

# A voice for a workers' alternative

**Workers Liberty's proposal for the basis for a Socialist Alliance.  
14 February 2001**

Workers Liberty endorses the need to mobilise a collective voice for a workers' alternative to the current projects of capital and to both the direct political parties of capital, the Liberals and the Nationals, and the pro-capitalist leadership of the ALP.

Accordingly we will join in enthusiastically in discussions around proposals for a Socialist Alliance.

The principles that we advocate as the basis for the Socialist Alliance are that its candidates and literature:

- Advocate a socialist solution;
- Call for the renovation of the labour movement;
- Emphasise the need for working-class struggle; and
- Call for a class-based vote, with preferences to the ALP or other workers' candidates, not to the Democrats. We are for the return of an ALP government, as long as the ALP remains the political expression of the trade unions, ie the overwhelming majority of the organised working class.

Socialists who recognise socialism as the liberation of the working class by the working class must focus on the trade union movement.

The discussions to form this alliance should address the following issues:

1. The policy platform.
2. The means by which these policies are to be achieved, and therefore to be campaigned around.
3. The decision making processes of the Socialist Alliance, including adoption of policies, endorsement of candidates, production of publicity and finances.

- **Policy platform**

## **Theme**

For a workers' plan to rebuild Australia - tax the rich, seize control from the profiteers, rebuild jobs, expand public services, create a democratic republic.

## **In more detail**

We are for socialism - By socialism, we mean nothing like the old Soviet Union, but instead solidarity raised from a principle of resistance to the guiding principle of society. We mean the working class organising to liberate itself from the rule of profit and create its own democracy, abolishing the privileges of managers and officials. Every major industry should be reorganised on the lines of social provision for need - publicly-owned, and democratically controlled by workers and the community. No rich and no poor, no profits and no wage-slavery, no mansions and no homeless, no jobless and no overworked!

Our candidates' aim is to enhance working-class political representation by providing a voice in the elections for working-class people seeking to assert their class interests against both the direct political parties of capital, the Liberals and the Nationals, and the treacherous pro-capitalist leadership of the ALP.

Candidates will support all working-class struggles, and all the battles for liberation of the oppressed. If elected, they will take only a worker's wage. They will be workers' representatives on a worker's wage.

We want to see the organised working class, through its unions and other organisations of struggle, create a workers' government, accountable to the labour movement and taking radical measures against wealth and privilege to serve the demands of the working class. We advocate that youth and radical movements seek to link their struggles to the working class movement.

## **Immediate issues**

### **The right to organise and fight**

- Every worker should have the right to join a union and oblige their employer to recognise and negotiate with the union. Unions should have the right to gain access to workplaces, to inspect company plans and books, to strike, to picket effectively, and to act in solidarity with other unions or social causes. Repeal anti-union laws - the Workplace Relations Act and sections 45 D and E of the Trade Practices Act.
- Disarm the police, and bring them under democratic community control - to prevent police attacks such as those made at S11 and Richmond Secondary College in Melbourne.

### **Economic equality**

- Tax the rich and slash the defence budget to fund free universal provision for health, education, and care of dependent people.
- End government funding of private schools, hospitals and health insurance.

- Repeal the GST and introduce a highly progressive progressive system of taxes on incomes, profits and wealth - reverse drastic reductions in business taxation of recent years.

### **Jobs for all**

- Expand public services and cut the work week without loss of pay. Companies making large scale job cuts should be nationalised with minimum compensation and handed over to workers and community control;
- Fight globalised capital with global working-class solidarity, to gain union rights, basic public services, and a living wage for workers worldwide, and for a global plan of economic reconstruction at the expense of the rich as our alternative to the poverty-and-privatisation drives of the WTO, IMF, World Bank, and international banks.

### **A sustainable future**

- Extend public transport
- Develop renewable energy and curtail greenhouse gas emissions
- Worker - community - green alliances to take control of production for human need and sustainability, not profit.

### **Rights for all**

- Recognise indigenous rights including native title
- Free access to Australia for migrants
- Sexual freedom and gender equality
- No discrimination on the basis of race, sex, nationality, religion, age, disability or sexuality.

## **2. Achieving these policies**

2.1 Such policies can be achieved by determined working class and community struggles and solidarity. This means that the SA must relate to the existing labour movement. The unions still remain the major organisations of the working class, the major vehicles of class struggle even though they represent the working class incompletely, unsatisfactorily, binding the class to capitalism. That was particularly apparent in the 13 years of Labor government between 1983 and 1996, with the Accord between the unions and the ALP.

The Alliance may not agree on precisely how to fully achieve these policies, but it must place mass action and solidarity ahead of parliamentary methods, reliance on the courts, or protection for Australian capital.

2.2 Standing candidates for parliamentary election is only one means that we will use to reach a wider audience to build support for these policies.

2.3 SA will advocate a vote in parliamentary elections first for any endorsed SA candidates, as a general rule with second preferences to the ALP ahead of Greens and the Democrats. There may be some individual cases for allocating preferences to other left-socialist candidates before the ALP. The Coalition would be receive last or second last preferences to any One Nation or far right candidates.

2.4 SA should consider taking on extra-parliamentary methods, especially within the labour movement, from workplace levels upwards, such as proposing endorsement of the SA policy platform, forming of SA campaign committees, seeking responses from union leaders, ALP branches, candidates and activist groups to the policy platform. We should anticipate the possibility of running SA candidates for union office where there is no viable rank and file movement already campaigning. The SA should fight for unions to call the ALP to account.

### **3. Decision making in the SA**

We understand that compromise will be necessary to keep the Alliance together, and that it must allow for members to express different interpretations within a broad framework. It will have to function in effect as a federation, not a unitary body. The decision making process should reflect this, and encourage full and open discussion, along with aiming to reach consensus.

3.1 Decisions should be made by a National Liaison Group on the basis of at least one vote per participating organisation, and voice but not vote for unaffiliated individuals, with the possibility of offering votes on pre-circulated propositions to properly-constituted local Alliances

3.2 Decisions within the SA should be made as far as possible by consensus.

3.3 Discussion should be supported by an email list open to the participation of all individual supporters, and members of supporting organisations, making up the SA.

3.4 The national liaison group should set the broad framework of the platform and campaigning methods, and ensure pluralism in the Socialist Alliance's nationwide list of candidates (political pluralism within the framework of the Alliance; also representation on the candidates' list of workers, trade unionists, youth, women, Aboriginals, etc.)

3.5 Local SA groupings will decide on candidates, specific campaign priorities and seeking of endorsements, subject to appeal to the national liaison group.

They should also take up non-electoral joint campaigning, supporting workers' and other struggles, and organise local political discussions.

3.6 Participants retain full freedom of criticism and elaboration of their own program, whilst recognising that uncomradely conduct will damage the viability of the SA.

3.7 We suggest that initial decision making should occur through an email discussion amongst representatives of the interested parties, and that there should be time allowed for progress to be made towards agreement on the key points before the advertising of public meetings to launch the alliance.