

Workers' Liberty



The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself ISSN 1446-0165

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**No to Bush, Blair, Howard!
No to Saddam!**

STOP WORK TO STOP THE WAR

Inside:

Editorial: Stop work to stop the war

Follow the lead of Western Australian unions: Unions taking action against the war

Socialist Alliance:

- Victorian Trade Union Solidarity Committee
- Sydney Branch anti-war discussion

Diversity in Safe Communities: Rally to stop the Blackshirts

Unionism and contract work in private English colleges

Queensland: Beattie to slash public service jobs

China: Free the Liaoyang workers under threat of death sentences

Defend workers in Hong Kong

Where we stand

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

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

The trade unions are the product of long struggles by the working class for the right to build their own organisations to protect them from the arrogant power of the bosses. They remain the major organisations of the working class, the major vehicles of class struggle. There is no short-term prospect of them being replaced by new organisations. Since we believe 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

Once again, the US prepares to unleash the horror of war to ensure the interests of big capital. Once again, an Australian government follows along slavishly. But also once again, a powerful movement is developing to oppose that war.

The anti-war movement has got off to a much earlier start than the movement against the Vietnam War. Already we are able to arrange street marches of many thousands. These protests are an important part of building the movement of opposition. However, in themselves, they will not stop Australian involvement in the war. Howard can resist very large protests. He ignored the huge reconciliation marches. But Howard has staked his credibility on this war. In order to achieve the object of stopping the war we would have to try to make the ruling class fear that society could become ungovernable. To put it another way, the working-class movement and its allies would need to make prosecution of the war too costly.

In the movement against the Vietnam War, unions played a big part. We need to learn from that experience and adopt one of the main mobilising slogans "Stop work to stop the war". Unionists everywhere should learn from the example of the West Australian Trades and Labor Council, which has taken the lead in proposing industrial action in the event of war (see *Unions against the war* page 4).

Workers and our unions have central importance in taking action that can actually stop this capitalist war. We can act by refusing to handle any military equipment and material that might be used in a war on Iraq. Unionists can also have an impact through a range of disruptive actions, such as strikes, pickets, walkouts, civil disobedience and occupations. We can win support for these actions in unionised and unorganised workplaces and in our communities.

As an initial rallying point for workers and unions who want to stop the war, we can campaign for our unions, trades and labour councils and the ACTU to organise a national day of protest and rallies supported with stop-work and other industrial action as already proposed in Western Australia (see accompanying article).

Socialist Alliance has rightly made union anti-war work its top priority. SA is seeking signatories to a statement urging union action and distributing a model motion for union meetings (see accompanying article.)

We cannot predict the progress and outcome of this war. If we don't stop it, it could be very short and devastating, over before we even have the time to end it ourselves. It is barely a year since US troops invaded Afghanistan, and Bush and Blair promise a never-ending "war on terror" with North Korea next. The war on Iraq is set in this bigger context, which means that the anti-war movement needs to take on the ruling classes of the major capitalist countries who are driving this war on and on without end. As such, slogans to withdraw troops from one particular theatre of war will be rapidly redundant, as we need to stop the whole war machine. We also need to take up policies on broader issues based on democracy and international solidarity; for serious disarmament and an end to the waste of military expenditure; for freedom from political, religious and sexual persecution by political Islam; for national independence for peoples of the Middle-East, including Kurds, Israeli Jews and Palestinians; for refugee rights; for opposition to all corrupt or dictatorial regimes, whether in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel or Egypt.

The Socialist Alliance is taking the fight against the war up to the political front by campaigning in elections. The anti-war campaign needs a political voice, a voice in parliament for a working-class anti-war struggle. The Greens' opposition to the war is clear but it is not anti-capitalist, and the Greens do not recognise the centrality of working-class action against the war.

Whilst socialist candidates or MPs cannot alone stop this war, they *can* voice the possibility of a government on our side, and they can support struggles by unions and community groups.

A sustained working-class movement against war will necessarily come up against the capitalist ruling class on all fronts: political, industrial and ideological. Its struggle could rekindle working-class self-confidence in solidarity. It would have the potential not only to stop this war, but also to fight for and win other demands, including an end to the waste of military expenditure. In such campaigns, we could learn our own capacity to run our country in the interests of all, and take power from that wealthy, privileged minority who are indifferent to human suffering and need, who spend poor people's blood for a rich man's war.

Stop the war

Unions against the war

Leon Parissi

On 4 February the West Australian union movement set a challenge for other sections of the Australian labour movement. Nine unions covering 75,000 workers in construction, manufacturing, finance and the public sector resolved to carry out protest strikes and demonstrations when the US led invasion of Iraq begins.

This follows the WA union movement opposition to the State Labor Government's collaboration with the US military on the use of port facilities in "Operation Seaswop". The WA Attorney-General, Jim McGinty, and the Upper House MP, Tony McCrae, publicly opposed the Premier, Geoff Gallop on this issue.

Union action against the war

According to a report in the *Tasmanian Mercury*, 5 February, 2003:

Unions WA Secretary, Dave Robinson, said, "affiliates unanimously voted yesterday to adopt a strong anti-war position. If war against Iraq commences, with or without UN support, affiliates are recommending that we should work together with other community groups to organise mass protest action against the war", Mr. Robinson said. "We need to send a message that most Australians, while strongly opposed to the repressive regime in Iraq, do not believe that war provides any solution. If war does occur though, let there be no mistake - unions and community groups will be united in promoting widespread action in opposition to it."

There is scant reference to this important development in the national mass media.

By Thursday 6 February, the story had turned up in its opposite form. The ABC reported that the Transport Workers Union in WA would refuse to strike:

"Union State Secretary, Jim McGiveron, stopped short of calling the planned campaign un-Australian. 'If our troops are ordered in by John Howard, we will do nothing whatsoever to affect their well being, their welfare', he said. 'We will be delivering whatever is necessary in support of our troops if they're ordered in'. Never mind the well being and welfare of innocent Iraqis following the insertion of a lethal Australian military presence in Iraq.

The ACTU, NSW Labor Council, the Victorian Trades Hall Council and the Queensland Council of Unions all have taken anti-war positions, but none so far have proposed industrial action to back up this stand. These peak union bodies and most of the Australian union movement have followed the feeble leadership of Federal Labor in looking for a UN Security Council resolution in favour of war as a way out. The majority of union leaderships have not proposed industrial action *even if* there is a unilateral invasion of Iraq. Socialists should take heart at the stand taken by Unions WA and work diligently within unions to advance a similar position, regardless of whether war is sanctioned by the UN or not.

Socialist Alliance-initiated statement against the impending war on Iraq

For action to stop this unjust war!

The Australian government has sent troops to support a US-led war against Iraq.

Whether or not it is sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council, this war will be an unjust war—not a war against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction but a war for oil and for control of the Middle East. It will not reduce the threat of terrorism, but make it worse. It will produce unimaginable suffering for the people of Iraq, already the victims of a 10-year-long blockade that has claimed over half a million victims. There will be death and suffering also for the ordinary soldiers in the invading armies—just as the 1991 Gulf War saw thousands of troops poisoned by depleted uranium weapons. And it will not liberate the peoples of Iraq from dictatorship, but impose another Saddam Hussein—or worse.

The majority of the Australian people understand this: only six per cent support the Bush-Blair-Howard crusade to invade Iraq without Security Council backing. In other countries support is even less. Clearly, if the peoples of Australia and the world were free to decide on war there would be no attack on Iraq. Therefore, we, the undersigned, committed to preventing or stopping this war on Iraq:

- Call on all Australian people to commit themselves to building the broadest possible movement against the threatened war on Iraq;
- Express our solidarity with Australia's Middle Eastern, Muslim and Arabic-speaking communities, who have been the target of cowardly and brutal racist attacks;
- Call on all Australians to participate in protest actions and demonstrations against a war on Iraq, beginning with the February 14-16 international days of action;
- Pledge to support those unions that refuse to handle any military equipment and material that might be used in a war on Iraq; and
- Call on all unions and trades and labour councils and the ACTU to organise a national day of protest and rallies supported with stop-work and other industrial action aimed at halting war with Iraq.

Authorised by: Riki Lane, Dick Nichols, Ian Rintoul,
23 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale NSW 2008

**Socialist
Alliance**

*'For the millions,
not the millionaires'*

Join Socialist Alliance

email:

ne@socialist-alliance.org;

Go to:

www.socialist-alliance.org

Convenors:

Riki Lane 0400 877 819;

Ian Rintoul 02-9261 4862;

Socialist Alliance

Trade Union motion to stop the war

Model motion for trade unions on action against war on Iraq

This meeting of [details of union body]:

1. Believes that there is no justification for the war on Iraq that is about to be unleashed by the US government. This war will be an unjust war — not a war against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction but a war for oil and for control of the Middle East. Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator, but it is up to the Iraqi people, not Washington, to get rid of him. We condemn the Howard government for its support for Bush's drive to war.

2. Notes that trade unions have played a crucial historical role in building opposition to unjust and illegal wars, for example in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. We congratulate the train drivers in Scotland who refused to transport war materials for the British army in Iraq and the growing number of US labour councils and unions that have come out against the war.

3. Therefore calls on our union to:

- oppose military preparations for war and demand the immediate withdrawal of all Australian armed forces from the Gulf;
- actively participate in the anti-war demonstrations, including emergency actions called to respond to the beginning of war on Iraq;
- place industrial bans on any work associated with the war effort against Iraq; hold meetings with other unions, relevant trades and labour councils and the ACTU to develop an ongoing campaign of industrial action against the war;
- urge the Labor Party to unequivocally oppose the war;
- actively build the anti-war movement by holding delegate and workplace meetings and by endorsing, publicising and providing financial support to the [name of relevant anti-war organisation].

Authorised by: Riki Lane, Dick Nichols, Ian Rintoul,
23 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale NSW 2008

International statement against the war

Join with Michael Albert, Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, and Iraqi and Iranian socialists and democrats in raising an international democratic and socialist voice against both the US's planned war on Iraq and Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. Add your signature to the statement below.

The original text of the statement was circulated in the USA; the version below is edited very slightly so as to make a text which can be signed internationally, not just in the USA. The original text can be consulted at www.cpdweb.org. A regularly updated list of international signatories, and translations into Farsi, Finnish, and soon French, German and other languages, is available at www.thirdcamp.org.uk

Download and join the appeal at:

<http://www.workersliberty.org.uk/files/appeal.pdf>

We oppose both Saddam Hussein and the U.S. war on Iraq:

*A call for a new, democratic foreign policy
For democracy and international solidarity!*
**NO TO WAR!
NO TO SADDAM!**

WE OPPOSE the impending U.S.-led war on Iraq, which threatens to inflict vast suffering and destruction, while exacerbating rather than resolving threats to regional and global peace. Saddam Hussein is a tyrant who should be removed from power, both for the good of the Iraqi people and for the security of neighbouring countries.

However, it is up to the Iraqi people themselves to oust Saddam Hussein, dismantle his police state regime, and democratise their country. People in other countries can be of immense help in this effort not by supporting military intervention, but by building a strong peace movement and working to ensure that our governments pursue a consistently democratic and just foreign policy.

We do not believe that the goal of the approaching war against Iraq is to bring democracy to the Iraqis, nor that it will produce this result. Instead, the Bush Administration's aim is to expand and solidify US predominance in the Middle East, at the cost of tens of thousands of civilian lives if necessary.

This war is about US political, military and economic power, about seizing control of oilfields and about strengthening the United States as the enforcer of an inhumane global status quo. That is why we are opposed to war against Iraq, whether waged unilaterally by Washington or by the UN Security Council, unaccountable to the UN General Assembly and bribed into endorsing the war. The US military may have the ability to destroy Saddam Hussein, but the United States and its allies cannot promote democracy in the Muslim world and peace in the Middle East, nor can they deal with the threat posed to all of us by terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda, and by weapons of mass destruction, by pursuing its current policies. Indeed, they could address these problems only by doing the opposite of what they are doing today that is, by:

- Denouncing the use of military intervention to extend and consolidate US imperial power, and withdrawing troops from the Middle East.
- Ending its support for corrupt and authoritarian regimes, e.g. Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Egypt.
- Opposing, and ending complicity in, all forms of terrorism worldwide not just by Al Qaeda, Palestinian suicide bombers and Chechen hostage takers, but also by Colombian paramilitaries, the Israeli military in the Occupied Territories and Russian counterinsurgency forces in Chechnya.
- Ending the cruel sanctions on Iraq, which inflict massive harm on the civilian population.
- Supporting the right of national self-determination for all peoples in the Middle East, including the Kurds, Palestinians and Israeli Jews. Ending one-sided support for Israel in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
- Taking unilateral steps toward renouncing weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, and vigorously promoting international disarmament treaties.
- Abandoning IMF/World Bank economic policies that bring mass misery to people in large parts of the world.
- Initiating a major foreign aid program directed at popular rather than corporate needs.

A government that carried out these policies would be in a position to honestly and consistently foster democracy in the Middle East and elsewhere. It could encourage democratic forces (not unrepresentative cliques, but genuinely popular parties and movements) in Iraq, Iran and Syria, as well as Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Turkey. Some of these forces exist today, others have yet to arise, but all would flower if nurtured by a new foreign policy from major powers.

These initiatives, taken together, would constitute a truly democratic foreign policy. Such a policy would weaken the power of dictatorships and the appeal of terrorism and reactionary religious fundamentalism. Though nothing outside powers can do would decisively undermine these elements right away, over time a new foreign policy from major powers would drastically undercut their power and influence.

The Administration's frantic and flagrantly dishonest efforts to portray Saddam Hussein as an imminent military threat to people in this country and to the inhabitants of other Middle Eastern countries lack credibility. Saddam Hussein is a killer and serial aggressor who would doubtless like nothing better than to wreak vengeance on the US and to dominate the Gulf Region. But there is no reason to believe he is suicidal or insane. Considerable evidence suggests that Saddam Hussein is much weaker militarily than he was before the Gulf War and that he is still some distance from being able to manufacture nuclear weapons. But most important, unlike Al Qaeda, he has a state and a position of power to protect; he knows that any Iraqi act of aggression now against the US or his neighbours would bring about his total destruction. As even CIA Director George Tenet has pointed out, it is precisely the certainty of a war to the finish against his regime that would provide Saddam Hussein with the incentive he now lacks to use whatever weapons he has against the US and its allies.

Weapons of mass destruction endanger us all and must be eliminated. But a war against Iraq is not the answer. War threatens massive harm to Iraqi civilians, will add to the ranks of terrorists throughout the Muslim world, and will encourage international bullies to pursue further acts of aggression. Everyone is legitimately concerned about terrorism; however, the path to genuine security involves promoting democracy, social justice and respect for the right of self-determination, along with disarmament, weapons-free-zones, and inspections.

Of all the countries in the world, the United States possesses by far the most powerful arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. If the US were to initiate a democratic foreign policy and take serious steps toward disarmament, it would be able to encourage global disarmament as well as regional demilitarisation in the Middle East. The Bush Administration has used the alleged Iraqi military danger to justify an alarming new doctrine of preemptive war. In the National Security Strategy, publicly released on September 20, 2002, the Bush Administration asserted that the US has the right to attack any country that might be a potential threat, not merely in response to an act of military aggression.

Much of the world sees this doctrine for what it is: the proclamation of an undisguised US global imperium. Ordinary Iraqis, and people everywhere, need to know that there is another voice in the US and allied countries, made up of those who both recognise the urgent need for democratic change in the Middle East and reject our governments' militaristic and imperial foreign policies. By signing this statement we declare our intention to work for a new democratic foreign policy. That means helping to rein in the war-makers and building the most powerful antiwar movement possible, and at the same time forging links of solidarity and concrete support for democratic forces in Iraq and throughout the Middle East.

We refuse to accept the inevitability of war on Iraq despite the enormous military juggernaut that has been put in place, and we declare our commitment to work with others in this country and abroad to avert it. And if war should start, we will do all in our power to end it immediately.

Initial international signatories include:

- Alliance for Workers' Liberty
- Professor Irene Bruegel, South Bank University, London
- Professor Saoud El Mawla, Beirut
- Akis Gavriilidis, Initiative for the Greek Social Forum/Brussels
- Judith Vidall Hall, editor, Index on Censorship
- Amir Javaheri, Co-ordinating committee, Workers' Left Unity Iran
- Aulis Kallio, editor of Sarastus (Finland)
- Mehdi Kia, co-editor Iran Bulletin
- Riki Lane, co-convenor, Socialist Alliance Australia
- Yassamine Mather, Co-ordinating committee, Workers' Left Unity Iran
- Ardeshir Mehrdad, Iran Bulletin and editor of the journal Rah-e-Kargar
- Muna Nashashibi, on behalf of the Coalition for Palestine
- Kazem Nik-khah, Worker-communist Party of Iran (Britain)
- Socialist Alliance England
- Ashok Subron, Lalit, Mauritius
- Worker-communist Party of Iraq (Britain)
- Workers' Liberty Australia
- (All in personal capacity unless otherwise stated)

Our history

Anti-war socialists in Britain

Martin Thomas

1. Capital is competitive, dog-eat-dog, profit-greedy. It operates with large state machines, bureaucratised, militarised, with large standing armies. War is endemic in capitalism.

Under capitalism, every war is a preparation for peace - for regular, tranquil, international trade and profit-taking. But every peace, extending as it does capital's international connections, interests, alliances and rivalries, is a preparation for war. Capitalism with peace is much preferable to capitalism with war, just as capitalism with a boom is much preferable to capitalism with a slump. But peace is not a reform measure that can be won under capitalism. A shorter legally limited working week, trade union rights, constitutional parliamentary government, universal suffrage, free speech, old age pensions - all these can be won as reforms under capitalism, always vulnerable to counter-attacks in crisis, but won. Peace, no.

2. As Lenin put it: "Socialists have always condemned war between nations as barbarous and brutal. But our attitude towards war is fundamentally different from that of the bourgeois pacifists... We understand the inevitable connection between wars and the class struggle within the country; we understand that war cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished and socialism is created...." Also, socialists support some wars which "in spite of all the horrors, atrocities, distress and suffering that inevitably accompany all wars", advance the cause of the working class: wars of national liberation, wars for democracy, class war of the workers against the bourgeoisie.

Socialists thus condemn and agitate against wars conducted by the conservative, imperialist big capitalist powers; but we conduct distinct socialist and labour movement campaigns against war, on our own basis, rather than sinking ourselves into a broad front of everyone who is against war. In the run-up to World War 1 the socialist parties agitated and demonstrated against the threat of war. In Britain in 1899-1902, the socialists campaigned against the Boer War. It never occurred to them to seek to form a joint campaign with the liberals who were also against the war.

3. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, the Communist Parties made it their main activity in many countries to build "the peace movement". This activity had been pioneered by the Stalinists in the 1930s, but became a whole system during the Cold War. The CP-organised "peace movement" was very different from socialist agitation against war, in three respects. a) It was explicitly and deliberately not a socialist or labour-movement effort, but "broader". The aim was to surround the CPs with a layer of bishops, celebrities, professors and suchlike who were not socialists but nevertheless against war. b) It was not focused on denouncing a particular war, but on a desire for peace in general. Very often, in fact, it was focused on diplomatic proposals, demands for Summit conferences and the like. c) It was dishonest. The CPs actually did not desire peace in general. They wanted to aid the USSR in the Cold War. The "peace movement" was large. It drew in many

Workers' Liberty No. 29 February 2003

people who were not Stalinists and honestly did desire peace. The Trotskyists criticised the general politics of the "peace movement", but intervened in specific campaigns, for example the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which came from the "peace movement" milieu but escaped (was too radical for) CP control.

4. The movement around the Vietnam War was something different. It was large and active, partly because of the spread of television, which allowed people back in the USA and Europe to see the realities of war as they would never previously have done. It was pretty clearly a campaign of the left and the labour movement. It was not just anti-war, but a movement in solidarity with one side (the Vietnamese) in the war. It was a formative experience for a whole political generation. The CP's old agitation for "Peace in Vietnam" was left behind.

5. In the 1991 Gulf War Workers' Liberty, in Britain, initiated a campaign on a similar basis to previous socialist agitations against war. Through preponderance of material resources, however, a campaign much more on the model of the old CP "peace movement", and with the CP rump and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament playing leading roles within it, was able to dominate the scene. The Committee to Stop War in the Gulf was like the old CP "peace movement" in that (a) it explicitly sought to be a broad catch-all alliance of all people of good will seeking peace; (b) it focused on vague catch-all "peace slogans" ("ceasefire", "peace talks now", etc.) The socialist and labour-movement agitation against the war, and for democracy, international solidarity and class struggle, which we can wage in the labour movement, is of much more fundamental importance.

6. The current Stop The War Coalition is even more like the old CP "peace movement". It is fundamentally not a campaign against a particular state's war effort, but a portmanteau campaign "for peace". The socialist and labour-movement agitation against the war, and for democracy, international solidarity and class struggle, which we can wage in the labour movement, is of much more fundamental importance than the showy agitation of the STWC, with their faux-naive excitement at having the *Daily Mirror* and the Liberal Democrats on their side. What remains of the old CP "peace movements" now? Only a noxious ideological legacy.

If war breaks out

Rally in your local area

Emergency Actions if War Breaks Out:

Armidale: assemble at 5.30pm at the Court House.

Bathurst: assemble at 5pm in front of the Court House.

Brisbane: 5pm, King George Square.

Central Coast: 5:30 meet at the Skillion at Terrigal.

Lismore: assemble 5pm, Spinks Park.

Newcastle: assemble 5.30pm, Civic Park.

Sydney: 5pm, Town Hall Square.

Wollongong: 5.30pm on the DAY AFTER war breaks out, Wollongong Mall Amphitheatre.

Melbourne: 5:00pm State Library.

For nationwide information see www.vicpeace.org

Socialist Alliance Victorian Trade Union Solidarity Committee

Maureen Murphy

A great step has been taken toward socialist unity through the formation of the Socialist Alliance. Eight separate socialist organisations have put aside their differences in order to build Socialist Alliance. There is also a growing number of independent socialists who now comprise more than half the total membership of 2500. The Socialist Alliance is a national organisation with branches in every state. In Victoria, the Socialist Alliance has branches in Melbourne Central, Melbourne West, Wills, Batman, Aston and Geelong.

The Victorian Socialist Alliance has set up the Trade Union Solidarity Committee (TUSC). This committee is open not only to Socialist Alliance members but to any trade unionists who wish to fight for democratic rank and file run unionism.

The TUSC is planning a series of monthly meetings throughout 2003 that aim to both organise and educate. The meetings will be held upstairs at the John Curtin Hotel at 6.30pm on the last Tuesday of the month. The purpose of these meetings will be to:

1. Report back on current union struggles in Australia and overseas

The TUSC monthly meetings will provide a forum where updates on union struggles can be shared among rank and file workers from all unions. Interventions and support work will be decided.

2. Provide educational sessions for rank and file workers

At each meeting a keynote speaker will be invited to speak on a topic that will assist in the development of the trade union struggle. In November 2002 we had a well-attended meeting on the Militant Minorities Movement, the rank and file networks of workers in unions in the 1930s. The speaker outlined how the movement was built, its strengths and weaknesses.

Some of the meetings we are planning for this year are:

- Trade unions and the fight against war: lessons from Vietnam.
- The successful Defence of Clarrie O'Shea — lessons for defending the Skilled Six and Martin Kingham.
- Women and the trade union movement.
- International unionism.
- Trade unions, the capitalist economy and the state.
- Trade unions, the environment, the unemployed, the unionised and community struggles.

In mid-2003, TUSC plan to hold an all-day trade union activist forum where participants can share their experience of past disputes and trade union organising, an

Workers' Liberty No. 29 February 2003

opportunity to learn the skills and range of tactics needed to be an effective and militant shop steward and rank and file unionist.

The Socialist Alliance is also working to build **rank and file networks in unions**. We aim to provide a forum for unionists from each union to come together and swap experiences and develop strategies and perspectives for taking the movement forward. Each trade union network will set its own agenda but possible activities may include:

- Providing a forum to discuss and work on current industrial issues in your workplace.
- Promoting anti-war and pro-refugee activities within the union.
- Attracting militant trade unionists to socialist politics.

Trade union networks in several unions are already meeting. At each monthly TUSC meeting and in each issue of *Solidarity*, a brief update of the activities of each trade union network will be provided.

So join us on the last Tuesday of the month for the Socialist Alliance TUSC meetings. To kick start off your involvement, we would like you to fill out the **Socialist Alliance trade union survey** so we can link you up with other workers in your union.

(Taken from a TUSC bulletin, Solidarity)

TUSC TRADE UNION NETWORKS UPDATE

The following trade union networks are organising their first meetings. Contact the Convenor of your union to get involved. More trade union networks are currently being established.

Australian Education Union

Convenor: Sue Bull (5229 0655) or miteus1@hotmail.com

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union

Convenor: Simon Millar (9386 5917) or samillar@optusnet.com.au

Community and Public Sector Union

Convenor: Steve Cilia (9482 4569) or stevecilia@hotmail.com

National Tertiary Education Union

Convenor: Jeremy Smith (5224 1016) or jeremy.smith@ballarat.edu.au

Australian Services Union

Convenor: Maureen Murphy (9386 0367) or maureenfmurphy@yahoo.com.au

Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Convenors: Tony Dewberry (9386 6060) or Tony.Dewberry@mediamonitors.com.au and Howard Morosi (9347 1405) howard_marosi@yahoo.com.au

Rally to Stop the Blackshirts!

Riki Lane

Diversity in Safe Communities (DiSC) has organised a rally and march against the Blackshirts on March 29 in Brunswick. DiSC is a coalition of residents, grassroots activists and anti-fascist fighters that formed last August out of widespread community opposition to these patriarchal thugs.

The campaign has picked up speed this year, gaining media attention and organising the rally and an art exhibition. Local media are particularly interested and *New Idea* is to publish an interview. Over 1000 leaflets for the rally were distributed at the Pride march. Organising meetings have attracted people not usually involved in campaign politics, including attendees from as far afield as the Dandenong hills and Geelong.

There is a large potential for an ongoing campaign – men are not going to stop harassing their ex-partners any time soon. Very important issues of misogyny and its potential connection to fascist politics are at stake. Explicitly defending fascism, the Blackshirts stalk women who leave violent relationships, win custody of the children or who may be in a lesbian relationship. They regularly demonstrate outside the Family Court to harass women who are fighting custody battles and to recruit angry men.

In September, a public meeting which packed out Brunswick Town Hall launched DiSC to defend everyone's right to decide how they will live and with whom and to enjoy that right in safety. The meeting voted to set up a Rapid Response Network and organise a protest rally.

The March rally will follow on from DiSC's highly successful counter-demonstration against the Blackshirts outside the Family Court just before Christmas.

The objectives for the protest are to:

- organise a large, broad-based community protest rally outside the Blackshirts' Brunswick base, the Dane Centre; They will be confronted by a community that solidarises with their victims;
- show that they, and their anti-woman, homophobic 'family values', will not be tolerated in a truly multicultural community that respects and values diversity;
- show what they're up against: a widely diverse community of men and women, queers and straights, and all the targets of fascism;
- show that there will be an organised community defence of any victim they target;
- demonstrate the power of solidarity to Blackshirts' victims; be a model to communities everywhere.

We are building it by:

- broad outreach and networking with neighborhoods, community support organisations, feminists, queers, students, unions, migrant communities, socialists, anarchists, everybody welcome!

- platform of invited speakers and an open mike to reflect these diverse voices;
- entertainment: for political messages and fun.

This rally needs a full mobilisation by left and community activists, especially Socialist Alliance – not just on the day, but in the weeks leading up to it. DiSC deliberately changed the date of the rally so as not to clash with SA commitments on election day in Footscray.

There are important issues being raised of how to relate both to working-class communities and to the "s11 generation" of activists. After the public meeting in September, there were concerns raised about holding the rally – it could be too confrontational and thus counterproductive. After much discussion, it was agreed to go ahead with a well-prepared and organised rally that would not result in 'adventurism'. By that, I understand violent actions by small groups that rebound on other protestors.

Lately this has been a cause of some dispute with an activist from the 'autonomist' tradition – who sees any demonstrators' discipline as excluding many of the people who attend rallies such as s11.

The main point here is, what are we trying to achieve? Is focussing on the Dane Centre and shutting it down for a few hours the aim, or do the objectives outlined above make more sense? In some ways, this is a false debate – actions aimed at the Dane Centre will certainly be part of the demonstration. However, there is a need to ensure that people from the local community feel safe to attend the rally. If we intended the rally to be a confrontation, we needed to make that clear in the publicity, so that people would know in advance what they were in for.

The campaign needs to be able to attract a whole range of people – from local residents to members of socialist and anarchist groups. We need to marshal all those energies against our common enemy.

If the rally is successful in its stated objectives, it can help build a movement that will shut down the Blackshirts for good. We should use the enthusiasm generated by the rally to plan an ongoing series of actions aimed at curtailing all activity at the Dane Centre.

DiSC Calendar

Art Exhibition against the Blackshirts/to stand up for diversity: Om Gallery, opposite Brunswick Town Hall. Opens Wednesday, 12 March, 6.00 pm and runs through Sunday, 23 March.

Rally to Stop the Blackshirts! Saturday, 29 March, 12.00 noon. Assemble Brunswick Town Hall, march to Dane Centre and Percy Street for 2pm Street Party.

DiSC General Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month, 7.00 pm at Cafe Mingo, 600 Sydney Rd, Brunswick. Everyone is welcome. TO ENDORSE or for more details: please contact Riki on (03) 9387 7819.

Enterprise bargaining in a private English college

Floyd Dartmoor

Private English teaching colleges are some of the most highly casualised workplaces in Australia. English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching is an industry comprised predominately of people in their late twenties and their thirties. They have invariably spent time abroad teaching English in Asian countries in the early 1990s, and upon their return to Australia found themselves highly employable due to the massive influx of Asian students seeking to learn English and who started coming to Australia in high numbers in the mid 1990s.

However, this relative 'seller's labour market' has strangely never translated into the winning of great wages and conditions. Casual wages in the private colleges are exceptionally low when compared to the casual wages that are paid in the university and TAFE systems. An hour's casual work at a private ESL college with the minimum prerequisite qualifications of a degree and a teaching certificate will fetch about \$30. (Please remember that there is no such thing as paid preparation time, and this hourly rate incorporates lesson preparation). An hour with the same qualifications at a university will fetch approximately \$42. An hour of casual teaching at TAFE in Queensland will fetch \$54 (a couple dollars less in other states). This massive difference in the hourly rate is the direct result of the effectiveness and militancy of the union representing the group of teachers. The dependable Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) covers TAFE ESL teachers — thus the relatively high hourly rate. The middling National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) covers university ESL teachers. The fledgling Queensland Independent Education Union (QIEU) covers ESL teachers in the private colleges.

Another factor directly determining the low wages paid in the private college system is the age of the work force. People in this age group simply have no experience of unionism. Some wouldn't even know what a union was. Some have never worked anything other than a casual job. (Bar one part-time university tutoring position, that is also true of this author, aged 29). Some young teachers have lived for years looking at the roster every Friday afternoon to see if they've been given their same hours for the following week, not knowing from week to week what their hours will be. Some teachers refuse to take holidays over Christmas because of the petty retribution that exists in the private college system in which those who decline work for leisure are put down the bottom of the availability list.

It is one thing to take on union work for an older and more experienced workforce, demoralised and cynical, perhaps even unprepared to do anything about the conditions they've lost through years of complacency and work burnout, but fundamentally aware of the principles of unionism. It is another proposition altogether taking on union work on behalf of a young workforce, almost entirely unfamiliar with the concept of work solidarity, yet energetic and deeply frustrated by the shoddy conditions in colleges and the low pay relative to their skills. In many respects, 'contamination' by cynicism of older workmates is generally

treacherous to union solidarity. In other respects, the experience and union memory of older workmates is indispensable to the cultivation of work solidarity. It is a bind.

When I first started a casual part-time position two days a week at Brisbane's largest private ESL college, Shafston International College, I contacted the QIEU to see if there were any delegates in my workplace and to join the union. There were no delegates, only a couple of other QIEU members who had come over to Shafston after having been sacked for having been involved in putting an Enterprise Bargaining claim on the table at another well-known ESL college, East Coast College. They were victimised, and had to move, making sure to keep their heads well and truly down.

I told the organiser I was prepared to be the on-site representative. We put together two meetings, hoping to attract teachers. One was an Award information seminar (Q&A 'get to know your ELICOS Award' session) and the other was a grievance-airing session about Shafston, which we hoped would draw out the common points the more willing teachers agreed needed addressing through collective action. Out of this, we built a little group of teachers who met weekly with the aim of devising, distributing and collecting a survey of the Shafston staff on teaching conditions and job security. We then published interim survey results in order to improve the confidence of the staff about taking collective action (for example, 95% of people feared for their jobs). The goal is to put an Enterprise Bargaining claim on the table at Shafston this year, moving off the ELICOS Award under which we presently work.

It was extremely strange to be arguing with workmates that we needed to move *off* the ELICOS Award and on to an industry-wide EBA. EBAs now cover only the 'twenty allowable matters' since legislation for stripping back was introduced by the Howard Government in the second wave of industrial relations reforms in 1998. This may appear to look like a regression or a backward step from the full spectrum of labour conditions. However, in reality, EB is the only method by which large and rapid gains in wages and conditions can be achieved, and enterprise bargaining is the only form in which even the mildest militancy can be expressed. Getting the union to put a claim in for a pay rise to the Industrial Relations Commission when you are working under the Award in effect means the rewriting of the *whole* Award and will almost certainly be rejected by the Commission. In addition, the bureaucratic and slow process of arbitration kills the enthusiasm required to change poor conditions decisively. The annual incremental pay rise the Award provides for ESL teachers every 9 July is nominal, outstripped by inflation. In the anti-worker environment we live in, it is not necessarily contradictory to push fellow workmates to move from Awards to EBAs, but it is important to explain how the Award is the *minimum* guarantee and protection of wages and conditions and how EB is the *maximum* result that will be achieved, a direct result of staff militancy, whatever that may be.

There is of course no guarantee we will succeed in our efforts at Shafston. Union material is now thrown in the rubbish bin by the management staff who detects it. Under such petty efforts to break up the flow of information between staff and even keep their conditions of work hidden from them (copies of the Award vanishing from the kitchen

etc.), it is difficult to see that even the most rudimentary union work can be done without forming a secret and clandestine underground ESL teachers network. In such a network, arguments would also need to be held about the complete restructuring of the ELICOS industry, which in many respects is a licence to print money for Australian entrepreneurs looking to make a quick buck off an exploding market.

Queensland

Beattie to slash public service

Bryan Sketchley

In 2002, the Queensland Treasury announced it plans to strip Queensland state government departments of their corporate support staff (human resources, finance, records, administration staff) and place them into five departments. Those five departments would then sell back the corporate support services to those government departments. Also included in the plan is an intention to standardise all corporate support computer systems and processes across all departments. The program is called ASAP – Aligning Services and People.

The price of this proposal? A steal at only 2000 jobs lost and massive savings in systems standardisation to the taxpayer. It seems, though, that the only buyer is the Labor Government. There is almost universal disapproval of the proposal amongst those most likely to be affected.

Treasury officials are so confident of their proposal that they initially felt they did not even have to provide any costing for it. When pressed they replied that it would 'save hundreds of millions'. Information on the how the proposal will work has been vague at best, and information to employees has been a trickle. When the Queensland State Public Sector Union (QPSU) called an information session to share what they had with members, Beattie said he saw any information session during work time as strike action and anyone attending would have their pay docked accordingly. The union called off the session.

In early November lunch time sessions for union members were organised and well attended. Unfortunately the quality of information provided to the union by Treasury was poor and many left the sessions not much better informed than when they arrived. Since then, the union has taken Treasury to the Arbitration Commission a number of times to get them to release what information and costings they might have.

At this point it is unclear if the proposal will proceed in its current form. A further hearing is under way at the Industrial Relations Commission at the moment. However, a number of departments are making arrangements for the initial transfer of staff to the core service-providing departments on 1 July. Cabinet has since approved funding for over 1000 voluntary early retirements (VERs) in preparation for the scheme going ahead. This in addition to

the 1000 VERs that the Labor Government funded last year under the guise of getting rid of 'bludgers'.

Those who will be affected by this proposal are administrative staff, and those at the lower end of the scale. Treasury argues that services to the public won't be compromised and large savings for the taxpayer will be made. In their propaganda they state that such administrative support arrangements are now becoming the trend internationally for government as a whole. As evidence of this, they quote the examples of two provincial governments, one in France and the other in the US.

The real reason for the wholesale attack on public service jobs has to do with the continuing poor credit rating the Queensland Government has received from Standards and Poor. S&P is an international credit-rating agency that give regular assessments on how various governments are managing their economies. They have a degree of sway on investment patterns if they report unfavourably, so governments tend to notice what they say. Their latest report identifies key problems with the Queensland economy and its recent management. Beattie is keen to show international creditors and investors that he has their best interests at heart — and will throw 2000 public servants on the scrap heap to prove it.

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China

Free the Liaoyang 2

Mark Osborn

During March 2002, thousands of angry workers took to the streets of Liaoyang, in north east China, demanding a basic living wage, pensions and back pay, as well as protesting against the corruption of local officials who forced the Liaoyang Ferro-alloy factory into bankruptcy.

When Ferro-alloy closed, the workers were promised pensions and back wages. But they never materialised and many of the unemployed workers accused the factory's managers of embezzlement.

The demonstration followed a four-year workers' campaign into corruption at the factory.

Following the protest Yao Fuxin and Xiao Yunliang, Pang Qingxiang and Wang Zhaoming were detained. Since March 2002, these workers have had their rights frequently violated.

International trade union organisations report Yao's family were not informed of his detention until four days after his arrest, that he and Xiao have been denied proper medical attention, and that they have been denied access to lawyers.

During their detention, while the legal waiting period for formal charges came and went, numerous unfounded allegations were levied against them.

The Chinese government has claimed that the four took advantage of worker discontent to "plan, instigate and carry out a number of destructive activities" and that Yao Fuxin "had been detained because he had broken Chinese law by carrying out car-bombings and not because he had organised a workers' campaign." These are fantastical lies.

Pang and Wang were released on bail on 20 December 2002 and told that the court would not press charges against them. They have been warned by the police not to discuss the trial. Yao and Xiao's families have had their phones cut off.

Liaoyang Public Security Bureau charged Yao and Xiao with "subverting state power", which could carry the death penalty. One court official told the Hong Kong-based *China Labour Bulletin* (CLB), that the charges against Yao and Xiao could be expected to bring sentences of between 3 to 10 years.

Their trial began on 15 January and the BBC reported that the verdicts are expected "within days".

As the trial began, a worker from the Liaoyang Ferro-alloy factory told the CLB that the leaders of the factory's workers were continuing the struggle and seeking the release of Yao and Xiao.

Yao, who denied all charges against him, was also accused of participating in a 'hostile organisation', stemming from his signature on a China Democracy Party petition. On 23 December 1998, Yao Fuxin and Xiao

Yunliang signed a petition-letter asking the Chinese government to release China Democracy Party's Xu Wenli, Wang Youcai, and Qin Yongmin.

In addition, on 29 May 2000, nine people from Liaoyang, including Yao Fuxin and Xiao Yunliang, presented a letter to Jiang Zemin calling for a re-assessment of the Tiananmen events of 4 June 1989, on the occasion of the 11th anniversary of the massacre of pro-democracy activists. They also asked the government to release all political detainees, respect human rights, and guarantee real social justice and fairness.

The Chinese rulers clearly fear the combination of workers' direct action and political activism. It is a threat to their political monopoly. This is why they are treating the Liaoyang workers so harshly.

Large-scale demonstrations are still unusual in China, but workers' dissent is growing, as workers who used to be guaranteed wages, housing and health care are suddenly left with little or nothing. Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji, recently told a meeting in Liaoning province that the government must set up a welfare system to strengthen social stability as the country continued capitalist economic "reforms". Millions more people are set to lose their jobs, as China's state-run enterprises struggle to become profitable.

Three weeks ago, 300 workers from a television manufacturing plant in the province of Yunnan held a protest outside the local Communist Party headquarters to demand back pay.

And in Beijing, more than 100 construction workers barricaded the entrance to a luxury housing complex to demand unpaid wages.

Hong Kong Defend Chinese workers in Hong Kong

Help us in our campaign to protest the plans by the Hong Kong government to introduce an 'anti-subversion law' which will stop workers in the Hong Kong Special Autonomous Region (HKSAR) coming together as trade unionists to campaign for their existing rights and campaign for improved rights — and to campaign for the rights of workers on the mainland.

If the Hong Kong anti-subversion laws are passed it will put back the growing struggle for workers' rights and free trade unions in mainland China.

The *China Labour Bulletin* and the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions are asking the international trade union movement to stand in solidarity with the workers in Hong Kong and mainland China against the enactment of these anti-subversion laws in the name of "protecting national security".

LabourStart has been asked by the *China Labour Bulletin* and the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions to help build support for an international campaign against the anti-subversion laws which are scheduled to operate from July 2003.

The 'need' to enact anti-subversion laws is prescribed by Article 23 of the Basic Law, which states:

The HKSAR shall enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government, or theft of state secrets, to prohibit foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting political activities in the Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies of the Region from establishing ties with foreign political organizations or bodies.

Article 23 offences are not ordinary crimes — they can be political crimes. They can be used to silence opposition, restrict press freedom, ideas, research, freedom of speech and freedom of belief. The consultation paper has drawn severe opposition at home and abroad because of its potential threats to political and civil rights, particularly in view of concrete cases of political repression in Mainland China in the name of "national security".

Find an online petition at:

<http://www.labourstart.org/actnow/20021227.shtml>

See also: www.china-labour.org.hk/

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Veteran Chinese Trotskyist Wang Fan-hsi dies

Din Wong

On 16 January the funeral of the veteran Chinese Trotskyist Wang Fan-hsi took place. He was ninety-five. As well as friends and family there were representatives and comrades from many of the revolutionary groups in Britain.

Alan Thornett spoke on behalf of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International about Wang's importance as a Trotskyist and other speakers highlighted his role as a teacher and a guide to many younger Chinese socialists and community activists. Professor Gregor Benton, who, with his family, was responsible for much of the care of Comrade Wang during his time in Leeds, provided the main speech. He highlighted the creative and critical element of Wang's thought, particularly in trying to learn lessons from the rise and victory of Maoism. Despite years of personal tragedy, illness and imprisonment, Wang remained optimistic about the socialist future and confident in the progressive role of the Chinese working class.

Just back from China, Benton also reported how a new generation of dissidents and critics of the CCP regime are reading Wang's writings, now given a limited circulation, with sympathy and interest. The rapid industrialisation of China in the last twenty years, turning it into the new “workshop of the world”, has produced a growth and new awakening in the organisation and struggles of the Chinese workers. With Wang's example and writings in mind, we

should share his confidence in the prospect of great things to come. *Din Wong assesses his life.*

"I have spent the greater part of my life and effort in the struggle for socialism and against Stalinism", said Wang Fan-hsi.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, many on the left greeted the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the USSR and Eastern Europe and the rise of US "New World Order" with dismay and despondency. But not Wang Fan-hsi, a life-long Trotskyist and Chinese communist revolutionary.

For Wang, the collapse of Stalinism was a vindication of his opposition to both the theory and practice of Stalinism, first in the Soviet Union and then in China. It was Trotskyists like Wang who consistently came out against the degeneration of the Soviet State, against its bureaucratic dictatorship and who exposed as an illusion the Stalinist idea of "building socialism in one country".

Born in 1907 in Hsia-shih (between Shanghai and Hangchow), Wang became politicised in high school at a momentous turning point in Chinese history — the May Fourth movement. As a student at Peking University in 1925, Wang Fan-hsi joined the Chinese Communist Party, at a time when the CCP was under instruction from the Comintern to subordinate itself to the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang KMT) and Chiang Kai-shek in a fatally opportunist interpretation of the united front tactic.

After the betrayal and massacre of workers in Canton and Shanghai by Chiang Kai-shek in 1926-7, Wang Fan-hsi was sent to Wuhan, the power base of the "Left" Nationalist leader, Wang Ching-wei, with whom the Chinese Communist Party, under orders from Moscow, now made an alliance. He watched with growing unease as the Party once again agreed to the surrender of arms by trade unionists and workers' militia to the local garrison as a mark of their "loyalty" to the nationalist government, just as they had in Shanghai.

In 1928, Wang Fan-hsi arrived in Moscow for military training at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, then in the thick of Stalin's campaign against Trotsky and the Left Opposition. Persuaded by Trotsky's analysis of the failure of the second Revolution, he joined, and soon became one of the organisers of, the clandestine group of Chinese Left Oppositionists.

When he returned to China in 1929, Wang worked as an aide to Chou En-lai in Shanghai until he was expelled from the CCP. He then worked for the unification of the four opposition groups to overcome their divisions regarding the nature of the coming revolution and the slogan 'for a constituent assembly'. Unfortunately, soon after he was elected with Chen Tu-hsiu to the leadership of the unified opposition group, Wang was arrested and jailed for three years by the Nationalists. Not deterred by this, he returned to Shanghai and, in collaboration with the South African communist, Frank Glass, and the American, Harold Isaacs, threw his energy into rebuilding the Trotskyist organisation and publishing theoretical and political periodicals.

Just before the outbreak of war with the Japanese, he was kidnapped by KMT special service agents and

Workers' Liberty No. 29 February 2003

endured another jail term. Under interrogation, despite torture, Wang refused to divulge the names and addresses of his comrades and was put in solitary confinement. This period, described by Wang as the darkest days of his life, was cut short only by the action of a sympathetic jailer who unlocked his cell before fleeing from the approaching Japanese army.

Back in Japanese occupied Shanghai, Wang and his comrades resumed political activity under very difficult circumstances and at great risks to their lives. Their efforts centred on education, propaganda, writing, translation and the publication of Trotsky's work, including *The History of the Russian Revolution*. Just weeks before his assassination, Trotsky wrote of this, "The day I learned that my History of the Russian Revolution was to be published in Chinese was a holiday for me."

This clandestine political activity continued in Shanghai throughout the war years. When the Japanese surrendered in 1945, the Trotskyists were able, despite a split in their ranks and a ban by the KMT government, to take some advantage of the situation in the cities where the CCP's concentration on the countryside had left a virtual vacuum in the leadership of the urban working classes.

When a CCP military victory seemed certain, however, Wang was sent to Hong Kong to set up a new co-ordinating centre. Unwelcome by the British, he was deported to Macau, where he stayed until he came to England in 1975. His comrades in China were rounded up in 1952, and the last of them, Cheng Ch'ao-lin, one of Wang's closest comrades, was not released until 27 years later.

In Macau, having lost his family, relatives, comrades and friends, Wang recollected his part in the Chinese revolution and reflected on the defeat of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in his memoirs, which have now been translated and published in English, French, German and Japanese. He kept a critical watch on events in China and continued to publish his writing which included translations of Trotsky's works, studies on Mao Tse-tung's thoughts and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. He also wrote several plays.

Despite years of hand to mouth existence, perilous threats to his life and prison terms that were most injurious to his health, Wang was unshaken in his political beliefs. The terms of his exile in Britain did not allow him to be politically active, yet he kept up extensive political correspondence with revolutionaries around the world and, ever forward-looking, he encouraged and inspired, a new generation of radical Chinese youth in Hong Kong and Britain in the seventies and eighties.

With the recent partial rehabilitation of Chen Tu-hsiu in China, Wang's *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary* and a new edition of his *Study on the Thoughts of Mao* have also now been published, although with restricted availability, in China. He was also very gratified to learn that some of his work is available on the Web, his only regret being that he was too old to learn how to use a computer.

If the downfall of Stalinism vindicated his commitment to the programme of Trotskyism, the emergence of a new workers' movement in China and of the anti-capitalist movement globally confirmed his continuing political

optimism and enthusiasm. Undimmed and an internationalist till his last, he was still enquiring about the progress of the anti-war and anti-capitalist movements even in his very last days.

A modest and unembittered comrade, generous and scrupulously fair to others in the Chinese Trotskyist movement with different views, his memory and his example will continue to inspire us all.

Wang is survived by his wife, at least two of his children, and some grandchildren, all except one are now in China.

Socialist Alliance

A Sydney branch opposes Saddam

Lynn Smith

An open letter to ALP members was agreed to by a vote of five votes to two at the Canterbury/Bankstown Socialist Alliance branch meeting on 11 February. An Iraqi comrade who had previously spoken from the crowd at our local anti-war rally in Bankstown Square last Saturday spoke to the meeting prior to the discussion.

This comrade is from the Iraqi Residents' Association and is also a member of the Communist Party of Iraq.

In his talk at the start of the branch meeting he emphasised the importance of publicly condemning the Hussein regime and supporting Iraqi resistance to it. He said, "Iraqis are angry at those on the left who just say 'stop the war, stop the war'".

"That's what Hussein himself is saying. In fact, footage of the last Sydney demo was run on TV in Iraq by the regime's channel to demonstrate that people in Australia are also opposed to interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq".

"You people who say you are just against US imperialism and that's it are betraying the Iraqi people. Aren't our lives important? Isn't our suffering under this regime of any account? I tell you there are hundreds of Iraqis out there in Australia who would join you if you openly criticised the Saddam regime".

In answer to a question about the chances of an internal revolt being successful, Kassim replied, "when the insurrection took place against Saddam in 1991 after the end of the Gulf War and after Bush snr. told the people to revolt, we took 14 of the 18 states in two days. We can do it alright. This regime is hated by almost every single human being in the country. I can take you to Auburn (a Sydney suburb) and introduce you to men who were officers in the Revolutionary Guard who turned their guns on Hussein and fought the regime in '92".

After the Iraqi comrade left the meeting, an unaligned branch member spoke for his version of the ALP letter, which omitted all mention of Hussein. "I am an Argentinean and I was living in Buenos Aires at the time of the British invasion of the Falklands. Although we were living under a military junta which had killed maybe 20,000 people, our main focus was to defeat British imperialism".

I disagreed with the Argentinean comrade that this should have been the only focus. I said his position was not from a working-class perspective. It was not the position of Lenin and Trotsky and the socialists in Russia during the 1914-18 war. They did not say to the working class of Russia, "your main enemy is German imperialism... you should forget about opposing the capitalist class at home".

A DSP comrade confused the issue by saying that to build the broadest possible support for the anti-war movement we should welcome those who oppose Hussein and those who may not have the same position. I reminded him that we were not at a meeting of "the broad anti-war coalition" but a branch meeting of the Socialist Alliance. And the SA had a clear position on the issue of the Hussein regime, which was spelt out in releases to members and the mass media. This was the position we should adopt in our local media releases.

However, the clear anti-Hussein position won the day and is the one we will be sending to local press for publication as well as handing to ALPers when we meet them on the street and in the large city demos.

Boss Watch

Lynn Smith

It is now public knowledge that Kerry Packer has a pistol in the desk of his office at Consolidated Press Holdings in Sydney. A 9-millimetre Glock which, according to reports, is the kind of weapon that "can turn you into spaghetti sauce". Now, to be the legal owner of a handgun in NSW you have to be a registered member of a pistol-shooting club. And which pistol-shooting club does the "big fella" belong to? It seems the police haven't bothered to ask. Does Packer snr. have a gun licence? Again, silence. Why aren't the "anti-terror" laws the Carr State Labor Government rushed through Parliament before Christmas being used to prosecute everyone with equal vigour? After all, if an Arabic-Australian was found with an unlicensed pistol, there'd be hell to pay. Just shows you... the laws in this country do not apply to the rich. They're just for the rest of us.

Here are a couple of reasons why any 'colourful' public identity might have acquired a heater:

1. To shoot the tax department assessor who had the hide to ask for \$300 in income tax last year when everyone knows most newspaper, TV, magazine and casino barons are down to their last \$100 billion.
2. To shoot the tax lawyer for giving the tax people a reason to send a bill at all.

Beat this for hypocrisy! Bill Gates, owner of Microsoft and the world's richest person, announced on January 26 that he would give \$337 million to scientists who come up with ideas to "cure the world's ills".

No news here —for centuries the rich have tried to buy their way into heaven (or more to the point, tried to blunt anti-capitalist movements) by throwing seemingly large amounts (which are in reality petty cash to them) at charities. The news is what else he said. "It is a basic fact", continued Bill the Supernerd, "that 90 per cent of the world's health research goes on 10 per cent of the problems". I wonder what 10 per cent he is talking about? Wouldn't be the problems experienced by rich and the upper middle class in developed countries would it? After all, in the USA where all health care is privately owned and there is nothing remotely like Medicare, only those with expensive private medical cover can afford to see a doctor or be admitted to hospital.

The "National Survey of Workplace Issues 2002", commissioned by the ACTU, showed that the salaries of big bosses was workers' second most important concern (their own wages rated tenth). Perhaps they were referring to the fact that Australia's top 100 CEOs earn 44 times (yep...you got it...*forty-four* times) the average worker's wage. When asked to comment on this, a business association spokesperson said that CEOs' salaries were based on performance and it cost lots of money to attract a high performing boss. For some reason, the spokesperson omitted to mention that bosses who don't reach their targets still pocket millions in salaries each year. If the profit results of companies they head are so bad that boards are forced to sack them before their contracts expire, these eminent persons generally walk away with multi-million dollar golden handshakes as well.

Rumour has it that scabmeister and "children overboard" liar, Peter Reith, is likely to be offered a position on the board of the ABC to replace long-time Liberal Party hack, Michael Kroger, who is to retire. Could it be that the bullyboy who tried to smash the Maritime Workers' Union by trying to enforce Patrick's lockout in 1998 will soon be trying to lock out ABC staff who hold to their working-class principles and efforts at independent journalism? Oh and by the way, guess where our ex-private schoolboy is holed up right now? You guessed it. Reithy is goofing off on the board of leading spin-doctors, Jackson Wells Morris, where his

experience in transforming water into wine (after all, he helped John Howard turn the human tragedy of refugees into a racist backlash and victory at the polls didn't he?) will undoubtedly come in handy.

Letter

Dear Comrades,

There was much to commend in your Editorial [*in WL28 – ed.*]. I especially liked the emphasis on the united front as opposed to the popular front. I do, however, have to comment on one aspect of your Editorial. At one stage, you say: 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".

Now, I won't criticise you for Brereton's reference to "our" defence" forces, but I do think that his reference to "bilateral intelligence" should have been exposed and condemned. He was referring to Pine Gap, the spy base near Alice Springs. The Pine Gap base is a vital part of all US war plans in the Middle East and between there and Australia. It is necessary for target selection and programming for US missiles and "smart" bombs. In fact, it's by far the most important contribution the Australian government makes to the US war effort.

Any Australian troop commitment to a US war is purely a political token, something to make the US look like it's got some sort of backing and is acting at the head of a genuine international community. The real military contribution is the "bilateral intelligence" from Pine Gap. This has been the key Australian contribution to the Afghan War and the previous Gulf War and, regardless of how large the force Howard sends this time, Pine Gap will be the key contribution this time.

Any anti-war movement worth the name should be trying to close Pine Gap. Even if we don't succeed in time to affect the invasion of Iraq, there's no need to worry – there're plenty more wars where this one's coming from.

In Solidarity,

Paul Conway

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