

Workers' Liberty



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

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No to war! No to Saddam!

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Where we stand

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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 only the working class liberating itself can achieve socialism, 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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Editorial

Stop work to stop the war

Opposition to war is growing. In Australia there have been impressive demonstrations of anti-war sentiment in the major cities and regional centres involving tens of thousands. In Britain, Italy and the US several hundred thousand have marched against the impending US/UK war on Iraq.

Opposition to unilateral action

A number of ALP federal parliamentarians are openly against supporting unilateral US action. Tasmanian MP, Harry Quick, publicly stated his intention to "cross the floor" if necessary in opposition to any ALP support for unilateral US action. Right-wing ALP MP, Laurie Brereton, writing in October in the Fairfax press stated that even if the UN supports an attack on Iraq, Australia should only contribute "bilateral intelligence" and not "lend the direct support of our defence forces". However, Australia has for some time had a military commitment to leading the UN sponsored naval blockade in Iraq which over the years since the last Gulf War has been responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent Iraqi people.

The ACTU President, Sharon Burrow, told a Sydney anti-war rally on 30 November, "the ACTU strongly opposes a unilateral declaration and Australian involvement in a war on Iraq." This is good as far as it goes. But that statement does not match the level of total opposition to war on Iraq either under UN or US leadership demanded by the many thousands who have marched for peace.

It is encouraging that many union flags and banners were present at the various anti-war demonstrations. This is a useful start to developing a rounded working-class response to the war drive. What will be needed to bring a halt to the war is the action on the streets reflected in resolutions, meetings, debate and, ultimately, action on the part of workers to stop the war.

One of the most useful early actions against the Vietnam War was a union ban by the Stalinist led Seamen's Union of Australia on crewing the supply ships 'Boonaroo' and 'Jeparit' in the mid-1960's. This followed a tradition in the SUA of industrial action in support of political causes such as opposition to the Korean War and support for the Indonesian nationalist movement, which fought the Dutch attempt to regain the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) after WW2. Many of these actions were carried out against the wishes of the mainstream union movement. But they could not have succeeded without thorough debate and support of the membership. It is always a hard task to fight against the current which supports "our boys" in Vietnam, Korea or, today, ...Iraq.

War wagon rolls on

Deputy sheriff, John Howard, is following faithfully along in the shadow of President Bush with his "Australian forces will be on the ground" to support

unilateral action by the US. The Labor Opposition fails to condemn the war in outright terms and seems happy to support the war aims of the US if they are appropriately camouflaged with a UN Security Council sanction.

Preparations for war are also growing with a massive US/UK military build up in the Gulf. In many respects the war has already begun, with the US and the UK increasing the tempo of "softening up" bombing raids in southern and northern Iraq, against air defence installations. Such bombing raids have been a feature of the US/UK unilateral low level military campaign against Iraq ever since President Bush Senior's 1991 Gulf War officially ended. Thousands of sorties have been flown, resulting in the deaths of many Iraqis.

War on civil rights

One of the pillars of the "war on terrorism" is the parallel "war" on civil rights, which is being carried out through new laws to boost the powers of police and intelligence agencies. These new laws have little to do with fighting the perpetrators of terrorism. There is already plenty of scope for the forces of "law and order" to spy on, round up, detain and prosecute terrorists. The new laws recently passed by the Carr Labor Government in NSW and those proposed by the Howard Coalition Government are more intended to restrict hard won rights of protest and civil disobedience. Such rights are essential for the expression of minority views which do not find a ready outlet in the capitalist mass media. Ultimately, such laws could be just as easily used against legitimate union activism as any alleged Islamist terrorists.

David Bernie, Vice-President of the NSW Council for Civil Liberties, described these laws to a public meeting called by the NSW Socialist Alliance on 6 December. He described how police, without a search warrant, under the new NSW law could strip-search children over ten years old as terrorist suspects, and people who refused to give their name to police could be jailed for twelve months. These new provisions are amongst other increased powers to search and detain suspects and their property.

In April this year the ACTU warned a Senate Committee that, under the Federal Government's proposed anti-terrorism laws:

"routine political and industrial activism could be criminalised as terrorism under the Howard Government's new security bill. High on the

ACTU's concerns were that the new law could be used to limit the civil liberties of union members, to work against union activism and to weaken unions.

Under the new law the activities that could be defined as a terrorist act includes any action or threat made with the intention of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause. Acts include those involving harm to persons or property as well as acts which constitute a risk to the health or safety of a section of the public, or interference with an electronic system, including telecommunications, financial, essential services, public utilities or transport.

Under this definition finance sector workers who "jam the fax" of their CEO, or telecommunications workers who ban repairs to faults could be deemed to have engaged in a terrorist act, punishable by life imprisonment."

United front needed

As socialists fighting to build a large and effective anti-war movement we should not lose sight of our orientation to the working class. There has been a tendency to build the anti-war movement as broadly as possible around the simple slogans of "No war on Iraq" and "No Australian support for the war". Anyone agreeing with these slogans are made welcome to the speakers' platform and the rallies. These are lowest common denominator slogans and, if taken at face value, could lead to socialists sharing the platform with anti-working-class forces. Supporters of the secular butcher Saddam Hussein, or the murderous Islamist regime in Iran, could support these slogans. Would we be happy sharing the platform with such representatives of anti-working-class forces?

Socialists need to bring their political perspective to the struggle against the war. Building sheer numbers is not the answer. Socialists should be clearly stating that it is the working class which has the potential to stop the war drive and offer on that basis to link with other working-class forces to build a broad united front against the war. How are we to build links with secular workers and their communities if we platform supporters of fundamentalist regimes or murderous cliques which have been responsible for the deaths of their sisters, brothers and comrades overseas? Surely we should make it a priority to link up with the more secular and working-class elements of the communities under racist attack from the Australian state.

It is a basic flaw to think that alliances, however temporary, with reactionary forces will lead to winning over a Muslim audience to socialist thinking. Those who are prepared to stand apart from the various anti-working-class regimes and cliques, whether secular or religious, are more our natural allies.

If we have a peace movement clearly based in the labour movement and on the principles of democracy and international solidarity, then we can invite speakers from community groups — so long as they

have no clear ruling-class links — without great problems. In Britain, for example, there are various anti-fundamentalist Muslim groups who were active in the movement against the Afghanistan war. The involvement of the Muslim Association seems to have driven them away from the current (Iraq) anti-war movement. On the evidence, you can't have both. The Muslim Association is not just fundamentalist, but plainly a ruling-class political outfit, financed presumably by some section of the Saudi élite. In Sydney, the invitation of Sheik Taj Al Hilali, the leader of the Australian Muslim community, was seen as necessary in order to attract other more acceptable Muslim speakers. The Sheik has an unsavoury past and has been widely accused of racism. It is well known that the Sheik's Lakemba Mosque was partly financed by the ultra-fundamentalist Saudi regime.

The drive for the broadest possible numbers will not make for a truly united anti-war movement that can challenge the whole war-mongering power apparatus in Australia. For that we need to be sure that our anti-war movement is in solidarity with working-class struggle in all affected countries, and clearly condemns our common enemies on all fronts — the US military, Howard's support for the USA, Saddam's dictatorship and political Islam.

No to war! No to Saddam!

The UK Alliance for Workers' Liberty National Committee on 30/11/02 passed the following resolution on the planned US/UK war in Iraq.

1. US strategists evidently believe that they are "on a roll", and should seize the chance to tidy up another problem. With enough "smart bombs", they can crush Saddam's regime quickly, set up an alternative, and then withdraw. At small cost they will have secured the end of the malodorous and ineffective UN sanctions against Iraq, established a reliable government over one of the world's major oil powers, and stabilised a crucial region. Even if we thought that the gung-ho US strategists were calculating correctly, socialists could not support such plans. The overthrow of Saddam is for the people of Iraq to do, not for the US to impose on Iraq at inescapably large cost of Iraqi civilian and conscript life.

2. War, in the famous adage of Clausewitz much repeated by Marxists, is the continuation of policy by other means. We judge wars not by "who fired first" or "who attacked", but by the character of the established state policy which the war "continues" on either side. However criminal the USA's plans, on the Iraqi side the record makes it impossible to see the "policy" which Iraq's course towards war "continues" as essentially one of defence of its political independence and rights. Since the 1970s, at least, Iraq's state policy has been essentially about trying to establish itself as a regional big power - a "sub-imperialist" centre. To do so it has repeatedly

repressed smaller peoples - the Kurds, the population of Kuwait - and made war against its neighbours. Its policy towards Israel represents the worst Arab chauvinism, mitigated only by distance. The state's rule of fear against its own people goes hand in hand with its reactionary external policy.

3. When we campaigning against the threat of US war on Iraq, therefore, we should not do so in any way that implies credence to or support for Saddam Hussein's "anti-imperialist" claims. Cheap agitation such as that which declares Bush and Sharon to be "the real axis of evil" and the "real terrorists" should be rejected. Whatever about Bush's hypocrisy, Saddam's regime is "really" as evil and as terrorist as any on earth. This position would not change in the event of a US invasion or conquest. Saddam's resistance to the US would not be motivated by a defence of the Iraqi peoples' rights to self-determination, but by the rationale of the self-preservation of his regime, including its repression of the Kurds and other minorities. We oppose the US war plans, not in the name of support for the Iraqi regime, but in the name of international democracy and working-class solidarity.

4. Out of this US/Iraq war could develop a political quagmire which would open up a whole new chapter in the history of imperialism. After an initial success against Saddam Hussein, the USA could get drawn into trying to impose effective (if not formal) colonial rule on Iraq, by way of heavy involvement by the US military to suppress mass popular resistance to a replacement regime which lacks a domestic political base and becomes in effect just a puppet government. In that possible future situation, we would give support to genuine popular resistance in the name of self-determination. We would express our opposition to a colonial policy or puppet government by making slogans such as 'self-determination', 'no imposed regime in Iraq' and 'democratic rights for the Iraqi peoples' prominent in our agitation, in addition to our previous slogans such as 'no to war', 'stop the war'. Given that this war certainly involves, one way or another, a US conquest of Iraq, we are for troops out of Iraq in pretty much any likely immediate situation; "troops out" would become a prominent slogan in the event of mass popular resistance.

Other scenarios are possible. For example, at the other end of the range of possibilities, there might be an uprising against Saddam - prompted by, or seizing opportunities created by, US military intervention - which to one degree or another supports, or at any rate does not oppose, the US military presence. By "uprising" here we mean a real mass movement, not a military schism or palace coup.

We should build solidarity with such an uprising. We should say that the priority is solidarity with the uprising; the anti-war movement's priorities should be the same - i.e., put crudely, solidarity first, opposition to America second. We would continue to oppose the US war and to preach no trust in or support for US militarism. Any genuine movement will threaten to go beyond what the US is prepared to accept. If it

develops, at a certain point, even if starting off "pro-American", it will come into conflict with those troops, and our solidarity will entail agitating for troops out.

Specifically, now, both main forces in Iraqi Kurdistan, PUK and KDP, support the US war drive. We criticise that support. We point to the Turkish government's statement that it will tolerate no Kurdish separation from Iraq, and its smug assurance that "the Americans understand our position". The US would oppose, probably suppress, any militant Kurdish movement for self-determination. Yet we continue to support the Iraqi Kurds, even under PUK and KDP leadership, in their self-assertion against Baghdad.

VIGIL FOR PEACE

Sydney Town Hall

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No Australian involvement!

**PEACE VIGIL @ Sydney Town
Hall Square**
Fridays, Dec 13 & 20 PLUS
Christmas Eve, and then every
Friday in January

5:00pm Friday 3 January
Sydney Town Hall Square

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War Announce/...](http://www.eGroups.com/group/StopTheWarAnnounce/)

Socialist Alliance

Socialist Alliance in review

The long and winding road.

Riki Lane, Socialist Alliance Co-Convenor

From tentative beginnings, Socialist Alliance is finding its feet and developing a clear sense of purpose and of its future. This may seem a surprising statement given recent ructions. However, if you look beyond the surface, it is clear how far we have come.

Elections

In Victoria, many more comrades were actively involved in the recent State election campaign than in previous ones. This is true both for the members of affiliated groups and for independent members. Meetings and functions are increasingly well attended. There were forty participants at the Trade Union Solidarity Committee meeting. Thirty attended a Brunswick campaign launch.

Our vote of between 1.1% and 2.6% showed improvement from the vote we got in the federal election. It was a particularly difficult election to get votes, given the landslides to Labor and the Greens. SA is now on the map as a recognised, but minor, electoral party. Steve Jolly for the Socialist Party in Richmond saw his vote collapse from 12% to 2%.

The Greens' impressive vote, over 20% in four electorates, indicates a major shift to the left. Labor's huge win, and its unprecedented control of the Upper House, mean that it has no excuses. The unions and the whole labour movement will put major demands on the government for serious reform – firstly, for legislation knocked back by the Liberals, such as on industrial manslaughter (Premier Bracks has already announced that he will not proceed with this) and for proportional representation in the upper house.

The Greens are cementing their position as both the realistic electoral left alternative to the ALP and as the “middle party” between the ALP and the Liberals. They have taken over that latter role from the Democrats, while having much more credibility in campaigns and on rallies than the Democrats ever did.

Unions

Workers' Liberty gives union work first priority, because we see Marxism as about working-class power and the unions as the basic organisations of the workers. Unions may not be the best places to recruit quickly, although SA has vastly more potential than any of its affiliates to attract unionists. However, unions are where we have to build strong roots if we are to build a working-class party. Independent SA union activists like Chris Cain and Simon Millar have given a huge boost to SA's profile, activity and morale.

Both the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and the International Socialist Organisation (ISO) are giving union work more attention than they have for a long time. This is a very positive development – but it has to be kept up as an ongoing orientation, not a passing phase. Simon Millar's paper on the TU Solidarity Committee in Melbourne (reprinted elsewhere in this issue) outlines some of the possibilities. This work will involve both practical questions of how to intervene in particular unions and discussion of theoretical issues in a concrete context.

Activism

Recent anti-war rallies have seen much better coordination and intervention by SA. Stalls, joint contingents, banners, posters – SA has a large and visible presence in Melbourne and Sydney and many other cities. SA branches have taken the lead in establishing local anti-war committees and organising local actions.

There is a lot of unevenness. Some branches are quite inactive, while others are lively. This also relates to the attitudes of local affiliates' branches. Where they are less developed – e.g. the DSP in Adelaide, or unenthusiastic about SA, e.g. the ISO in Brisbane – the local SA branches have suffered.

DSP/ISO

From the start there have been different conceptions – the ISO's minimalist electoral approach of a “united front of a special type”, the DSP's hope to have a multi-tendency socialist party in which they would be the dominant force. These conceptions still have to be debated through, but there has been a lot of movement.

WL welcomed the DSP's proposal to restructure itself as a tendency in SA and commit its resources to building SA. However, we knew that proposal was putting the organisational cart before the political horse and would not be acceptable to most other affiliates – especially the ISO. The ISO's subsequent ultimatum, and the DSP's backing off, actually gives us a good base from which to really develop joint work and debate out a proper basis for unity.

The National Executive of the Socialist Alliance recently unanimously adopted the following points, based on an ISO proposal, as the basis for joint work:

“An open-ended discussion about the nature of the Alliance, and around key political questions like the nature of reformism, the nature of the trade union bureaucracy, etc. This process should lead up to the annual conference in May, but not end there.”

Strengthening union collaboration

What has been achieved to date in the NTEU could be replicated in the CPSU, another union where the Alliance has a relatively large membership. We should investigate in which other unions, from state to state, caucuses would be useful. We should also encourage cross-union committees like the Alliance Solidarity Committee in Melbourne. We should

organise another round of union seminars across the country. We should strengthen our collaboration in campaign work, in particular, anti-war and refugee rights' campaigns.

Raising the Alliance profile by campaigning under its banner where we can – for instance, the Alliance is an excellent vehicle for initiating or building protests against the recent ASIO raids on Muslim families. Raising the Alliance profile more regularly and thoroughly on all rallies and at other public events, using placards, leaflets, etc. The ISO understands that this would involve making greater resources available than at present. Holding Alliance public meetings on key topics as broad platforms of the left, and organising debate across the left on contentious issues.

This represents a major step forward from the ISO's initial conceptions – the SA can act as a major vehicle for discussion and debate amongst the left, and also be an activist party where union and campaign work can be strengthened.

Towards the May National Conference

In the lead up to the May 2003 Socialist Alliance National Conference, we can strengthen our joint work and start to debate out some of the big issues. The conference itself should set out a path towards a united multi-tendency party, setting out markers that need to be achieved. Some of these could include: reaching agreement on some central issues of how to approach the labour movement; properly functioning branches that actively involve the affiliates and independents; attracting new layers of activists; organised and regular interventions in a number of unions; establishing a regular publication that SA can actually support.

Both before and after May, we should aim to draw in other activists such as militant unionists, solidarity activists, and community activists. We should also seek to attract new affiliates such as ethnic left groups, Left Press in Brisbane, other independent groups of leftists etc and, despite their hostility, Socialist Alternative and the Socialist Party.

In a sense, it is a bit like the European Union – we need to both deepen and broaden the Alliance through increasing our joint work and programmatic agreement and through attracting new activists. SA has established an important body of common experience. If we can show the labour movement that the revolutionary left can work together and start to attract a wider range of forces, we can make a serious contribution to building a mass class struggle workers' party.

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

Stay in the Socialist Alliance!

An open letter to the ISO

Dear comrades,

According to your letter to the DSP of 29 September 2002: "In the space of just 18 months, [the Socialist Alliance] has begun to establish itself among hundreds of non-aligned working-class activists, and has contributed to a much more comradely atmosphere among affiliates".

Now, however, you are actively considering pulling out from the Alliance. Your conference on 7-8 December resolved to open a discussion on this option and to decide after the New South Wales state elections.

We urge you to stay in the Alliance and to join with us in fighting to develop the Alliance into a core for a genuine working-class political party.

In the 20th century, after 1917, the chances for working-class socialist revolution were aborted, essentially by the effects of Stalinism (including its rebound effect in extending the hold of social democracy over the working class in many countries). Socialists at the start of the 21st century have a more open field before us. But much of the very language of our movement has suffered through being annexed for so long by Stalinism. For example, many young activists today describe themselves as "anti-capitalist", but shy away from the words "communist" or even "socialist".

We need to rebuild a socialist political culture, remedying the deformations imposed even on anti-Stalinists by the decades of Stalinist domination of the left, and at the same time coming to terms with a radically changed world capitalist system and world working class. That work requires intense self-education, discussion and debate among already-committed socialists. At the same time we have to reach out.

For decades our comrades, the revolutionary socialist opponents of both capitalism and Stalinism, addressed themselves to, and moved among, primarily workers and youth who had already come to identify as "socialist" in a broad sense by reference to a culture sustained primarily by the Stalinist and social-democratic parties. That culture has not vanished, and will not vanish tomorrow. We share your concern to have the Alliance appeal to people who identify as "old Labor", although we disagree with your idea that the Alliance can best do that by pretending, implausibly, to be "old Labor" (a rather diluted variety of "old Labor") itself. Nevertheless, that

culture is waning. More and more today we have the opportunity, and the task, to "make socialists" among young people whose only notion and knowledge of socialism will be what we can take to them.

With the decline of the old Stalinist and social-democratic political labour movements, we can, and we must, address ourselves to a wider and more diffuse audience, with fewer fixed points of reference.

Work together

The Socialist Alliance is valuable because it allows us to work together; to establish a basis of common activity which can make our debates more fruitful; to pursue those debates and discussions; and, by combining our forces, to reach out to broad, raw audiences in election work (the main area, in bourgeois democracies, where such large audiences can be reached) on a much bigger scale than we could do if we all worked separately. We do not exaggerate what the Alliance has achieved so far; but to quit it now would be to move not forwards but backwards, to the stage we were at before we launched the Alliance.

Your doubts about continuing the Alliance have been prompted mainly by the DSP's suggestion that they would dissolve as a party and organise instead as a "Democratic Socialist Tendency" inside the Alliance. You saw that as a move to force the development of the Alliance and to convert it essentially into an annexe of the DSP, with yourselves as a trapped minority. The DSP has shelved its suggestion for now, but you still see it as a threat.

No doubt the DSP does want to win hegemony in the Alliance, and would strive to use its "dissolution" as a step towards converting the Alliance into an enlarged and renamed version of the DSP. The outcome, however, will depend, on political struggle. It will depend on that in any case. The Alliance cannot continue for ever as a diplomatic link-up. Life will pose issues on which the Alliance will have to define itself. You should be part of the struggle, not opt out of it.

You seem to see the Alliance too much as a diplomatic arrangement between yourselves and the DSP, and one which is now breaking down because the DSP is being too pushy. We urge you to see it instead as a framework for thrashing out politics, by argument and debate, among many hundreds of socialists. Do not run away from the DSP and leave the Alliance's hundreds of unaffiliated members in the pocket of the DSP. Do not regard the DSP members and periphery as just automatic transmission mechanisms for some fixed set of politics. Join with us in a battle to get more politics, and more political debate and self-education, in the Alliance.

Debates

We know that political struggles are not conducted like dispassionate, even-handed debates in the Forum of ancient Athens. We do not underestimate the weight of the DSP's considerable resources in material assets and staff. We know it is possible to win a debate yet lose the vote. Even then it is much

better to take part in the struggle, and to face exclusion, if it comes to that, together with others we have convinced in the struggle, than to opt out in advance. At the very least we learn more.

As Trotsky put it: "Revolutionists are tempered not only during strikes and street battles but, first of all, during struggles for the correct policies of their own party".

Two options

Either revert to the old pattern in which the left operates as an archipelago of small groups, each with its own circle of campaigns, meetings, and contacts, with the seas between the islands almost impassable, and the dialect spoken on one island scarcely comprehensible to the inhabitants of the next one. Or, push on, through experiences like the Socialist Alliance, to a revival and recomposition of working-class politics in the years and decades ahead, and the maximum intervention of Marxist ideas and debates into that recomposition.

The first option makes sense only if we believe that one of the small groups has, through some peculiar inspiration, already acquired for itself all the essential political and theoretical ideas needed to make a Marxist party, and needs only to be clever and energetic enough in popularising itself. (And in that case, why wouldn't it have achieved absolute dominance on the left already?)

You complain that the DSP proposal could collapse the Alliance into a "revolutionary party", or alternatively into a "broad party", not revolutionary enough, whereas it should be sustained as an "electoral united front". But it is politically false to see Chinese walls separating those three categories, "electoral united front", "broad party", and "revolutionary party".

Electoral agitation, which is aimed at the broadest audience and should therefore be limited to a few, simple, clear-cut ideas, is properly a lot simpler and cruder than the general writing and speaking of a socialist organisation, much of which is aimed at narrower audiences (active trade unionists; trade unionists in struggle; campaign activists; etc.) One-off "electoral united fronts" may be possible with all sorts of people.

But, fundamentally, consistent socialists cannot have one set of politics for the activists, and another for the broader working-class electorate. If we put one set of politics to the voters, then, to be true to ourselves, we must be active for those politics outside election time too. Unless we are to appear as, and be, ordinary bourgeois-electoralist hypocrites, then the politics of our activity outside election times must be defended by us at election time too. A consistent "electoral united front", maintained over a solid stretch of time during which it must define itself in relation to wars, strikes, and political crises, can only be a party.

You want the Alliance to be a "home for those looking for a left alternative to Labor"? Excellent. What sort of home? One where the housemates discuss the

issues freely and equally, and progressively acquire clearer collective politics? Or one where the new residents, the disillusioned Laborites, are allowed into the kitchen only on special (electoral?) occasions, and otherwise have to stay in their rooms and entertain themselves while the real "revolutionaries" run things?

Broad party

About a "broad party", you write that "*because* [our emphasis] such a party should not, and would not, be a revolutionary party, it would need to afford clear and permanent platform rights for revolutionary currents such as ourselves". By what logic can we say a broad party *should* not be revolutionary? Of what class-struggle test can we say that the party *should* fail it? That we would not even *try* to convince the broad party to take an independent working-class stand? Which war would we want the "broad party" not to oppose, which workers' struggle would we want it not to support, which socialist principle would we want it to flout? Of course the struggle to make such a "broad party" revolutionary should be waged not by futile administrative coups (packing the appropriate meetings and voting through a decision to be "revolutionary" over the heads of the uncomprehending or aggrieved members) but by convincing the members in broad and open debate. But it should be waged.

Of course that struggle requires democracy, including platform rights for different factions. But democracy is not something wanted just "because the party is not revolutionary". A party, or group, cannot dispense with the need for democracy just by declaring itself "revolutionary". How can it remain "revolutionary" in response to new challenges? What is its mechanism for getting back on course if its leadership, previously "revolutionary", proves less-than-revolutionary in some new situation?

Revolutionary party

A revolutionary party is defined as revolutionary not by a desire (however sincere) to lead a revolution at some unknown time in the future, nor indeed by any one-off decision. It is defined as revolutionary by its constant striving to respond in a revolutionary way — that is, according to the logic of the class struggle, with the maximum of active, independent, working-class initiative — to daily politics. Any real socialist organisation is "revolutionary" not as a fixed state of being, but only as a measure of some success in that striving.

And the revolutionary organisation reaches the level of being a party, a real party, only when it gets beyond the stage of being an ideological grouping (which we are all at now) and organises a decisive contingent of the most militant workers, the leaders of struggle in the workplaces and the communities. To be a real party it must be "broad" as well as "revolutionary".

Underpinning your feelings here, it seems, is the assumption that the normal and natural condition on the left is to have a small "revolutionary party" ("revolutionary" by fixed self-proclamation, and

therefore not needing to allow any "platform rights" or large space for dispute inside its ranks) on one side, and various "broad" groupings and "united fronts" on the other with which the "revolutionary party" may or may not involve itself depending on its assessment of "moods" and the "gate receipts" to be got. It is an assumption which impoverishes your politics.

Explaining your turn to the Socialist Alliance at your "Marxism 2001" weekend school, David Glanz recalled Engels' idea of the class struggle being on three fronts, economic, ideological, and political. The ISO, he said, had long been active on the economic and ideological fronts. By turning to the Socialist Alliance it was taking up the political front, too.

Essentially he was right. To turn back the old pre-Alliance ways would be to impoverish your activity - to reduce it to a combination of immediate struggle-cheering ("smash" this, "stop" that, etc.) and abstract preaching ("one solution, revolution").

In comradeship,
Workers' Liberty

Victoria Trade Union Solidarity Committee

Simon Millar (with the author's permission reprinted from a Socialist Alliance Bulletin)

Thirty eight trade unionists attended the first meeting of the Trade Union Solidarity Committee at Trades Hall on Tuesday 19th of November. This committee has been set up by the Socialist Alliance but is open to all unionists interested in building and supporting militant unionism in Victoria. The topic for the meeting was 'building rank & file unionism' and Tom O'Lincoln spoke on the Militant Minority Movement established in the 1930's by the Communist Party of Australia. He was then followed by Steve Roach who spoke on his experiences in building the breakaway Shearers' and Rural Workers Union.

The history of the Militant minority Movement is not well known but invaluable in showing socialists what is possible when a socialist party makes a conscious and long-term effort to organise within the trade union movement. For a detailed account of this movement both Tom O'Lincoln and Paul True have written pamphlets. If you want a copy e-mail me and I can arrange to send you a photocopied version.

Steve Roach gave a brief history of the AWU and the early shearers' union providing the background to the formation of the breakaway Shearers' and Rural Workers Union. He emphasised the crucial importance of rank and file organisation and control over trade unions and highlighted a number of key disputes that were won by the rank and file refusing to be sold out by their officials.

Maureen Murphy spoke on the aims and objectives of the committee and handed out a flyer that detailed the projected educational and organisational tasks for the committee. We had a very interesting discussion with people raising the particular problems they face in their workplace. There was also a debate on questions of the sociological nature of the trade union bureaucracy, the dangers of taking leadership positions in the unions and the question of how to raise political demands in the trade union movement. Also the key question of organising the unemployed was raised as well as how to work effectively within existing trade union campaigns even if they are limited.

It was an excellent first step, as one of the organisers I know there were many apologies and many more trade unionists willing to come to future meetings. The unity brought about by the establishment of the Socialist Alliance has created the possibility of uniting a significant layer militant trade unionists. We also see the committee as providing the organisational framework from which to reach out and connect with, win over and organise wide layers of workers. The committee I believe has the real potential to not only develop better organization and politically unity amongst both socialist and non socialist trade union militants, it will also provide a crucial stepping stone to revolutionary politics and socialism.

Militant minority

The key to the committee's success will be in its ability to attract and involve militant workers outside Socialist Alliances membership combined with winning fresh layers of workers to militant unionism and in time socialism. The committee will need to develop a broad platform and be open to both labour party, anarchist, green and independent unionists. It will also need to in time attract unorganised and unemployed workers. For this to happen the committee must not degenerate into a talk shop it must be constantly outward looking, practical and inclusive.

One of the lessons of the Militant Minority Movement was the key role of publications. They produced a paper called Red Leader and many job bulletins for each union, which were written and distributed by rank & file militants. While it would be foolish to try and simply replicate the Militant Minority Movement the committee is having a discussion on Sunday 24th of November at the Resistance Centre 5th Floor Druid House 407 Swanston St opposite RMIT at 1pm on establishing a trade union bulletin for the committee.

We are in the very early stages of organising ourselves but I am excited at the nature of the work ahead of us. Thus far we have a contact and e-mail list will over 200 names. For the committee to work the current organising committee, which is open to volunteers, will need to be expanded. It really needs a core of ten or so trade union activists who are prepared to prioritise building the committee. We plan to have monthly meetings of the committee and monthly meetings of the organising committee. Also a key part of our work will be the individual caucuses, discussion groups, rank & file groups (whatever is

appropriate for the particular union) that will provide the avenue for united action within each union.

We have to make the group accessible to workers by having realistic intervals between meetings, keeping meetings as short as possible, avoiding jargon, sectarian behaviour and tying theoretical debate to practical issues. The key work now facing the committee is to find key activists in each union who are prepared to organise fellow committee members into an appropriate grouping. These union specific groups will then need to develop a collective understanding of the politics of their union and the key issues confronting the membership. These groups may become the embryos of a broad rank & file group or a caucus within an existing rank & file group.

Once these union specific groups have developed a perspective (this will grow and develop over time) then the committee meetings will become the forum for report backs. Through discussions at both the general and organising meetings the union specific groups will be able to draw on the committee as whole for help with their work. Also the bulletin will play a key role in reporting the activities and political perspectives of each of the union specific groups. The committee is a loose organization which will aim to reach decisions by consensus, due to the many different political perspectives. It would be destructive at this stage to try and dictate the policy and practice of committee members. Democracy, friendly collaboration and agreement on very broad principles is all we need to establish working unity.

Education

The other key aspect of the committee's work will be education. We plan to launch the monthly meetings with an educational topic. My suggestion for the first major meeting next year will be to organise a well-spoken academic to give a lecture on the history of Australian trade unionism. Topics such as this should appeal to a broad range of trade unionists and hopefully inspire new workers to become more involved in the organisational side of the committee.

None of what I have said is set in stone it is just my current vision of how I broadly see the committee working. The above work will also need to be supplemented with Public Meeting's called over a key issues that have arisen, picket line solidarity work, trade union rallies, 3CR radio work and an end of year trade union conference.

While we are not in a period of mass discontent and strikes amongst the organised and unorganised working class I believe the conditions are well and truly ripe for establishing a militant heart in the Victorian trade union movement. For the committee to be successful it must not be a flash in the pan it will take years of consistent work to build. It will provide the best forum based on practical day-to-day activity from which to deepen both our influence and understanding of the Victorian trade union movement. It will also hopefully train up and steel significant numbers of trade union activists and future leaders embedded in the trade unions so that when

there is an upsurge in struggle, workers will flock to our banner. Also theoretical differences can be thrashed out in the real world of practice and not the void that currently exists. I also hope that similar committees are established in all other states so we can operate in the future on a national level.

I urge all the socialists out there who have been frustrated at the socialist movement's isolation from the working class, who want to see the world-shattering ideas of Marxism and socialism once again stir the hearts of millions of workers, to embrace this project and make it a reality. As we know only the working class can end capitalism in conjunction with revolutionary organization and ideas.

If you wish to be involved in the Victorian Trade Union Solidarity Committee please contact Simon Millar on 03 9386 5917 samillar@optusnet.com.au or Richard Lane on 03 9387 7819 or 0400 877 818

Forum

Towards a rural policy for the Socialist Alliance in the NSW 2003 state elections

Initiated by Lynn Smith. Developed with input from Sue Bolton and Liz MacNamara.

Preamble

The Socialist Alliance should have a rural policy that benefits both rural workers and the rural middle class i.e. small farmers, small shopkeepers, self employed professionals, sub-contractors etc.

Politically

Workers and the petit bourgeois have a common enemy: big farmers and big business. Big business exploits workers and is out to bankrupt small business people e.g. small farmers, small shopkeepers, contractors, small-scale fishermen, owner/drivers, self-employed tradespeople. Small business people are under constant pressure to either go into hock to the banks, or get bigger, or sell out to large enterprises, or go bust. Struggles by workers against big business (and the state forces the capitalist class uses to try and crush these struggles) can be more effective if petit bourgeois elements are won over to the workers' side. Examples:

In the Mount Isa miners' strike during the late 1800s police were brought in from Brisbane to protect scabs. When policemen went to the local shops to buy food, the shopkeepers refused to sell to them.

During the MUA lockout on the docks in '98, both the metalworkers' union (AMWU) and the Maritime Union of Australia were approached by members of the

Union of Farmers who said they "opposed the bully boy tactics of the National Farmers Federation" (the group of mainly wealthy farmers which employed scabs to do wharfies' jobs during the lockout).

A group of East Gippsland dairy farmers organised a barbecue for the picketing waterfront workers at the Melbourne docks during the above dispute.

If the working class does NOT succeed in winning a significant number of small business people to its side in times of relative class peace (such as we are experiencing now), when a crisis erupts we will have left the way clear for the capitalist class to organise demoralised petit bourgeois and lumpen elements into fascist gangs. All you have to do is look at Germany in the 1930s, the New Guard in Australia in the 1930s and Chile in '72-73 to see what can happen.

Class fluidity in country areas is greater than that in large cities. People who are wage workers and members of trade unions right now could well be self-employed next month, then become wage workers again next year. When factories, steel mills, mines, railway yards, docks, canning works etc. close down, workers have to find other ways to survive. So they become sub-contractors, or taxi drivers or buy a milk run or a corner store until something better turns up. One of the main reasons why the ALP gained the impetus to move outside the cities and become a nation-wide party in the late 1800s is because of the support of the Australian Workers Union. Many of the militant members of the AWU were shearers. And what did many shearers do when the season was over? Go back to their small farms. They did not earn enough from their properties to support their families right through the year, so they became part-time unionists.

Organisationally

At the recent NSW State Conference of the Socialist Alliance, we were informed that the SA currently has 160 members in NSW who live in areas away from branches.

These members (who are in their ones and twos) can hardly be expected to produce leaflets and campaign on local issues, especially if we do not have a SA candidate standing for the Lower House in their electorate.

If we had a rural policy that applied to all country areas in NSW and produced material centrally on this, at least we would be giving our more isolated members something relevant to campaign around in regard to our Upper House candidates.

Some policy thought starters

1. Food production, packaging, manufacture and distribution:

Small farmers need a living income. Workers in the city and the country need clean, nutritious, tasty foods at affordable prices. At the moment small farmers, trucking companies, food packing and processing companies and consumers are being dictated to by the large supermarket chains e.g. Woolworths, Coles-Myer etc. Small farmers are forced to sell under the cost of production.

Owner/drivers who transport produce to market barely make a living. Working-class families find they have to pay more every time they wheel a trolley of food to the supermarket checkout. Yet the dominant supermarket chains are raking in massive profits.

WE SAY:

- nationalise the large supermarket chains and place them under the control of small farmers, supermarket workers and consumers;
- re-regulate milk production and distribution. Re-establish milk co-operatives on a democratic basis i.e. one member, one vote (rather than a vote based on the amount of land owned) and only farmers who work the land be allowed as members;
- take the various primary production marketing boards out of private hands and place them under the control of producers' and workers' committees;
- introduce a guaranteed minimum income for small farmers.

Banking and finance

Australia's banks are now all privately owned. In the name of making fabulous profits for their shareholders, banks are closing branches in smaller towns, foreclosing on small farmers in difficulty and sacking bank workers in the thousands. These banks always favour big business when it comes to lending money for upgrading services.

WE SAY:

- nationalise the major banks and finance companies and place them under the control of committees of workers, customers and small business people;
- open bank branches in every community that needs one;
- defend the jobs of bank workers;
- provide low interest, long term loans to small farmers and small business people to help them buy equipment that will improve productivity.

Other policy ideas for rural areas which need to be worked up:

- extend and upgrade public transport, especially country rail links. Low freight rates for bulk agricultural produce, stock feed, farm equipment etc.
- prevent the privatisation of utilities e.g. electricity, gas, water;
- phase out farming on environmentally-fragile land and national parks. Set up a rural relocation scheme that assists small farmers to move to more productive rural areas or to the city, without a reduction in their living standards;
- improve and expand recreational, health and support services for young people in country areas, especially gay, lesbian and indigenous young people;
- renationalise all of Telstra, nationalise Optus and Vodaphone and place these phone giants under the control of workers' and consumers' committees;

- protect small business from rapacious landlords e.g. via long term fixed rentals;
- long-term casual workers to enjoy the same conditions as full-time workers e.g. to be paid sick pay, holiday pay, long service leave etc.
- encourage more workers to be union delegates by giving them paid time off work to travel around and organise in their areas;
- expand the public housing sector in regional centres;
- retrain for real jobs on full pay those workers made redundant e.g. timber workers, fisheries workers etc.

'Farm hand'- the myth of the struggling farmer

Bryan Sketchley and Melissa White

Over recent months, public donations have been sought to help farmers in drought-ravished areas, and corporate Australia has got behind the so-called 'Farm Hand' appeal. We've seen full-page advertisements in the newspapers, slick TV ads, and a televised concert all encouraging us to tap into an Australian spirit and 'help our country cousins'. Yet the appeal isn't as benevolent as it first seems.

In October, the ABC's "Media Watch" show revealed that one of the major drivers behind 'Farm Hand' is Telstra. Telstra is in the middle of trying to convince the Government, and the rest of Australia, that its management of rural communication services is up to scratch, and that it in fact cares at all about the most unprofitable section of its national clientele. Of course, there has been significant disquiet in rural areas for some time about the level of service that rural customers receive from Telstra, but if Telstra can help smooth the waters in country areas, and be seen generally to be the corporate good guys by supporting drought relief programs, then the likelihood of country folks supporting the full sale of Telstra is likely to increase. In essence, Telstra is throwing public money at a small lobby group for its own corporate interests.

The politics of drought relief has a similar long and sordid history in this country. That very small — but very powerful — farming and grazing interest groups have such a hold on domestic politics is unsurprising. Yet to look at the history of these interest groups, it would not be difficult to label them colloquially as 'bludgers', eternally whining about conditions of life on the land, seeking handouts from the Government through the working taxpayer, and blaming anyone but themselves for their current plight.

Given the regularity of droughts and floods in Australia, it would not seem unreasonable to expect primary producers to prepare and plan for such

occurrences, or for primary production to be brought under total nationalisation, in good times and bad. Instead, in good years, with high yields and good prices, farmers often will invest in coastal units, new cars, overseas trips or expensive private boarding school education for their children. When the bad years hit, we witness the current spectacle of primary producers wanting all types of assistance. This sits oddly with Australian mythology about the 'man on the land', being self-reliant and self-made — the very same sentimental mythology that is rolled out of the shed during the tough times and used to mobilise sympathy and monetary donations.

Farm Handouts

In actual fact, nothing could be further from the truth. At every turn, primary producers have sought assistance (often financial) from city dwellers, and frequently the working class. From the moment that pastoral industry came into existence on this the driest continent on the planet, pastoralists and graziers have freeloaded off others. Cheap and often unpaid Aboriginal labour helped many large holdings get off the ground, and convict labour settled the farms. When international prices for produce drop, the Government is often implored to buy the produce at higher prices off the farmer. All manner of subsidies are given to primary producers. And, of course, when droughts hit, the hands are stretched out again, until the rain arrives, at which time flood relief cheques are sought. When the High Court ruled in favour of the Wik people after the ending the fiction of *terra nullus* through the Mabo case, setting right at least some of gross injustice perpetrated against Aboriginal people dispossessed from their land, rural leaders rushed for Government intervention to secure their leases, when there was absolutely no genuine material threat to the ownership arrangement: their private control over and use of the land.

There are a number of things that make the current pleading for financial assistance particularly odorous. Firstly, a farmer-friendly Government has governed us for the past six years (not unlike Malcolm Fraser's infamous cabinet, that at one point comprised twelve graziers of the eighteen cabinet positions), where concessions on top of handouts have been given to primary producers, while at the same time public services have been run down or privatised, education funding has been slashed, the unemployed mercilessly hounded, the public sector starved of funds. Yet now the farmers are asking 'ordinary Australians' to assist them. By that they mean working-class folks with bills and mortgages and commitments of their own to see to, whose taxes have been diverted in no small measure for the past six years towards the ruling class and rich and powerful interest groups, and away from public spending. The handouts primary producers have sought will ensure the propping up of inefficient and uncompetitive rural practices, at least on the small farms. However, if the small farmers co-operated with other farmers in their regions and put an end to the ridiculous and unnecessary duplication of heavy agricultural industrial machinery, then certainly part of the problem would be solved.

Clearly, anyone attempting to plan against such natural disasters is not given an entirely blank slate from which to start. Deforestation, gullying and salinity are the widespread results of the domination of short-term, profit-driven thinking over long-term sustainable conclusions, and have left their deadly marks all over the land. They reveal the inability of the present social and economic order to provide real solutions to the maintenance of a rural economy, one that is not crisis-driven and shunted from one climate emergency to the next. Unfortunately, it is only exceptional individual farmers who are organised against the harmful practices, who utilise the natural water courses of the land, who plant more trees on their properties etc. But planting more trees is like putting a band-aid over a gaping head wound. Instead, a total reorganisation of farming methods is required, and small farmers are best positioned to do this since they are best able to work in the structures of the farmers' co-operative.

On the big farms, the farmers complain otherwise. The withdrawal of government subsidies in the form of tariffs and quotas have left them highly competitive i.e. highly productive compared to US or EU farmers, who are highly subsidized. And so the Australian farmer is highly 'productive' but uncompetitive, even on the 'level playing field' that the international regulatory monitors of world trade (namely, the World Trade Organisation) purport to set in place. They say that they have been left to face this 'unfair' competition. The WTO will also eventually get around to forcing the abolition of the various centralised marketing bodies like the Wool Corp. If they do do this, however, there will be no reason to cry. The point for us is to make sure that this money which presently goes into propping up farming and grazing is redirected into funds to be used for public services: housing, transport, schools and universities, hospitals, more jobs with better money and conditions (whether urban or rural), lots of public concerts and events of general public interest.

The nature of grazing in Australia means that for the most part farmers are often asset rich and, in good years, they reap rich dividends. External conditions over which no one has control will periodically affect their income, be it a drought, a flood, or a drop in world prices. And nobody denies that these external conditions are particularly harsh in the wide, brown land. However, the history of farming in Australia is the farmer being helped over those difficult periods with government handouts, and this Government pays for those rural handouts by slashing public funding in health care, in education, in aged care, in public infrastructure.

Rural blacklegs

Farmers' organisations, particularly the National Farmers Federation, have spared no effort in recent years to assist the government in attacking union-won conditions. In the first week of the 1998 waterfront dispute, the NFF pledged \$100 million to help break union control of the wharves. This money paid for the secret training of ex-army strikebreakers and scabs far away offshore in the United Arab Emirates. This was exposed in the media in the

course of the dispute, much to the disgrace of the NFF, and the newly-trained blacklegs were secreted home by the Government as quickly as possible, never used on the wharves. In the late 1980s, the NFF funded other employer organisations to fight a protracted battle over working conditions in the meat industry. Money is there in the NFF whenever the class battle is waged, but apparently that money is not now available to assist their members in times of need. The hypocritical NFF should assist its own members financially and technically instead of acting as the bouncers for the Federal Government, trying to break the working class when the farmers' product is "inconveniently held up" on the wharves during industrial struggle.

Farmers' and graziers' position in society is entirely different to that of the urban worker, and farmers recognize that. Why else would they actively support and encourage the Government to attack the conditions of 'ordinary Australians'? Farmers and graziers are self-employed, often with a staff of workers at their properties, and usually have significant assets on their properties. Know anyone that owns or leases tens or hundreds of thousands of hectares of property? Even the small farmers are in an entirely different position from the workers in cities who are self-employed, the sub-contractors, the shopkeepers and the like. Their urban cousins receive little in the way of public funding for assistance when times are tough. Is the local shopkeeper get any special treatment for their defaulting on their bank loans when the giant Coles or Woolworths moves in next door? Absolutely not. It is those redirections of public funds to farmers, both large and small, that at the end of the day contribute only to farmers' personal wealth, to *their* stake in the social product, and not the benefit of society, and certainly not the working class.

Farming in Australia is grossly inefficient. Part of that has to do with the natural conditions in which we live. But that is not the whole of the story by a long shot. And the solution to that isn't constantly throwing cash from either the Governments coffers or by appealing to 'ordinary folks' to keep bankrolling farmers when things get tough. Socialists argue that a complete and total reorganisation of farming methods in Australia is needed. The first phase of that would be to nationalise primary production under workers' control. Then rational decisions will be made about farming methods, and public funds be expended for public good, not simply to placate an already rich and powerful lobby group.

The interests of working people lay not in digging deep to help out rich pastoralists, who receive a myriad of handouts already at the expense of public services, the sick and elderly, the unemployed and lowly paid, those seeking serviceable educational facilities. Don't let the corrupt 'hired gun' media agents for Telstra — the brainless Alan Joneses and John Lawses — tug on your 'Australian' heartstrings. Keep your money, take out a subscription to our magazine, or at least treat yourself to something nice!

Gender identity and sexuality

One struggle, one fight

Riki Lane

Including transsexuals in the struggle against oppression based on sexuality has long been accepted (for the most part) in Australia, unlike in the UK. The "gay press" explicitly orients to the GLBT (Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender — and now GLBTI — Intersex, or often "queer") community. Most of those who complain about the trannies and drag queens etc. are those who want to settle in to a comfortable middle class, two income, no kids existence — to merge into society and happily vote Liberal or even One Nation, their homosexuality nothing to remark on. The trannies make that difficult because they implicitly question the whole masculine/feminine schema.

To separate out gender identity from sexuality is a very difficult process that results in all sorts of problems. Separatist feminists have denied entry to meetings by both male to female (MTF) and female to male (FTM) gatherings. At times butch women have been asked to prove their femaleness to gain entry. Right-wing feminists (like Andrea Dworkin, Catherine McKinnon and Sheila Jeffries), who ally themselves with Christian morals crusaders to censor pornography and make prostitution illegal, also target transsexuals as "men invading women's space" and as part of the problem of patriarchal oppression.

Historically, homosexuals were often seen as adopting the other gender identity. Today, there is enormous playing with gender by people with a same sex orientation — drag queens and kings, butch and femme lesbians, ultra-masculine and feminine gay men.

Transsexuals — who identify their gender identity as different to their sexual anatomy — may or may not wish to alter their bodies with hormones or surgery. 'Transgender' covers a wider field of people who do not fit into the usual dualistic masculine/feminine schema. Intersex people are those born with, or who develop, genitalia and secondary sexual characteristics that have some features of both male and female. The number of intersex people can be seen as very large depending on your definition — many men have substantial breasts for example, while many women do not.

Many people who have gender identity questions also have sexuality questions and vice versa. There is a clear community of interest between those who fight oppression on the basis of sexuality and of gender identity.

Transsexual people face enormous discrimination and oppression. Generally regarded as freaks, those who go "full time" almost always lose their jobs and find it hard to get employment outside of the sex and entertainment industries. Recent law reform in various Australian states has given legal recognition to trannies, but that is a long way from gaining real liberation.

The medical hoops that transsexuals have to leap through impose a 1950s version of gender identity, e.g. MTFs have to live for two years "appropriately" as women — wearing makeup and dresses, being passive, orienting sexually to men etc. Many people lie about much of this in order to get through. Most transsexual people have had bisexual experiences, certainly before their operations and often after. There are quite a few MTF lesbian feminists about.

Many, perhaps most MTF transsexuals try to merge into straight society after their operation and live as unobtrusive heterosexual people. However, a significant minority remain gender rebels. Intersex people in Western societies have usually faced genital mutilation at birth as they are assigned a gender. The criteria for this assignment is at times as crude as how long the clitoris/penis is. This has led to many tragedies as people have grown up feeling more comfortable with the other gender to the one they have been assigned. They also often have repeated operation throughout childhood in order to maintain the created genitalia. These often leave scarring that makes sex painful.

I find it sad and ironic that many activists in Western societies protest about female genital mutilation in other cultures (which we of course oppose strongly), but ignore the culturally acceptable genital mutilation of intersex children. There is also a huge schism between culturally acceptable and unacceptable surgical and hormonal alterations to the body. Men who take steroids to approach an image of masculinity, women who engage in cosmetic surgery to make their bodies closer to an image of femininity, or who take steroids for birth control or other reasons — these are widely accepted, although questioned by feminists. Men who take steroids to grow breasts, who have surgery to alter their genitalia towards the feminine image, women who have surgery to remove their breasts, who take steroids to lower their voice and masculinise their bodies — these are freaks.

We have to be careful to avoid both hard social constructionist and biological determinist arguments. It is not that there is some fixed biological essence to which social construction is added as a simple ideological overlay. Formation of gender identity is a complex process where biological differences are given meaning in a social and cultural context.

Althusser interpreted Marx to say that human nature was completely socially constructed — that biology had no role at all. Stalinists also tend to agree with this — hence the Maoist program to create a "new man". Most Marxists think this is crap. Marx had a view that there is a biologically given human nature, but that this is altered through historical development.

So the act of eating is completely different when you are

- a) tearing raw meat from the bone of an animal you have just killed,
- b) sitting down to fillet mignon at a French restaurant.

The same argument applies to sexuality and gender identity, which are arguably the most culturally invested forms of human behaviour.

Marxist writers are not noted for their sophistication in describing gender development. De Beauvoir, Mitchell etc. used Marxist tools to some extent. "Transgender Warriors", by Leslie Feinberg, (an FTM trans woman who is a member of the Workers' World Party) is very useful, but not a deep analysis.

Writers such as Nancy Chodorow (using an object relation Freudian approach) argued for a model where exclusive mothering by women reproduces masculine and feminine personality types. More recent writers such as Judith Butler (queen of queer theory), Elizabeth Grosz, and Anne Fausto-Stirling (Professor of Biology and Women's Studies — whose recent book, "Sexing the Body", is extremely useful) question the sex/gender distinction and argue that culture "inscribes" the body.

Rather than seeing biological sex as of two completely distinct types, with some freaks in the middle, Fausto-Stirling argues that we have a continuum from male to female that is highly dimorphic; that is, biased towards either end.

What our bodies are, how they differ sexually is clearly important, but it is the social and cultural processes that give those differences meaning. That is where our politics and activity can have an impact. We have to fight for a society where all bodies are accepted — male, female, inbetween, surgically/hormonally altered, differently abled, black, white etc. Within that struggle for human liberation, the struggles for liberation from oppression based on sexuality and gender identity are inextricably linked.

Reason in revolt

The Workers' Liberty journal re-launched; Vol. 2 No. 3, "The new world disorder: war and imperialism"

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Queensland

The Gully bulldozed: Development runs unchecked in Brisbane

Bryan Sketchley & Melissa White

At the end of a dry gully...

In early November, behind a phalanx of police and a scrum of media, bulldozers began clearing one of the last pieces of inner city bushland in Brisbane. This piece of bushland was in essence no more than scrub, of low environmental value, but it was a very nice local catchment area running all the way down from the hill to the Brisbane River, replete with nice big trees, and with a cute bridge that linked the lower side of West End to the higher side of Highgate Hill which you could cut through on foot to visit friends and avoid the main road, Dornoch Tce. It had taken nearly twenty years of struggle on the part of developers to get their machinery onto the three hectare block known as 'the gully', but the last days of the gully's existence were never going to be ceded lightly by local residents and activists.

The gully was a small piece of bushland that for a number of reasons had never been developed. The land had been zoned for development more than twenty years ago, but local residents had lobbied the local Council to buy the land and retain it in its original state for future generations. The fact that the land was owned but never developed by Pioneer Concrete since the 1950s meant that we all developed the expectation that the land would be ours, WAS ours, and we could keep it. But successive Council administrations refused to buy the land. Residents and activists tied the developer up for years in environmental court hearings, issuing piecemeal challenges to Council's zoning approval and development leases. There were small victories along the way. The developer's original proposal for placing 89 houses on the block was whittled down over time to an approval for a mere 29 dwellings.

Over the past twelve months it became obvious that the manoeuvring to save the gully had reached its end as a strategy. Lobbying of the Council and the State Government to buy back the land became more frantic. Neither State Government nor Council (both are ALP administrations) supported any bid to save the land and turn it over to the public in perpetuity.

Opposition grows

As the fateful day for work to start on the site got closer, activists and residents actively prepared to hinder the start of the work. The first scheduled day of work saw 200 people rally on site, with a dozen

folks spread throughout the gully camped high in trees. The direct action techniques were utterly impressive, but should not be revealed in detail here in case they are required for future action. Nevertheless, they involved elevating people twenty-five metres into the air into the tops of trees that could not be climbed in the dead of night. Other techniques involved hiding down drains and 'locking on' to machinery or bits and pieces in the undergrowth.

The first couple of days saw little work undertaken, as up to 100 police tried to clear the site of protestors, who rather got in the way of bulldozers. On the third day, work began in real earnest. The developers and police had lost patience and had little concern for workplace safety on the site. The unsafe work went ahead, but now under police jurisdiction. A legal challenge was issued to the Queensland Police Service for this cover the police were providing when one of the protestors was savaged by a security guard's Rottweiler one night and had to be hospitalised. Trees were felled, the land was grubbed. In their haste to clear the land a falling tree fell on the police, injuring two officers.

Union action

On that third day, a socialist intervention took place. A meeting was held on site and a delegation dispatched in the morning to put pressure for help on the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Engineering union. The delegation was able to convince the union that there were serious workplace health and safety conditions being breached and that the union should consider investigating the matter. CFMEU organisers arrived on site and in a couple of hours managed to achieve what years of frantic and well meaning but ultimately ineffective campaigning had failed to do – stop the destruction of the gully. CFMEU organisers managed to speak to their members working on site and persuade them to stop work for the day, so that safety issues could be addressed. The next day's work didn't start until after lunch, because of similar union concerns.

Activists and residents were heartened, to say the least. Breathing space! There was a window of opportunity to again try and persuade local Council and State Government to devise a plan to buy back the land. Further delegations were quickly dispatched to the Lord Mayor Jim Soorley's office and the office of the local ALP State member, Anna Bligh. All approaches by the residents were rebuked. Demurral, stalling, cancellation of meetings.

It seemed to many that the battle was over once work resumed. Yet for a brief period, in an illuminating and breakthrough moment, residents and activists realised the power of organised labor to wield its clout for the common good. For a period of just over twenty-four hours, WE were in charge. Once the CFMEU got the workers to stop work, the developer left. The police left. We all went into the gully to feed and water our activists high up in the trees and tell them what had just happened (they couldn't hear from so high up). Then at night, a large contingent of people set up a camp at the bottom of the gully, and

other activists set up in trees. We reclaimed the place. Against the might of State and Council Governments, a small army of police, editorial writers and the environment court, and at an oblique angle running beyond the well-intentioned and courageous activists that had battled long and hard in trying conditions, the appeal to unionists and the principle of solidarity between workers and the neighbourhood won the day and halted the destruction. Temporary victory!

In other times, various unions have taken principled stands on saving places of value for the public, and refused to allow their members to work on such sites. We were inspired by green bans in particular. However, we also realised the limitations of work bans during the gully dispute. The only grounds on which we could ask the CFMEU to halt the work on the gully were those of industrial health and safety, appealing to the definition of a 'worksites'. Yet, we had wanted them to stop the work on the grounds that we just didn't WANT the gully destroyed. It was nice, and we wanted to keep it. There's a giant chasm between the single-issue technicalities, such as industrial safety, and the social conscience that the union movement in Australia should come to embody. The ambivalent nature of trade unions — subjects of capitalism as far as they are directed to do the types of work a capitalist economy requires, and organisations of working-class unity and independence — is extremely frustrating.

Currently the CFMEU has bans on work in environmentally sensitive areas in coastal Victoria. Some unions have rightly recognised that whilst winning better pay and conditions is important for its members, without protecting and defending areas of social and community importance there is little value in winning better conditions without also defending those spaces to enjoy life outside of work. Issues of community space, social justice and peace have been union issues in the past, and need to be put on the agenda again of all progressive unions.

	<i>'For the millions, not the millionaires'</i>
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Argentina

Working-class democracy comes to life

Janet Burstall

In the year since the popular uprising brought down five Argentine governments in a few weeks, self-organisation has become the most militant form of resistance to the Government, and to the desperate poverty of the unemployed, and the threat of unemployment facing the employed.

Unemployed workers had already been organising as 'piqueteros', picketing to demand jobs and support. During the December uprising, neighbourhood assemblies were formed. Then on February 16, thousands of workers, unemployed, and members of the popular assemblies, met in the Plaza de Mayo square in the capital, Buenos Aires. This was the beginning of the National Assembly of Workers (employed and unemployed). The day after, two thousand elected delegates met, representing unemployed workers' organisations from all over the country, but also local trade union branches, groups of workers' in struggle, neighbourhood popular assemblies, etc. (Martorell)

Also formed in February was the National Movement of Enterprises Reclaimed by the Workers (MNER), with representation from over 100 bankrupt companies where 10,000 workers are in control of production.

This self-organisation has the potential to create an alternative power to the government and the ruling capitalist class of Argentina. For the moment it is struggling with the many divisions that have plagued the Argentine working class, and is not yet collectively committed to the goal of taking power for itself.

The activities of the various forms of self-organisation exemplify the democratic and mobilising basis for revolution from below.

Neighbourhood Assemblies

The neighbourhood assemblies are not specifically working class, many of them are in less poverty stricken neighbourhoods. Nevertheless they are important. Ernesto Herrera of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International conveyed the intensity of their activity in March.

"Nobody sleeps anymore. The Neighborhood, Village, or Popular Assemblies—however they are described—take place at night and have become generalized. Thousands of people communicate, listen, deliberate, and propose, in hundreds and

hundreds of meetings. They organize the protests and demonstrations of the week.

Every Sunday, in the Centenario Park of Argentina's capital city, the "inter-neighborhood" coordination of the Assemblies of Buenos Aires takes place — the *Asamblea Interbarrial*. Here the young, the unemployed, the working, the swindled savers, pensioners, women, children come together, as well as the militants of the left organisations, who must hang up their party flags and handle the questions wisely. But the political weight of the left's presence does not go unnoticed, in particular the diverse Trotskyist organisations (PO, MST, MAS, PTS), the Communist Party, and the *Corriente Clasista Combativa* (in which the Maoists of the PCR predominate).

The assemblies are built in opposition to the "multi-sectoral dialogue" proposed by the Government and the Catholic Church, with the support of the trade union bureaucracies of the two CGTs [the Peronist-dominated central workers' federations]. What is at stake, however, is not only the rejection of this manoeuvre from above for "discussing the problems of the country." It is true that there is an instinctive feeling of opposition to "politics" (mainly against the disguised corruption of politics), but the deputy Luis Zamora (of *Autonomía y Libertad*) can take part in meetings, marches, and *cacerolazos* [pot-banging demonstrations] without being insulted or regarded with distrust. Moreover, this power from below is developing a consciousness "for itself" and a movement where anti-neo-liberal and anti-capitalist demands are advanced.

What began as a movement of indignation at the "financial corralito" ("little ranch" or "playpen") and for the dismissal of the infamous Supreme Court of Justice, is advancing in the direction of a true transitional program.

Demands adopted by the Inter-Neighborhood Assembly of Buenos Aires include: non-payment of the foreign debt; breaking with the IMF; rejection of the Free Trade Area of the Americas; against dollarisation and for a South American currency; nationalization of the banks; renationalisation of privatized public companies; taxes on speculative financial capital; suspension of all dismissals; immediate food and medical assistance to the unemployed; creation of a million jobs; unemployment benefit of 380 dollars a month; annulment of the law on "labor flexibility"; elimination of the tax of 13% on wages and pensions; suspension of the cuts for nonpayment of public service charges; one to one weighting of all debts and credits; immediate return of the money of the small savers; distribution of the indebted companies to the people; increased budgets in education and health; free and public education at all levels; cuts in military and police expenditure; judgment and punishment of those responsible for repression; reduction of the pay and privileges of politicians.

To the general demand "that they should all go, that not a single one should be left" (referring to the

political leaders and governing Peronists, Radicals, and Frepaso), is now added the slogan of a "Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly" and above all the demand for "five representatives of the Popular Assemblies in the Congress" (for the discussion of the national budget)."

Factory occupations and workers' control

National Movement of Enterprises Reclaimed by the Workers (MNER) now has 10,000 workers in control. This is absolutely necessary. In Argentina more than half the population of 37 million is below the poverty line and 34% of the workforce is unemployed or underemployed.

Workplaces that have been taken over include a tractor factory, metallurgical factories, print shops, recycling plants, textile and clothing factories, a supermarket, a medical clinic, a meatpacking plant, a pizzeria, a mine in Patagonia and a Buenos Aires shipyard.

Typically the seizures begin with a struggle to prevent the owners from removing plant and equipment, either by picketing or, more effectively, occupation. In some cases police have tried to remove the occupiers. For example "in March, some 200 people from neighbourhood assemblies and human-rights groups converged on the occupied Brukman textile factory in Buenos Aires, forcing the retreat of 70 federal police who were acting on a judge's order to reclaim the property." "Many workers chose to live for weeks in the factories, guarding the machinery and the raw materials to keep the former owners from stripping the factories bare. Many also saw their places of work surrounded by the police, a constant threat to their efforts to resume production." (Dafne Sabanes Plou) Neighbourhood assemblies formed during the December 2001 protests that brought down the Argentine government joined with the occupying workers to save many occupations which have been threatened by the police

The occupiers have campaigned for provincial and national legislatures to provide legal recognition. There have been a variety of results, ranging from joint stock companies, Government-sanctioned leasing arrangements and co-operatives, through to full expropriation and state ownership.

"Some worker-controlled factories...are seeking further government intervention. Led by the nearly 300 workers at the Zanon ceramic factory in the Patagonian province of Neuquen, these workers have refused to form co-operatives, demanding instead that the factories be expropriated and held in state ownership with worker control."(Lindsay)

"Seventeen factories have been expropriated in the province of Buenos Aires and in recent months three in the capital. Legislators in both the province and the city are drafting bills that would create a government agency to assist in the formation of co-operatives and streamline the process of expropriating bankrupt companies in order to hand them over to the workers."

Once the workers gain control of the enterprises they operate with, typical measures of workers' control begin. "As in most of the factories, the Union and Force Co-operative has established an egalitarian pay scale. Decisions are made by direct vote in regularly-held assemblies and each worker earns the same wage, based on that week's profits."(Lindsay) Profits are freed up when they are not going to the owner, and there is no need for managerial and administrative staff to earn higher pay.

Some factories are very successful and paying higher wages and taking on more workers, while others are struggling for economic viability and workers are working not only harder but longer hours. (Lindsay)

National Conference

The First National Conference of Plants and Factories Occupied and In Struggle was held in August at the occupied Grissinopoli factory. The Conference of 800 was organised by:

the Bloque Piquetero Nacional (National Picketeers Bloc) and the Movimiento Independiente de Jubilados y Desocupados (Independent Movement of Pensioners and Unemployed).

Delegates represented Transportes del Oeste (transport workers), de Supermercados Tigre de Rosario (supermarket), de Metrovas (subway), de Editorial Perfil (publishing house / printers), de Clinica Junn de Crdoba (clinic), de Mineros de Ro Turbio (coal miners), de petroleros de Chubut (oil workers), together with more than 130 trade unions and shop steward committees, as well as 35 Popular Assemblies.

Reports of this conference do not refer to the National Movement of Enterprises Reclaimed by the Workers (MNER) formed earlier in the year. The occupying workers on some of the factories are calling on the unemployed and piqueteros organisations to allow the factory workers, as leaders of the struggles, to host subsequent conferences.

The various national conferences and assemblies of neighbourhoods, occupying workers, the unemployed and workers' delegates are called, but sometimes aborted due to disagreement about who should call them or host them, on what basis.

A central concern for advocates of workers' power is that the vast majority of the trade unionised workers in Argentina belongs to the Peronist CGT, the leaders of which are hostile to this self-organisation. They prefer to reach an accommodation with the Government. A route will have to be found to involve large sections of the industrial working class in self-organisation order to create the power base needed to challenge the rulers.

Constituent Assembly

Another issue which is producing divisions on the left is the call for a Constituent Assembly, made by some of the popular assemblies. The Argentine supporters of the Militant tendency were counter-posing a general strike to a Constituent Assembly earlier in 2002.

Some discussion of the progress of the movement is recorded on the Marxmail discussion list. Néstor Miguel Gorojovsky comments:

"The actual importance of the movement is that out of the crisis of Argentinean capitalism rises a movement whereby workers discover that they don't need to establish the fetishized relationship with the product of their labour necessarily implied in the worker-boss schema. Thus, workers aren't "better capitalists than the capitalists". Simply they work harder - and with far greater joy - when they are not alienated from the product of their own toil, and they do it more efficiently because the division of labor and the hierarchical order is broken inside the plant: an accounts clerk can act as a janitor, or a manager can help in loading trucks with the products.

- Anyway, the movement should advance towards the understanding that the same methods that are applied - usually with support from the State, the capitalist state, by the way - to individual plants and firms must be applied to the whole State and the nation.

- The question of State power remains as the core of the issue. If this is not understood, then the recovered plants movement will not step ahead far further. At best, what these factories will become is a group of industrial kibbutzim where there is no surplus value extraction *within the factory* but which will be completely subsumed in the laws of motion of capitalism immediately after product leaves the gates, or even before, when the inputs are purchased.

- Some possible ways out of this Hobsonian situation might include production agreements between recovered plants, which are taking place already, so that they don't compete with each other. This would be some form of "workers' cartels", reaping the advantages of monopoly or quasi monopoly in a competitive market.

But if this is not generalized to the economy as a whole (and, again, this can only be achieved through the struggle for State power) these movements would only push back the laws of motion of capitalism but would not be eliminating them."

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European Social Forum

Anti-corporate globalisation: where to from here?

*After the recent Florence European Social Forum, Michaela Collins, in London, asks: **where do we go from here?***

At the centre of the ESF was the million-person march against the War on Iraq. This sums up both the problems and the potential of the Social Forums.

It's impossible not to be moved and inspired by that mass of humanity. The section I marched with was overwhelmingly proletarian and political. They have resisted overwhelming media manipulation and intimidation. In Italy, Berlusconi effectively owns both the state and the media. They have held onto a vision of another world being possible.

But how do you organise that million (and others back home) into an effective force for bringing that alternative world into being? It was a massive show of opposition, but will it have any effect whatever? George W. Bush certainly doesn't seem to have noticed.

Arguably, it is the power of these movements to work imperceptibly but inexorably, through a thousand channels, shifting consciousness by minute degrees, that is their strength. That is the idea espoused by some of the ESF organisers and underlies the theory of "cross-contamination" of Rifondazione, who were substantially responsible for mobilising for both the Forum and the demo. But that idea comes up against the problem of every spontaneist, non-hierarchical movement — what is to be done about organisation, and the fact that the absence of formal structures does not guarantee against invisible hierarchies.

The march was followed on the Sunday by an Assembly which was to point the future direction for the ESF. Thousands of activists listened to rally-type speeches from pre-selected speakers. Presumably these were chosen at the mobilising meetings held in various European cities leading up to the Forum. The organisation behind the Forum was anything but transparent. Noticeably, the speakers from England were all from the SWP in their Globalise Resistance or Stop the War Coalition, hats. The English mobilisation meetings had been SWP-dominated, as had the English "delegation" to the European mobilising meetings.

The domination of the various countries' mobilisations by one particular group belies the

rhetoric of the Social Forums being about movements rather than parties. The decision that the Forums be non-deliberative again covertly favours certain strands of opinion against others. "Broad consensus" politics can exclude radical, working-class, Marxist or minority views on that basis that we don't want to alienate the "middle ground". The final declaration, for example, nowhere explicitly indicted capitalism, though I'm pretty sure the majority of participants see themselves as anti-capitalist. There is no sense of "how" another world will come into being; nor any more explicit recognition that capitalism may resist our resistance.

World Social Forum

Talking to people who had been at both the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and the European Social Forum, they reckoned the European event was more political, more open to class politics. Certainly, there were vast numbers of union banners on the demo (mainly CGIL and COBAS, the radical union federations, and those unions had organised a general strike earlier in the year. The basis does exist for a united European working-class movement that can begin to articulate its own alternative to capitalism. Part of the anti-party feeling derives from disgust at the record of the traditional workers' parties ("socialist", "social democratic" and "communist"). They have run governments, either alone or in coalition with explicitly capitalist parties, which have consistently put the interests of capital over those of the workers who elected them. The disgust is understandable, but it can lead to anti-democratic practices which ultimately put the movement in the hands of softer variants of those same interests, who will hope to use the moral weight of the Social Forums as a bargaining lever to mitigate the worst effects of capitalism without fundamentally challenging the system.

The working class has had to re-invent democracy every time it goes into struggle. If Social Forums are to be built in each country, the first thing that must happen is that they are built on the basis of genuine democracy, not covert domination by one particular group. They need to be actively engaged in building the alternative world which we believe is possible, through working-class solidarity.

Some unions, notably in transport, have begun building real international links. These need to be extended at every level. If the fire fighters' dispute continues, this could be a first show of the ESF's ability to mobilise international workers' solidarity. One of the suggestions to come out of the No Sweat workshop was for International Women's Day next year to be declared a Day of Solidarity with Women in Sweatshops. This would seem to be a positive way that "cross-contamination" can work practically between the labour movement, women's and anti-sweatshop campaigns.

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

UK firefighters

Strike: a test for Blair and the for UK labour movement

A victory for the FBU will be a victory for all workers

Jill Mountford

“The anger in the fire service is greater than ever”, said Geoff Ellis, Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Campaigns Organiser, on 21 November. “The Government are just playing games with us”.

After hours of negotiations, an insulting four per cent was all the employers could come up with on 21 November — not a penny more than was on the table weeks before the dispute started. All the hype about a 16% pay offer from the employers has turned to dust. They backed down when the Government said it would concede not a penny more. They offered four per cent and then 12% in installments, conditional on the employers getting their way on “modernisation”. In substance, it was four percent, not 16%.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and his Chancellor, Gordon Brown, look set to take this dispute as far as they can in order to cut short the emerging revival of trade-union confidence. If that means risking life, they don't care. At least there'll be no misunderstanding about who's boss. Yet, for the moment, the Government is fighting this position from a more isolated position. Public support for the firefighters has risen from around 46% to 54%. Even the armed forces of the state are giving Blair the cold shoulder.

Army tops resist scabbing

So we have a supposedly Labour Prime Minister and his Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, threatening to use troops to break picket lines and take equipment out of the fire stations — and a pillar of the capitalist Establishment, Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, Chief of Defence Staff, refusing to consider such action. Boyce warned that the 19,000 troops on standby in the firefighters' dispute are already overstretched and demoralised. Just hours after the Government press-released US President George W. Bush's formal request for British participation in his war in Iraq, Boyce stressed that he was “extremely concerned” about trying to use the army to fight two wars at once, one against firefighters in this country and one in Iraq.

Defence minister, Geoff Hoon, said that police would be used instead of troops to break the picket lines — but the Association of Chief Police Officers has said that he would not ask police to do that. We should

not think that the army and the police are above class battles. When it comes down to it, the top brass will always be on the bosses' side. But for the moment, they may not be prepared to do Blair's dirty work for him in this strike. And that makes our side that bit stronger.

The Government may tighten the screw and force the police or the army into action. Or they may resort to another part of the unelected machine of government — the courts — getting the strike ruled illegal. They may claim that by standing up for decent wages and conditions the union is taking the side of “terrorism” in George W. Bush's “war against terrorism”.

Whatever they do, the FBU deserves the support and solidarity of the whole working class. With that solidarity, the FBU can win. And a victory for the FBU will open the door for millions of other workers, in the public services and outside, to demand and win decent pay. Already London teachers will be striking on 26 November.

Fireys resolute

Since their first strike, on 13-14 November, the mood among firefighters has become more resolute. They see the modernisation issue for what it is. Every union is always prepared to talk about making the job more “modern”. But what the Government wants, under the name “modernisation”, is something very old-fashioned: cuts in jobs and services, and attacks on conditions of work designed not only to save money but also to undermine the FBU. Few firefighters want to sell out their working conditions for a few extra pounds.

On 13-14 November, firefighters on picket lines all over the country were talking about this being a long dispute and a political dispute, one in which Blair is out to wreck the FBU. But they were confident. “We're expecting a long fight about our pay. We have prepared for a long fight. Firefighters with kids were doing their Christmas shopping back in August. We've sorted out our mortgages. We're digging in for a decent pay rise”, said one firefighter at Euston Fire Station, in London, during that strike.

Brown and Blair will not let a reasonable deal be negotiated for the firefighters because they know that a win for the FBU will be a green light for every low-paid worker in the public sector — health service, education, council workers, civil servants — and outside too. They know that they can't please everyone. They can't please both the bosses, the rich and big business on one side, and the working class on the other side. With the world-market outlook gloomy, they know they will have to be sacrifices, and they want the working class to make them.

Firefighters, hospital workers, council workers — we are all the same to Blair and Brown, voting fodder every four or five years, contributors through our trade unions to the Labour Party's funds, but we should not expect anything in return.

For five years they have been able to get away with that attitude. Maybe no longer. FBU support groups

are gaining momentum. Collections in workplaces and on the streets are showing there is public support. Tube workers who refused to work in the unsafe conditions created by lack of fire service cover brought three lines of the London Underground almost to a halt in the 13-14 November strike.

- Back the firefighters!
- Build labour-movement support groups!
- Link the struggles of different unions!
- Check the fire risks in every workplace: refuse to work during FBU strikes where they are high, demand extra precautions everywhere.
- Prepare for solidarity action if the Government uses troops, police or the courts against the FBU.

Refuse orders to scab!

An appeal to serving soldiers

Sean Matgamna

Firefighters are on strike for a decent living wage. The Government has deliberately provoked the strike. It stepped in to prevent a settlement between employers and the firefighters.

Why? Because they want to smash the FBU and thereby crush growing trade union militancy. The firefighters are being used as scapegoats.

They have cast you, soldier, in the role of strikebreaking scab in this strike. You are to do their dirty work against the firefighters.

They tell you that their concern is to save lives. But if that were their concern, then they would not choose to make the firefighters a test case in which to prove how tough they, the friends of big business and the rich, can be against the working class.

As far as they are concerned, this is a political strike. They want to do to the firefighters what Margaret Thatcher did to the miners in the 1980s.

Some of you come from areas of Britain, the former steel and coal districts, where the lives of a generation of working-class people have been blighted as a result of the defeat of that labour movement by the Thatcherites. Over many decades the labour movement won most of what is good and decent in Britain. When the labour movement was defeated — remember the miners! — all working-class people felt the bad effects.

The New Labour government is a Tory government - Tory values, Tory priorities, a hard-faced Tory determination to beat down workers who get uppity.

They may ask you to smash through picket lines of firefighters, many of whom are ex-services, to take out the red fire engines. Maybe they will have police try to smash through the picket lines, and then expect

you to work the red fire engines they bring out. Don't do it! They have no right to order you to scab against working-class people. When they give you such orders, don't obey them. Stand by your class!

A precedent is worth remembering. When engineers struck work in 1944, during World War 2, there was a great outcry in the Tory press, who claimed that the strikers were stabbing British soldiers in the back. A few people were jailed.

The British Eighth Army — the men who had beaten Rommel's Afrika Korps and fought their way up through Sicily — held a meeting in Alexandria, Egypt, and, after debating the issue, passed a resolution insisting that the right to strike was one of the fundamental rights that separated Britain from Nazi Germany. They backed the right of the engineers to strike in Britain. They told the 1944 equivalent of today's Sun where to stick its witch-hunt against the workers.

Today this government of the rich, for the rich, by the rich, keeps on the statute book the Tory anti-union laws passed in the 1980s which outlaw solidarity strike action — that is, in many cases, outlaws effective trade unionism.

Don't be their tool against the firefighters!
Don't scab!

Refuse all orders to break the picket lines!
Stand by your class!

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Book reviews

The Hegel-Marx Connection,

edited by Tony Burns and Ian Fraser,
Macmillan Press.

Reviewed by Melissa White

The Hegel-Marx Connection is a diverse collection of essays that, as a whole, attempts to evaluate the claim that there is a significant philosophical correspondence between Hegel's and Marx's philosophy. This claim is certainly not new, and most Marxists grow up with the maxim in their heads, popularised by Plekhanov, that the categorical basis of Marxism is just to be summarised as a 'corrected blend' of Hegel's dialectical method, French materialism and utopian socialism. However, the claim that there is a correspondence between Hegel and Marx is rather in tatters after two events in the world of philosophy: the anti-essentialist yet pro-existentialist Marxist afflatus that swept through universities known as structuralism; and the more recent project, not unconnected with the outcomes of structuralism, to 'epistemologise' Hegel (i.e. to try to pretend that all of Hegel's claims in his works were really claims about knowledge and not claims about reality). The book seeks to assess the full influence of Hegel's thought upon Marx on a fresh basis, to explain the full extent of the Hegelian impulse in Marx's own thought, without the annoying interference of the view that the Hegel in Marx's thought is an optional coat of paint that might be peeled off. It should thus be made clear that the book presupposes Hegel's strong influence on Marx.

The book contains some prescient insights. In one of the better essays in the book, Joseph McCarney argues how the discipline known as critical theory, which emerged out of Marxism, and which had initially radical intentions to refute the Hegelian view that history needs no positing subject (for Marxists, the working class), has now contributed to the terrible situation in analytic moral philosophy in which Marxism is seen as one competing normative moral theory amongst others. This view annoys me no end, so it was most satisfying to see McCarney sticking it to the analytic moral philosophers. We see the liberatory content of critical theory (Marxism extending into cultural areas) and the dead weight of it (failure to identify the revolutionary subject) in McCarney's ideas. In another essay, Terrell Carver presents the reader with a fair-minded argument that when Marx talks of the self-expanding nature of capital he is running out Hegel's discussion of 'the finite'.

On the negative side, I found the editors' introductory essay a pretty unsophisticated statement of the overall direction of this line of enquiry of Hegel's connection with Marx in Marxist thought. For example, I have been trying to find out more about a

matter of basic importance for Hegelian Marxists: what they make of Bernstein's critique of the law of value. No answers here and, I suspect, no real understanding of how Engels tried to defeat Bernstein's critique by generalising the historical validity of the law of value. What do people make of Engels' efforts to defend the law of value? I'm still in the complete dark. And Tony Burns makes a valiant but weak attempt in another of the essays to expunge metaphysics from Marx having seen them expelled from Hegel in other recent studies. However, metaphysics can not be so easily done away with in Marx, despite how Tony Burns (or the Moor) might have hated to hear anyone say that. If things such as value are to be more than 'ways of describing' in Marx, it will be necessary to resort to metaphysical hypotheses.

It is true that the essays are divergent, full of different opinions about Hegel's role in Marx's thought. But what is good about this is that together, perhaps by sheer weight, they counteract one legacy of structuralism, namely, the abolition of essences, despite the valuable contribution it otherwise gave philosophy, expunging moral interpretations from Marx's writings.

Democracy Against Capitalism

by Ellen Meiksins Wood, Cambridge, 1995

Reviewed by Clive Bradley

Ellen Meiksins Wood (EMW from now on) is one of the most trenchant Marxist critics of 'post-modernism' and all its associated nonsense, she is an important thinker, and all her work I've read is readable and stimulating. I intend to focus on one of her most important books, "Democracy Against Capitalism". I'll try to summarise the argument, suggest some problematic areas, and conclude with some comments about how her argument relates to proposals for a 'federal republic'.

Inevitably, as a summary, what I say here will be crude, but I hope not false. The first part of the book is essentially about two things, one of which relates to the argument in the second half about democracy, the second less so. Capitalism, EMW argues, is a unique social system because it revolutionises the means of production in way that no previous society did (or indeed, previous modes of production may have 'petrified' them). It is also unique in the separation it creates between 'economic' and 'political' spheres. Pre-capitalist class societies require, for the extraction of surplus from the direct producers, 'extra economic' means, such as the direct coercive power of the state. Capitalism, on the other hand, is based on the apparent formal equality of bourgeois and proletarian: surplus value is

extracted through the hidden mechanism of the exchange of labour power for wages (whereas a serf can see and touch the 'surplus' handed over to the lord). From this different form of surplus extraction comes the separate spheres of economics and politics in capitalism. EMW sees this as basic to the 'critique of capitalism', and of course it is.

The other argument is less relevant to the overall discussion here, so I'll deal with it only briefly. Essentially, it is a detailed defence of the historical theory of EP Thompson (against Anderson and Althusserians), or at least of her own take on his work. This concerns the limited use of the 'base/superstructure' metaphor, the failings of technological determinism, and Thompson's dynamic and historical conception of 'class' (of an English working class that was 'present at its own making') against 'structuralist' concepts. There's one aspect of all this which is relevant to our debate, so I'll come back to it later; otherwise, I'll leave that there – except to say that I agree with EMW.

Democracy

The most original and interesting part of the book is an extended study of the difference between 'democracy' as it was understood and existed in ancient Athens, and as it has developed in the modern capitalist world. In classical Athens, democracy meant, literally, rule by the 'demos', the people – directly through a popular assembly of citizens. EMW contests the idea that Athens was, primarily, a 'slave mode of production'. There were slaves; but the dominant form of production was peasant and artisan, and these citizens were, collectively, the state. The Athenian 'polis' was, therefore, a unique historical phenomenon, in that there was no extra-economic coercion in the extraction of surplus: there was a complete fusion of the direct producers and the state.

Modern 'democracy' traces its lineage through Magna Carta, 1688, and so on – and EMW points how instructive this historical orthodoxy is: rather than popular movements from below (Diggers, Chartists, etc), modern democratic institutions are seen as the product of the historical victories of lords over the monarchy, of property owners against the people. Even the American constitution is based on a radically different concept of democracy to the ancient Athenian one. 'Representative' democracy would have been alien to an Athenian; but it is central to modern 'democracy', and the core of the idea is to take power away from the 'demos', to separate out those with political power from the masses (and, from the outset, to define 'representatives' as 'social betters'). Where Athenian democracy was the fusion of the citizen and the state (and economics and politics), modern democracy is, in a sense, the opposite. If the essential feature of capitalism is the separation of politics and economy, its democratic forms echo this perfectly – the formal legal equalities of modern democracy by definition don't touch the inequalities of social and economic power.

In the western tradition, democracy has been reduced to 'liberalism' – to the parliamentary system,

and to legal individual rights. But 'liberal democracy' is not 'democracy' in its original and literal meaning at all. The left needs to assert this proper meaning of democracy – direct popular power – against capitalism. Capitalism can accommodate a range of liberal rights and 'freedoms' (even racial and sexual emancipation, EMW argues, at least in principle); but it cannot accommodate democracy, properly understood, at all.

There is much that is interesting and persuasive in her account. In this framework, the struggle for democracy is not simply a parallel, still less subordinate, aspect of some more properly socialist struggle, or just campaigns for this or that civil liberty, but essential and central to the socialist project. Meiksin Wood admits that she raises more questions than she answers; I want to explore a few possible questions.

She does not, of course, argue against 'representative' democracy. But she does not address the obvious objection to any attempt to use ancient Athens as any sort of model, inspiration (or even merely suggestive historical point of departure), which is that the Athenian polis was rather small and unpopulated compared to a modern state. Delegation is a necessary function of any modern democratic system. I don't think she would deny this; but the precise political relevance of the Athenian model is never spelled out – and since the whole question of democracy is at least in some regard a debate about institutional forms, this seems an odd omission.

Workers' Councils

It relates to the second odd omission, which is that there is no discussion of the substantial Marxist literature on alternative democratic state forms, from Marx on the Paris Commune, through Lenin's 'State and Revolution', to the wide range of historical examples of workers' council type bodies (including, for example, Hungary in 1956, and Poland in 1980). Such historical examples put some flesh on the bones of any discussion about democracy, surely. Moreover, they raise interesting and important questions – strategic questions (like, just to take one more or less at random: the Hungarian revolution formed workers' councils, but it also demanded a parliament. What is the relationship between these demands – how should socialists relate to them? Is the Bolshevik approach to the Constituent Assembly a model, or not? Etc)

The distinction EMW makes between 'liberalism' and 'democracy' is, for sure, a valid and suggestive one. Another of her books, 'The Origin of Capitalism' (she covers some of the argument in the first half of this one, too), goes in more detail into the question of the 'bourgeois democratic revolution'. But I think she makes too much of the anti-democratic content of modern 'democracy' beginning with the American war of independence, which, she argues, crucially 'redefined' democracy so as not to mean popular rule. For sure, the bourgeois advocates of democracy, in America and shortly afterwards in France, wanted freedom, fundamentally, for themselves, freedom to trade, freedom for non-

'feudal' property, rights for themselves not simply divinely-appointed kings and aristocrats, etc. But I think the democratic impulse was stronger than this implies.

Western capitalist civilisation emerged in a period in which this democratic impulse was at work at all levels of society. In a profound sense, the whole of the Enlightenment and the rise of modern science, beginning with Copernicus through to Darwin, was a democratising process – undermining the entrenched powers of the older society, redefining humanity's place in the universe and establishing 'reason' as the overriding principle, from which flowed the preoccupation with the 'rights of man', and so on. The French revolution, animated by these ideals, whatever the limitations of its ideology regarding 'democracy' and 'freedom', unleashed this democratising impulse across Europe – from universal suffrage to the emancipation of the Jews to the very idea of the republic.

EMW is right, I'm sure, that it's significant that these revolutionaries saw the Roman republic as their model, not Athenian democracy. But these democratic notions informed the new, explicitly socialist and communist movements which emerged in the wake of the French revolution. It is surely significant that these movements emerged then – in the context of the Enlightenment and the French revolution – and not before. Marxism itself, in all sorts of ways, is the inheritor of this democratic tradition.

It was, of course, a tradition shot through with contradictions. Kenan Malik, in his interesting book 'The Meaning of Race', traces how the Enlightenment project of human equality faced the contradiction of class inequality. Its solution, he argues, was the concept of 'race'. Initially, race was used to describe lower classes, and only later became identified with skin colour. On the basis of this, scientific racism emerged, justifying the biological inferiority of 'races'. Key to Malik's argument, though, and it seems to me he's right, is that you can't understand this process – understand the contradictions which propelled it – unless you understand the genuinely democratic, egalitarian aspect to the 'Enlightenment project' in the first place. Of course it is true that the bourgeoisie, from very early on if not the outset, had an ambiguous and contradictory relationship to the democratic impulse which revolutions bring with them. But the communist movement emerged from the historical processes thus unleashed.

Marxism and democracy

What distinguished Marx from the start of being a 'Marxist' was the merging of the young working-class and communist movement with the traditions of revolutionary democracy, and we should beware of cutting Marxism adrift from this historical background. Almost immediately – straight after the 1848 revolutions, or even after June 1848 in Paris – Marx and Engels recognised the undemocratic role of the bourgeoisie. But the principles and demands which were animating the revolutions themselves, including the working class and broadly 'plebian' components,

were properly democratic, even if they were not on the Athenian model. EMW's critique of the redefined democracy of the modern era seems to me to ignore this, to reduce the modern meaning of 'democracy' to its most 'right-wing' and anti-democratic versions.

The more general argument, though, that a thoroughgoing democracy which means more than just parliamentary government, and involves genuine social control, is utterly incompatible with capitalism, and so at its deepest level capitalism is an undemocratic system – all that is important, and cogently put. I wonder, however, exactly what it's got to do with the debate we have been having about the 'federal republic' and the more general struggle for democracy.

Plainly, what attracts EMW to ancient Athens is its character as a citizen-state; that the direct producers (peasants and artisans) themselves exercised political power (and that in terms of political power, were equal to larger landowners). Its 'literal' democracy is in contrast to the separation of 'citizen' from real social power under capitalism. Her argument is fundamentally about the different forms of democracy which would be needed to exercise power in a socialist society – it's an argument about abolishing the distinction between politics and economics, about the popular exercise of power over the whole of society. In capitalism, she argues, the economy is itself a form of political coercion (because the market rules us). Human liberation means freeing ourselves from this form of rule.

She is, of course, also in favour of the defence and extension of democracy in a more limited and everyday sense; but her fundamental argument is, in a sense, a way of talking about socialism, not a programme for a different constitutional arrangement under capitalism. A debate about a 'federal republic' (with or without quotes from Marx and Lenin) inhabits a different conceptual universe from the one in this book.

In sum: there are some stimulating ideas in this book, though it begs equally stimulating questions. Her argument about the two traditions ('two souls'?) of democracy is distinct and original, though the more general critique of capitalism (the separation of 'economic' and 'political') is only recapitulating familiar ideas no less important for that, of course.

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The New Crusade: America's war on terrorism

by **Rahul
Majajan, 2002, New York, Monthly
Review Press.**

Reviewed by R.F.Price

In this short (148 pages of text) book, the author sets out to answer three main questions: what measure of truth is there in the version of events and their causes and consequences that is conveyed by the US government and the mainstream media?; what is the larger historical context in which the war on terrorism can be understood and assessed?; and what can we expect to happen next, now that the military conquest of Afghanistan has been completed? These questions arise from Mahajan's belief that it is crucial to understand the world we live in, and "what the United States has done to make it so" [p.8].

The book is divided into three parts: The War On Terrorism — Myth And Reality; The New White Man's Burden; and New Directions In The War On Terrorism. Among the myths disseminated by the US propaganda machine and which Mahajan dissects are: "They hate us for our freedoms" and "You're with us or you're with the terrorists"

One of many trenchant sections is entitled "The United States as Imperial Power" [101-05]. While this theme underlies most of the book, it is here that Mahajan cites an earlier official document, the State Department Policy Study 23 of 1948. There Kennan was surprisingly candid, admitting that "The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better" [p.102]. In the event, the US government has preferred to resort to deception, talking of "democracy" and "human rights" in circumstances which had been the very reverse. Mahajan shows that duplicity [p.38] has been backed by three full-scale wars {Korea, Vietnam and Iraq} and smaller ones in Grenada, Panama, Serbia and Afghanistan, together with military support for suppression of popular movements in Greece, the Philippines and many countries in Latin America. As well as millions killed directly, further millions have died as a direct result of "enforced impoverishment so that U.S. corporations could increase their profits" [p.104].

Unlike so much of the "academic Left", Mahajan is not content to describe events. In a number of places, he makes clear recommendations for ways of combating "the terrorism of the weak", terrorism which he clearly shows is a reaction to "the terrorism of the powerful". Measures include an end to the sanctions on Iraq; an end of US military and other support for Israel; demilitarization of the Gulf region;

and an end to CIA training of extremist groups [pp.97 & 139].

I would only question two points in this excellent book. One is Mahajan's optimistic comparison with the period of the Cold War. Walden Bello seems to me nearer the mark when he suggests that the measures taken by the Bush regime to curb individual and organisational freedoms (especially of foreigners) "would have turned Joe McCarthy green with envy"! The other point is Mahajan's section on "Assessing Humanitarian Intent: Making Africa safe for the AIDS Virus" [pp.107-09]. Here he concentrates on the exorbitant price the drug companies charge for the needed drugs. But an even greater indictment of the international medical-pharmaceutical complex could be made were he (and the rest of the Left) to take a closer look at the HIV/AIDS hypothesis.

To conclude, this book is suffused with a deep humanism and understanding of genuine democracy. The first expresses itself in Mahajan's condemnation of US weaponry, ranging from the nuclear weapons the US dropped on Japan in spite of military advice that they were not needed to end the war [pp.14-15], to the cluster bombs which have scattered lethal bomblets in Kuwait, Iraq, Kosovo and Afghanistan [p.46]. He draws attention to the dangers of bacterial and toxic weapons, including those designed to destroy vegetation and deprive humans of their livelihood and ruin their environment [p.142]. His vision of democracy shows, among other places, in his discussion of the role and structure of the United Nations Organisation and its highly undemocratic Security Council.

Film review

Santa Clause 2

Janet Burstall

At the North Pole, one of Santa's elves, Curtis, discovers that Clause 2 in Santa's contract says Santa must marry by midnight on Christmas Eve, or else lose his magic powers and cease being Santa. Further complications arise when Santa's son (who lives in a town in the USA) is caught spray-painting the gym (film rating in NSW might need revising, since it depicts an under 18-year old with a spray can!) by the school principal.

Santa is torn between work and family matters, as befits a modern father. So he is easily persuaded when Curtis offers to manufacture Santa's double in the form of an intelligent toy.

The best bits of the film will provide starters for political discussions with kids.

Toy Santa reads the Santa rule book and takes it literally, which real Santa didn't do. Toy Santa insists that the list of naughty children must be checked and

the children on it must receive lumps of black coal in their stockings. The elf workforce (a couple of hundred mainly primary school-aged children) are horrified. Toy Santa becomes increasingly dictatorial in the Art Nouveau and once joyfully post-Fordist toy factory. He enlarges a toy soldier from which he manufactures a menacing army. Then in military uniform himself, Santa declares that ALL children are naughty and there will be NO presents, only black coal for Christmas.

One real life character comes to mind. Of course the whole premise of the film is unbelievable, but the obvious fantasy elements are tongue in cheek,

played for laughs, containing some wit and enjoyable allusions. What is weak about the film is its typical American schmalziness and predictability, where personal pain is resolved with such simplicity and sentimentality.

If only George W. Bush and his army could be defeated as easily as Toy Santa is. The elves go out to rebel *en masse*, when their leader, the real Santa, returns, at the 23rd hour of Christmas Eve. They break up the toy soldier army, while real Santa deals with Toy Santa. I guess some of us are more prone than others to rely on simple fantasy.

Socialism From Below

A discussion series sponsored by Workers' Liberty Sydney

We have examined the Hal Draper's pamphlet "The Two Souls of Socialism" and the first extract from his 4 Volume work "Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution"

What the Marxist Internet Archive has to say about Hal Draper:

*"From 1932 until his death in 1990, Hal Draper was a prolific Marxist writer and a socialist activist. In the 50s, a time of general collapse and demoralization in the American left, Draper edited the weekly **Labor Action**, a political journal widely read in Europe as well as the United States because of its uncompromising rejection of the American consensus which did not depend on accepting that other form of despair – the slavish defense of "real existing socialism" as the only alternative. It was not possible, of course, to remain in opposition to the "real existing crap" of both sides of the Cold War without rethinking the history of the movement. Draper's 4-volume **Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution** is his principal achievement in this regard."* (<http://www.marxists.org/>)



Third self-contained session: Vol.2, Chap.2 "Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution"

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For a workers' government in NSW [continued from back page]:

We should be explaining that a workers' government would take a stand on the side of people who have to work for a living, and will stand up to the wealthy elite. It would take up a fight with the Federal Government to replace the GST with a progressive tax system, in order to fund the public services we need. It would be able to protect the environment because it will stand with the community against developers and industry. It would guarantee union rights and civil liberties, and obstruct the federal government from implementing any anti-union, anti-civil liberties and anti-refugee laws, and from making war on Iraq. A workers' government would abolish state secrets, commercial secrets and use full openness in public policy as the way to collective security against threats of violence. It would provide a convincing alternative to the hysteria of fear created by repressive government policies, and make irrelevant those who try to scapegoat and demonise small sections of the community.

The many policy problems that a workers' government would have to solve would be dealt with on the principle of collective solidarity, public ownership and democratic control of the resources and production needed to provide for a good standard of living for all.

Unlike Labor governments, a workers' government would recognise that the power and privileges of the wealthy investors must be challenged and their monopoly of production be ended by a government that is serious about meeting the needs of the majority.

Unlike the Greens a workers' government would recognise that class divisions are at the heart of the problems in our society, and that it is only by organising together in solidarity against capitalist interests that we can win a better world.

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For a workers' government in NSW

Janet Burstall

NSW State elections will be held in March 2002 and the Socialist Alliance will be standing candidates.

If the Victorian election in November, and the Cunningham by-election in October are any indication, then the Greens in NSW can be expecting to get more than 20% of the vote in some seats in the NSW election next year. A significant proportion of the Greens vote is from disillusioned Labor voters. According to Phillip Adams, ABC broadcaster, a number of very senior ALP office bearers have confessed to him that they voted Green, not Labor in the last Federal election.

The Socialist Alliance set out specifically to capture the votes of Labor supporters who felt betrayed. Within the Alliance, the International Socialists, in particular, have argued for limiting the platform of the Alliance to a set of specific reform demands that represent the issues on which they think that traditional Labor voters feel strongly.

This perspective is not winning great gains for the Alliance, at least partly because the Greens are winning that vote.

Even if not for the Greens though, the SA election platforms have not inspired a sense of a new possibility in political representation and election campaigning.

Being the best organisers of street marches and protest actions does not make the SA relevant in an election. We have to reach voters far beyond those who endorse demonstrations and protests as a necessary means to win social change. In any case the SA is not connecting protests to a governmental aim. Most importantly the SA is not giving a coherent explanation for how a government would be able to implement these policies, so they are not persuasive.

'For the millions, not the millionaires' is a SA slogan, but not specifically for government. If it were, it would be vague and populist – i.e. avoiding the difference between the potential power of the working class, versus the undifferentiated "people" in general. The SA needs to campaign on a much clearer message that we are for a government that is for the working class and against the interests of capital.

It is true that "class" has become an unfashionable concept, and that the majority seems to understand "working class" to mean men in blue singlets doing hot and dirty physical work. It is also true the nature of work has changed over recent decades, but this means that the nature of the working class has changed so that many working-class people do not identify themselves as such. If there is any one single point on which socialists should be able to agree, surely it must be that it is our job to try to raise class consciousness, a sense of common interest and solidarity amongst working-class people.

Our election campaigns will not do this, and will not reach working-class people until we are clear that that is our purpose. We will not be the convincing answer to Labor unless we explicitly say that we aim to be what Labor has failed to be, the voice of working-class struggle, always on the side of the working class.

We cannot challenge the Greens on a platform of reforms alone. The Greens are in a much stronger position to propose and vote for reforms in parliament than we are.

Workers' Liberty is advocating that the SA should run in the NSW election on a platform that is clearly for a workers' government.

The SA campaign focus for the NSW state elections should be for a workers' government in NSW.
[continued on page 27]