a higher moral authority, blockading was a matter of principle, and breaking a blockade by calling it off in face of threat by the police was not only "unprincipled" in some way, it was also evidence of bureaucratic manipulation, necessarily flowing from "hierarchy" and "Leninism".

The ISO are never ones to miss the opportunity to appear militant, when in fact that organisation merely parrots militancy as a result of its centrism which at this present moment expresses itself in two poles of attitude (that of the younger vs. the older) in addition to its normal centrism (an ongoing mixture of reactionary and ultra-left politics). Nevertheless, the ISO take their cue from Socialist Alternative on this issue of the blockading principle, and Socialist Alternative deal with the problem not by arguing tactics, but by keeping in thick with "direct actionism". Socialist Alternative have dreams of leading the movement by appearing to be the most militant. Left groups, after all, can be direct actionists too (so they think). The ISO and SA now lend by far the most weight to the "blockading as principle" argument, since they have now united in the "STOP CHOGM Alliance". And both are more keen not to cut themselves off from the radical youth immersed in direct action, especially those in the campus collectives. The ISO and SA subsequently declared CHOGM an "illegitimate" forum. Whether and by what standards CHOGM is "illegitimate" aside for the moment, the main argument put by the ISO as to why it was, was that the same people who would attend CHOGM would be attending WTO rounds in Qatar shortly after, and this exposed some previously hidden link between big business and state in the form of GATS.

The DSP could not declare CHOGM an "illegitimate" forum for reasons of the composition of people represented there. It contained some of the heads of states of ex-colonial countries, and given the DSP's third worldist analysis in the current-snapshot of socialist hope in the world, the DSP could not in all consistency oppose those Heads of States getting together to seek "better deals" for their countries out of the "imperialist Commonwealth", since they measure their socialism in degrees of resistance to imperialism. The DSP floundered. The G77 Summit of the South in Havana last April, in which Castro hailed Seattle as a "revolt against neo-liberalism", and Castro's

greetings to the demonstrators in Quebec for the Free Trade Summit of the Americas, has been much lauded by the DSP as evidence that the Castro regime is a progressive force in favour of anti-capitalism and its version of socialism. Moreover, India looks like bucking up about the next round of WTO meetings. Isn't that possibility worth defending in the form of easy entry into the Convention Centre foyer? Although the DSP had completely adopted the rhetoric of direct action at S11 and M1 - "parliament of the streets" etc - they now claim that blockading is not the appropriate tactic for CHOGM. A militant confrontation is no longer "appropriate". Rather, the objective is to make an intervention electorally with mass backing in the "parliament of the streets". (The DSP revealed their intentions for a Socialist Alliance as early as September 2000.)

But it cannot pass without notice that the DSP has in fact changed its position on the question of the blockade entirely. Just before May 1 there was a full page spread in GLW about blockading Parliament House in Canberra on Sept. 11 as a suggestion about what to do to keep the movement "against corporate tyranny" moving, in commemoration of the S11 protest of 2000 in Melbourne. The idea fell on deaf ears. In fact it fell flat well and truly! A sham concern not to "burn out the movement" failed entirely in a highly energised and even electrifying environment. The DSP then dropped this suggestion.

It was at this precise point that the DSP started to question its own position in the anti-capitalist movement, and in particular, its ability to continue to lead the movement. There is no question that the DSP had almost complete hold of the leadership of the "M1 Alliance" in Sydney for the blockade of the stock exchange on M1, and it was also there that they played an aggressive role in the fall-out with the Stalinist-controlled "S-11 Coalition" (a.k.a. "Global Justice Coalition") which nevertheless is comprised of some active unions.

[The noteworthy event for the socialist groups was that Phil Davey of the C.F.M.E.U. issued a public retraction of his earlier assessments of the M1 demonstration and the M1 Alliance. This resulted in the collapse of the May Day (Labour Day) march on Sunday May 6: the first to be cancelled by the bureaucracy in approximately 50 years.]

So, the DSP could not reasonably oppose blockading a forum of democratically elected heads of government when they themselves (Peter Boyle) had proposed blockading Parliament House in Canberra! But all of a sudden, they did oppose blockading. The argument about "logistics" and "tactics" just does not hold up. The Brisbane CHOGM activists then split into two over the issue. It was going to take some fancy justification to rationalise this sudden change.

The fancy footwork followed quickly. Tim Stewart published an article in GLW on July 4. No group should be isolated, he said — as new spokesman for CAN (CHOGM Action Network) — by a group that was primarily composed of "students" (STOP CHOGM Alliance). This played the dual role of galvanising those community groups uninterested in blockading and exploiting a political rift within the ISO, which, suffering internal convulsion, is not politically unified across its membership. A chasm exists between the younger and older members as stated earlier.

The youngest members of the ISO are less than interested in the Socialist Alliance, and the centre of that organisation is having difficulty in holding the younger cadres 'in position', since it has been incapable of accounting for the dramatic turn-about in ISO policy on the issue of standing in elections. The primary rationale for that turn-about has never come out, at least not in a form that convinces the younger ISO members (nor anyone else: cf. "united front of a special kind"). Stewart went on to list of large and diverse range of participants in CAN, showing off to the maximum. The DSP had clearly assessed its chances of success as lying in a movement where it was able to win arguments about which demands to place. In the STOP CHOGM Alliance, it could not. So off went the DSP.

[Lurking in the background to all of this were the three anarchist groups (at least in Brisbane), themselves split over the issue of CHOGM. The blockade was the go. A spokescouncil was held in June in which the groups were permitted to exchange plans of action, the assumption being that affinity groups were cells of people who had agreed via consensus to work together and carry out whatever actions they felt comfortable with.]

In many ways, Workers' Liberty has been out of the main line of debate around organising for the demonstrations. Blockading is no principle. Nor is not blockading. Our message has been consistent and forceful, especially before M1 (so much so that the DSP felt the need to mobilise a large part of its Sydney branch against us before the M1 Alliance) with our suggestions of taking up existing union campaigns against various corporations. The anti-capitalist movement must intersect with working-class organisations if it is to go further and develop into more than a militant activist lobby group. The idea of global revolution or "worldwide general strikes" is meaningless until it does. This is not a very new or glamorous conclusion simply because nothing has changed for us.

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## Building a new left: the Socialist Alliance forum at the ISO's Marxism 2001.

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*The forum panel was David Glanz, International Socialist Organisation, Dick Nicholls, Democratic Socialist Party, and Janet Burstall, Workers' Liberty. Here is an outline of Janet Burstall's contribution.*

Conditions are favourable for building a new left. There has been a consistent, though not high, level of industrial combativity since the MUA dispute in 1998, which inspired many with militant solidarity. Politically, the Liberals and the Nationals are highly unpopular, whilst the fortunes of the ALP are looking up in election results in WA, Queensland and the NT.

The expectations of the unions though are not political. The AMWU has expressed the most direct political

concern (i.e. demanding something of government) of any unions recently with its fair trade campaign which is effectively a tariff and industry policy. Other than that unions have demanded very little from national government, and show no sign of wanting to have their own government, accountable to them.

The further development of left unity achieved so far by the Socialist Alliance is essential to the development of an effective socialist force in the working-class movement, and a very hopeful sign.

The Socialist Alliance platform and election campaign could make a big difference. The SA could be "what Labor is not". Not just by taking the stand that the ALP perhaps used to take on particular issues, such as public services, tax and union rights - an "Old Labor" platform of a return to the welfare state. The SA could be "what Labor is not" because of the void left by the ALP in failing to express working class interests. So the working class cannot trust Labor to be on its side, and needs a party that would in government be loyal to the interests of the class. The SA's response should be to take a stand on the need for just such a government. Without referring to what type of government we are for, we are protesting, rather than genuinely acting on the political front. This is the sense in which politics is one of the fronts of class struggle, along with the industrial and ideological, which I was glad to hear David Glanz just quote from Engels.

This need for a workers' government is implicit in the SA's platform and priority pledges, but it is not explicit. It should be explicit. This is what we should emphasise. The principle is what can convince people to vote SA.

The shopping list of demands may look more pragmatic, but it is a list on which we can't in practice deliver. It is a list of protests, not a coherent alternative project. If it is specific issues which matter most, then voters are just as likely to vote for a party that they think could make a difference on that issue - the Greens, maybe the Democrats, or even back to Labor. The shopping list does not distinguish us clearly enough from the Greens. We, here in this room, didn't become socialists because we ticked off a list of demands or issues, we joined because of the principles of socialism, because we identify with a side in class society.

The idea of a workers government is an immediate expression of the political interests of the working class, and one that shows a step towards socialism.

The ETU in Victoria is thinking about who it could support against Labor in the coming Federal election, and is giving serious thought to the Greens. The difference between the SA and the Greens should be so obvious that there is no confusion for unions about whether to support us or the Greens. The idea of a government for the working class would be a much more promising basis for the SA to put itself forward for endorsement from unions, especially the left unions in Victoria, such as the ETU. The principle is the key: it is simple and straight forward. The shopping list is both more arguable, and makes us seem more like the Greens. Calling ourselves "anti-neo-liberal" does not mark us out either. We need to appeal for a big vote - we need to give people a demonstrable reason to vote for us -

which cannot be pragmatic, at this stage, it can only be based on principle.

Finally what is our future after the election? Are we equipping ourselves? When the ALP wins government, sooner or later the shit will hit the fan. There was mild hysteria over the Tristar dispute with Abbott demanding that the ALP condemn the strike. Simon Crean's eventual assertion of the rights of unionists to protect their entitlements is as good as we will see from the ALP. It will only get worse after Labor is in government.

Our role will be to encourage unions to place their demands on Labor and not to compromise. To be in a position to do this, we need our election campaign to be a grassroots campaign, going out to existing unions, campaigns and community groups to offer them our support for their issues. We raise the need for a government whose defining principle will be to take their side. We should continue with the aim of being an even broader left unity project, seeking cooperation with the left in unions, the ALP and the other left groups who have not yet joined with us.

### **In replying to the discussion in closing:**

Both Dick Nicholls and David Glanz implied that the Workers Liberty proposal is going too far, and David Glanz asked what was wrong with Old Labor demands, which have a radical dynamic.

In reply Janet Burstall agreed that there is nothing wrong in principle with most of the demands in the SA platform – the point is to draw out the logic of the radical dynamic with a political, i.e. governmental conception – a workers' government. A speaker from the floor had thought that the platform wasn't the main point anyway – we should be campaigning on the streets. Janet said that even more important than the streets, and events under the name of the SA, is making the connection with existing movements and groups, as Anne Picot had argued. Further, the platform is fundamental to expressing the level of agreement we have reached already, and, as a document, to rework, to discuss, and to extend our agreement and clarify our differences. It is also the basis on which new members of the Socialist Alliance will learn what our politics are.

We can sort these issues out by continuing our campaigning and the discussion and dialogue that has begun with the Socialist Alliance; Workers' Liberty hopes that it will continue in the same vein.

## **Was Malcolm X a socialist?**

**Martin Thomas looks at George Breitman's book, *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of a Revolutionary* (Pathfinder Press).**

This book, written over the year after Malcolm X was murdered in February 1965, sets out to prove that from June 1964 until his death "Malcolm was a revolutionary - increasingly anti-capitalist and pro-socialist as well as anti-imperialist".

On one level, it is solid and convincing. Shortly before his death Malcolm said plainly that his struggle was not "a racial conflict of black against white, or... a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter".

"I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those who do the oppressing... but I don't think it will be based upon the colour of the skin, as Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad had taught it."

Anyone who uses Malcolm X as authority for narrow black nationalist politics is being disloyal.

In his last year Malcolm became willing to work with the (liberal-led) mass civil rights movement.

He called for a struggle of both black and white people, not black people alone. "When the day comes when the whites who are really fed-up - I don't mean these jive whites who pose as liberals... - learn how to establish the proper type of communication with those uptown [in Harlem] who are fed-up, and they get some co-ordinated action going, you'll get some changes... And it will take both."

He dumped the Black Muslims' vague talk of a "black state": "No. I believe in a society in which people can live like human beings on the basis of equality." Immediately after quitting the Black Muslims, he summed up his philosophy as "black nationalism" - but by January 1965 he had rejected that: "I haven't been using the expression for several months."

He dropped the Black Muslims' line of promoting black capitalism, in a way which Breitman shows must have been deliberate and considered - though he never openly argued against it, and never came out clearly with an alternative.

He denounced capitalism: "You can't have capitalism without racism... You can't operate a capitalistic system unless you are vulturistic; you have to have someone else's blood to suck to be a capitalist..." He told Breitman's comrade Harry Ring that he "felt it necessary for his people to consider socialist solutions to their problem. But as the leader of the movement, he said, it was necessary to present this concept in a way that would be understandable to his people and would not isolate him from them".

The basic statement of his Organisation of Afro-American Unity, in June 1964, had cited "the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of the USA and the Bill of Rights" as "the principles in which we believe"; but in December 1964 he urged the OAAU to look wider: "The man doesn't want you and me to look beyond Harlem or beyond the shores of America".

He told the OAAU to consider socialism because, he said, that was the system that the new independent countries in Africa and Asia (and Scandinavia, too, he said in passing) were using to get rid of poverty and provide a decent life and decent education for everyone.

That those countries were not as he thought them to be does not undo the importance of Malcolm's preaching of social provision for need in place of "vulturistic" profit. Unfortunately, however, Breitman's own illusions here blur the argument of the book.

He weaves his presentation into a general notion of "the tendency of revolutionary nationalism to grow over into and become merged with socialism", and thus blurs over both Malcolm's sharp change of direction in 1964-5 and the deep differences Malcolm still had with working-class socialists.

Breitman was a Trotskyist, a long-standing member of American Socialist Workers' Party (no relation to the SWP-Britain). When the SWP went Castro-Stalinist in the early 1980s, he fought against the turn and, nearly 70 years old, was expelled. He knew that the new states in Africa were not socialist at all.

All that, however, was blurred in his mind by a concept which he shared with all the "mainstream" Trotskyists of the time: that a great process of "colonial revolution" was sweeping the world which somehow had an inbuilt and semi-automatic tendency to "grow over" into socialism, and within which class issues were secondary details.

Malcolm's identification with Third World states was thus, for Breitman, an identification with the "colonial revolution" and ipso facto an identification with a movement or process tending towards socialism. Moreover, for Breitman, Malcolm was also himself an example of that movement or process.

Breitman's general summings-up, as opposed to his detailed documentation, therefore blur Malcolm's change of direction. And Breitman gives a very blurred picture of the socialist view which he says Malcolm was moving towards.

## Levelling up is the answer

The socialist answer to racism is black and white workers' unity on a programme of eliminating disadvantage by levelling up at the expense of the capitalists and capitalism. The principle of unity should not stop socialists supporting black people who start struggles against racism before any large number of white workers are ready to back those struggles; revolutionary unity can be established only by building on struggles, using them as a lever to change consciousness, not by dampening them down to get "unity" in silence and stillness.

Nevertheless, class unity remains the basic principle. Breitman mentions this issue quite clearly. "It is important to note that Malcolm... was talking about [an alliance with] 'militant whites', not white workers... He did not share the belief of the Marxists that the working class, including a decisive section of the white workers... will play a leading role".

But Breitman's blurred vision stops him developing this, or another important point he makes: "class questions are often expressed in racial terms", that is, "racial" issues often have to be demystified by exposing class issues inside them.

Breitman concludes: "Malcolm was not yet a Marxist." Not yet! But it was not only a matter of time!

Malcolm was not a Marxist. Whether he would have become one if he had lived longer depends on whether he would have become convinced on the key issues separating the sort of socialism at which he had arrived (with various state-capitalist and bureaucratic regimes as models, and without any special connection to the working class) from Marxist working-class socialism. It was not just a matter of trundling a little further along an automatic conveyor-belt.

On another level Breitman misses the point.

Malcolm was beginning to think and read about socialism. He was not, and could not have been, anywhere near producing a new socialist strategy against racism.

For a dozen years before that, he had had a strategy against racism - the "Black Muslim" strategy of building black self-respect and pride, encouraging racial separation, and using black resources to build up black (capitalist) businesses in black communities. Malcolm had rejected that strategy.

Malcolm was and is a great political figure not because he offered strategic guidance. His most famous slogan was "Freedom - by any means necessary". The phrase "by any means necessary" shattered all the liberal taboos about non-violence and not demanding "too much", and the black-separatist taboos too. In place of all talk of gradually scaling down racism, bit by bit, it put the basic human demand: we will not tolerate any racism any longer!

It was a revolutionary principle. But it said nothing about which means were suitable and effective! It offered no strategy. All it did was to open the way for clear thinking about strategy - and that was a great thing to do, especially at that time and in that place. Malcolm opened the way for others (and for himself, in his last year) to think for themselves.

And to string together "Malcolm X's strategy" from whatever selection of Malcolm's statements suits your prejudices - black-nationalist, Muslim, or socialist - is not the best way to think for yourself. It is not the best way to learn from Malcolm X.

**Join the fight for class struggle politics in the labour movement today!**

Contact Workers' Liberty:

Website: <http://www.workersliberty.org/australia>

e-mail: [contact@workersliberty.org](mailto:contact@workersliberty.org)

Join our e-mail discussion list at [www.yahoogroups.com/list/workersliberty](http://www.yahoogroups.com/list/workersliberty)

# Workers' Liberty

## Open letter to Ansett workers

## You are entitled to secure jobs.

## You could run air transport for public need, not corporate greed.

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Your passengers and cargo still need flights. The 30-40% of market share of Ansett cannot be taken up by QANTAS or Virgin without extra aircraft and extra staff. Regional centres have been abandoned and need air services.

Ansett owners and directors have been taking the money and running, - Peter Abeles, Rupert Murdoch, Ron Brierley. They have mismanaged Ansett, left it with an aging fleet and losses from safety failures. They have stolen your wages and paid themselves outrageous bonuses for their incompetence. They have paid huge advertising fees to rich stars. They have failed you the staff, and the passengers, especially in regional centres and rural communities.

Australian and NZ governments say that competition and private ownership is the most efficient way to provide goods and services, and cheap air fares. That's why QANTAS was privatised and they sell off Airports. But Virgin only runs high traffic routes, and pays around 20% less to its staff. Competition put you under pressure to cut conditions or lose your jobs, to work long hours and excessive overtime. Now if a new operator turns up, you will certainly be asked to work for less. Especially with the crisis in the US aviation industry following the New York plane attacks.

And in turn QANTAS workers' conditions will be under increased pressure too. If the whole of air services were taken into public ownership there wouldn't be this insecurity of jobs and services.

But neither the Liberal government nor Labor sees that as the solution. It will only happen if you, the workers, demand it as your plan for saving your jobs and providing the air transport that Australians need. Your unions should support you in these demands, to save your jobs and not simply focus on securing already earned entitlements. You are entitled to your jobs, not just a few thousand dollars that won't last long.

We think you can win your jobs back. Through your unions and your own efforts you have been making yourselves heard on the streets, at the airports, on TV, in the newspapers. The Australian public is sympathetic, but they don't have a solution. By proposing to run aviation yourselves, in the public interest, you could win the support you need. You could set out your own plan for air travel, to be run democratically by your own

elected representatives, and representatives of passengers and cargo users.

Your plan would include services to regional centres, high safety standards, reasonably priced airfares, and decent pay and conditions, including reasonable hours of work for aviation workers. There would be no parasitic private owners, caring only about the profits they can take. By your own actions, turning up to the airports on Friday 14<sup>th</sup>, to look after stranded passengers and to support one another, you have shown that you care, that you want to provide a quality service, that it matters to you.

### You deserve to run the service.

Workers Liberty will support you in every way we can. We belong to the Socialist Alliance which has hundreds of members in all the major cities and some regional centres, committed to campaign in the coming federal election to put people before profit, for a government that will take your side, not the side of private owners.

The Socialist Alliance is petitioning the government to nationalise Ansett.

### 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.

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