

# Alliance Voices

**Socialist Alliance Discussion Bulletin**

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**\$2**

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**Reports and photos from the 2006 SA national conference, and the National Trade Union Activists' Workshop on October 28, are available at [www.socialist-alliance.org](http://www.socialist-alliance.org) and [www.greenleft.org.au](http://www.greenleft.org.au)**

Items for Alliance Voices should be emailed to [national\\_office@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:national_office@socialist-alliance.org), faxed to (02) 9690 1381, or posted to PO Box A2323, Sydney South 1235. Only items submitted by current members of the Socialist Alliance will be published.

*The content of articles published in Alliance Voices reflect the views of the author, not necessarily those of the Socialist Alliance.*

# Draft minutes of the Socialist Alliance National Conference

October 29, 2006

Geelong Trades Hall

## Conference welcome, acknowledgement of traditional owners, draft agenda and procedures

Reporter: Lisa Macdonald for the National Executive.

### Motion from the National Executive that Lisa Macdonald chair the agenda and procedures session.

*Motion carried.*

The following apologies from branch delegates were noted: Bernie Wundsch (Northern Rivers), Belinda Selke (Blue Mountains), Gonzalo Villanueva (Brisbane Central), John Coleman (Sydney West).

### Motion from the National Executive: To adopt the following standing orders:

- a) Presiding committee. The presiding committee to be the National Executive.
- b) Chairing. Chairpeople will be proposed by the National Executive at the beginning of each session.
- c) Voting. Voting on reports, resolutions and amendments to be by show of delegate cards. Voting on resolutions and amendments to take place as soon as discussion on the resolutions and amendments in question has ended.
- d) Majority required. Decisions to be by simple majority;
- e) Procedure for selecting speakers. Delegates to have voice and vote. Non-delegate members to have voice but not vote. The speaking order to be formed of delegates and non-delegates, but session chairs shall ensure that all delegates who wish to speak get the opportunity to do so. The chair will aim to ensure balanced representation by gender and branch. Any delegate or non-delegate who has not spoken in the session is to have precedence over any delegate or non-delegate who has already spoken;
- f) Dealing with amendments. Following the reports moving the major resolution in each session, discussion move immediately to deal with any amendments proposed.
- h) Speaking limit. The speaking limit be four minutes for movers of resolutions (other than the major resolution in the session) and three minutes for all subsequent speakers on a resolution. Speakers may ask the conference for extensions.
- j) Procedural motions. In the case of procedural motions, only one speaker to be allowed for and against. Procedural motions do not require a seconder.
- k) Motion to gag debate. The motion to gag debate to be put without debate.
- l) Treatment and presentation of resolutions and amendments. Movers of amendments to be entitled to amalgamate and modify amendments at any time until the vote on the matter under discussion is taken. All resolutions and amendments to be submitted to the presiding committee so as to be able to be projected on screen for delegates.
- m) Media coverage. Conference to be open to media, but any speaker who does not wish to be recorded by media to so indicate and coverage to be suspended for the duration of the presentation of the speaker in question.

*Motion carried.*

### Motion from the National Executive: To adopt the following amended agenda:

- 10.00-11.00am Plenary panel: Australian politics today and the role of the Socialist Alliance
- 11.00-11.40am Plenary discussion
- 11.40-11.45am Voting on resolution
- 11.45am-12.10 Screening of Actively Radical TV's film on WA MUA
- 12.10-1.15pm Campaign workshops
  - (i) The Industrial Relations campaign and the November 30 national day of action
  - (ii) Against imperialist wars, Islamophobia and the assault on all democratic rights: "Stop Bush" 2007
  - (iii) Stop Indigenous deaths in custody!
  - (iv) No uranium mining, no nukes! Campaigning towards the ALP national conference
  - (v) Ending the ban on same-sex marriage
  - (vi) Venezuela: Building solidarity in Australia with the Bolivarian revolution
- 1.15-2.00pm Lunch
- 2.00-2.20pm Plenary panel: Building the Socialist Alliance
- 2.20-3.30pm Workshops
  - (i) Taking socialism to regional areas
  - (ii) Socialist election campaigning
  - (iii) Using the Internet for campaigning (creating and using websites, blogs, etc)
  - (iv) Radical journalism: How to write for *Green Left Weekly*
- 3.30-3.45pm Voting on resolutions from the workshops
- 4.00-4.20pm National Treasurer's report, discussion and voting

4.20-5.00pm Constitution and national leadership report (Lisa Macdonald for national executive), discussion and voting

5.00-6.00pm Elections of the national executive/office-bearers

*Motion carried.*

**Motion from the National Executive: To adopt as an accurate record the draft minutes of the 2005 national conference published in Alliance Voices Volume 5, Number 8.**

*Motion carried.*

**Motion from the presiding committee: That Chris Williams chair the plenary session on “Australian politics today and the role of the Socialist Alliance”.**

*Motion carried.*

**Plenary panel speakers: Rob Stary, Chris Cain and Dick Nichols, followed by discussion.**

**Motion from the National Executive: That conference adopt the resolution on “Australian politics today and the Socialist Alliance”, as follows:**

1. Since our last conference in May 2005, Socialist Alliance members and supporters in the trade union movement have worked hard to ensure that the overwhelming public opposition to John Howard’s anti-worker and union-busting laws has been mobilised in the massive nationwide protests over the last year—the largest worker protests ever organised in Australia.

2. While this campaign has not stopped the Howard government from bringing in these laws, which reverse gains won over 100 years of working-class struggle, the scale of the mass mobilisations and the unpopularity of the laws demonstrated in numerous polls has undermined many bosses’ confidence to rapidly use them against workers and unions. These mobilisations have also pressured Labor opposition leader Kim Beazley into promising to “rip up” Work Choices. The work of Socialist Alliance activists, especially in the unions, has been essential to achieving this result.

3. However, serious attacks on working people’s conditions of work and right to organise are under way. CFMEU and AMWU members in Western Australia are facing fines of up to \$28,600 for taking industrial action, while some bosses have begun forcing individual contracts onto workers and even refusing to pay for work done. At the same time, the punitive new “Welfare to Work” regime is forcing thousands more people into greater poverty and exploitation, and being used to undermine union-won working conditions.

4. It is still early days in the struggle against Howard’s anti-worker laws—crucial battles lie before us. Together with other militants, Socialist Alliance activists must continue to ensure that the campaign against Work Choices is not just an ALP election campaign, but one that strengthens unions’ ability to defend workers’ rights—now and under a possible future ALP federal government.

5. The Socialist Alliance will campaign for the defeat of the Howard government in the next federal election and for its replacement by a Labor government. However, we have little confidence that a Beazley government will stand by its promise to rip up Work Choices and Australian Workplace Agreements and introduce an industrial relations system that enshrines our rights at work unless there is sustained political pressure from below, expressed in independent union and broader community mass mobilisation and protest.

6. Strengthening resistance to the Coalition’s anti-worker laws should remain the priority campaign for the Socialist Alliance, not the least because serious defeats imposed on the organised working class will weaken the ability of all working people and all social justice movements to defend their rights.

7. In this context the 2005 Fightback Conference, an initiative of unionists in and around the Socialist Alliance, helped strengthen organised resistance to Work Choices and other anti-union laws by bringing together a broad range of militant trade unionists. The loose and informal network of militant resistance in the trade unions launched at this conference increased the potential to organise unionists for this fight on a broader scale. The Socialist Alliance should continue to facilitate the development of this broader network.

8. The Socialist Alliance’s second campaign priority should remain building the anti-war movement, as well as opposing the attacks on civil liberties in the form of new “anti-terrorism” laws and the criminalisation and scapegoating of Middle Eastern-Australian, Arabic-speaking and Muslim communities.

9. The Socialist Alliance gave wholehearted support to the protests initiated by the Middle Eastern-Australian and Muslim communities against Liberal and Labor support for Israel’s brutal wars on Lebanon and Palestine. Alliance

activists continue to help lead and organise the rallies and marches against the occupation of Iraq and the destruction of our democratic freedoms that the “war on terror” is used to justify.

10. The imperialist wars of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan are intensifying and the Howard government has increased its commitment of troops to aid its US allies. While the Labor opposition opposes Australian military involvement in Iraq it supports a greater Australian military intervention in Afghanistan as well as the US-Australia alliance (ANZUS). Labor state governments and the federal opposition have come 100% behind the so-called war on terror, and the associated racist scapegoating and assault on civil liberties. With George Bush coming to Australia for the APEC conference in September 2007, Socialist Alliance should help build the biggest and broadest possible demonstrations against Bush and Australia’s ties with Washington’s foreign policy and war machine.

11. While IR and anti-war remain the two top campaign priorities for the Socialist Alliance, our members continue to play leading roles in other important movements. For example:

Socialist Alliance members in gay and lesbian rights organisations threw their energies into organising last month’s national day on action against the federal ban on same-sex marriage. This remains an important and ongoing campaign in which Alliance members should continue to play a leading role.

\* Socialist Alliance is beginning to play a role in building resistance to Federal and State government attacks on the rights and gains of Indigenous Australia. With both Liberal and Labor parties either persecuting or abandoning Indigenous people, it is critical that the Alliance strengthen its contribution to this struggle.

\* Socialist Alliance is opposed to uranium mining, as we are opposed to the government’s plan to sell it to countries that have not signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, such as India. In the lead up to next year’s ALP national conference, at which the three-mines policy will be debated, Socialist Alliance activists have committed with other environmental and anti-nuclear activists, including some still in the ALP, to demand that all uranium mining cease. We are also committed to working with Indigenous peoples, and others, against the imposition of a nuclear waste dump anywhere in Australia and against plans to enrich uranium here.

\* The high per capita output of greenhouse gases, a by-product of Australian corporate and government investment in fossil fuels rather than renewable energy technologies is another important campaign for the Socialist Alliance. Widespread concern about the impact of greenhouse gases on climate change continues to generate local campaigns. These provide an important opportunity for the Alliance to highlight the limit of market-based solutions and to campaign for the rapid conversion of Australia’s energy industry into one based on renewable sources.

12. Socialist Alliance will continue to take the people-before-profits message into the electoral arena. The campaign of Sam Watson (the only Indigenous candidate) against premier Peter Beattie in the September 9 Queensland elections was an inspiring example of how a socialist election campaign can “give voice to the voiceless” and help profile all social justice issues at election time. While most people disgusted with the conservatism of both Labor and Liberal are currently voting for the Greens in elections, and the Socialist Alliance vote will therefore generally continue to be small in the short term, for the Alliance the gains from such campaigns are not measured only in votes. Just as important is the chance they provide to increase the profile of socialist solutions, to be a tribune for all struggles for justice and democratic rights and to build the Alliance.

13. More generally, the Socialist Alliance’s year-round campaigning activity puts left politics onto the political stage at every level. Whether it is putting motions to workplace meetings, organising students, distributing *Green Left Weekly*, hosting public forums, joining picket lines, organising fund raisers, contributing to *Seeing Red* magazine—all help to build resistance by boosting people’s confidence to take action to defend their rights. It raises the voice of dissent and gives millions of people hope with the knowledge that they are not alone in their hatred of war, racism and union bashing, and that organised resistance is possible, and happening.

14. Socialist Alliance re-affirms its core objective of promoting left unity and regroupment. However, we recognise that the Socialist Alliance will have to go through a more extended period of united campaigning and political convergence with the broader forces generated by a new upturn of resistance before it can develop the social base and harness the leadership resources needed to take a significant step towards creating a new mass socialist party.

15. Nonetheless, for first time in many years many in the working class look towards Socialist Alliance as a valuable step forward along that path. By championing the need for a broadly based anti-capitalist or new mass workers’ party and by always helping to organise the most united left intervention possible in the social movements, the Socialist Alliance can continue to win the respect of broader layers of militant workers and social justice activists, and win them to its ranks. In this way Socialist Alliance will continue to take practical steps along the road to building the political force that Australia’s workers, poor and oppressed need.

**Amendment moved by Jeremy Smith, seconded by Sue Bull: That a further sentence be added to point 7 that states: “The 2006 Trade Union Workshop represents a further initiative to bring together radical and socialist unionists in an ongoing network.**

*Amendment carried.*

*Motion to adopt the amended resolution carried.*

**Greetings from the FMLN presented by Francisco Ramos.**

**Screening of Actively Radical TV’s film on the WA Maritime Union of Australia, introduced by Jill Hickson.**

**Workshops:**

- \* The Industrial Relations campaign and the November 30 national day of action
- \* Against imperialist wars, Islamophobia and the assault on all democratic rights: “Stop Bush” 2007
- \* Stop Indigenous deaths in custody!
- \* No uranium mining, no nukes! Campaigning towards the ALP national conference
- \* Ending the ban on same-sex marriage
- \* Venezuela: Building solidarity in Australia with the Bolivarian revolution.

Lunch break.

**Greetings from Nelson Davila, Venezuela’s charge d’affaires in Australia, read by Lisa Macdonald.**

**Greetings from Islamic Girls and Women’s Group, read by Ema Corro.**

**Greetings from the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth, read by Margarita Windisch.**

**Greeting from Party of Labour – Turkey, read by Lisa Macdonald.**

**Motion from the presiding committee that Kerry Mulholland chair the plenary session on “Building the Socialist Alliance”.**

*Motion carried.*

**Plenary panel speakers: Amelia Taylor, Sam Watson and Peter Boyle.**

**Workshops:**

- \* Taking socialism to regional areas
- \* Socialist election campaigning
- \* Using the Internet for campaigning (creating and using websites, blogs, etc)
- \* Radical journalism: How to write for *Green Left Weekly*

**Motion from the presiding committee that Andrew Hall chair the rest of the conference.**

*Motion carried.*

**Voting on resolutions generated by workshops**

**Moved by Dick Nichols, seconded by Mick Bull that conference resolve:**

\* To immediately produce statement of position for the November 4 ‘Walks Against Warming’ provisionally entitled No Nukes! No Coal! Clean Green Energy is Possible!

\* To launch an open letter to Kim Beazley calling on the ALP to reject any change to ALP uranium mining policy (this to be initially an SA initiative for the November 4 protests but with SA investigating adding as broad as possible a range of initiating sponsors for it).

\* That the SA National Executive initiate discussions with other potential members of a coalition against uranium mining and nuclear energy with a view to building a national day of action at the time of the ALP national conference and even beforehand, if this proves feasible.

\* To set up a Socialist Alliance environment Yahoo! Group to continue discussion and information sharing.

*Motion carried.*

**Moved by Susan Price, seconded by Sam Wainwright that:**

\* SA produce a national poster and leaflet for the November 30 industrial relations protests.

\* SA branches commit to building the November 30 protests and organize the largest possible mobilisations of SA members as possible on the day.

\* SA produce a national statement on the issue of 457 visas, which be published as a pamphlet depending on available resources.

\* SA host another National Trade Union Activists Workshop in 2007. The timing to be determined by the National Executive in collaboration with the National Trade Union Committee.

*Motion carried.*

**Moved by Niko Leka, seconded by Pip Hinman that SA:**

- \* investigate and initiate a letter writing campaign in the broader movement to express solidarity with David Hicks (addressed to David Hicks and CC to Terry Hicks, Attorney-General Ruddock, Shadow Attorney-General Roxon); and
- \* investigate and initiate an SA postcard campaign to Ruddock demanding Bring David back and Close Guantanamo Bay.

*Motion carried.*

**Moved by Vivian Messimeris, seconded by Susan Price that SA:**

- \* continue to raise the same-sex marriage rights and civil unions demand;
- \* builds August 13 mobilisations;
- \* investigate the formation of a democratic, national coalition of groups fighting for [queer] marriage and civil union rights; and
- \* endorse and build queer blocs for the G20 and APEC protests.

*Motion carried.*

**Greetings from the Australia Latin America Solidarity Association presented by Cristobal Zelaya**

**Moved by Margarita Windisch, seconded by Alex Bainbridge that SA:**

- \* run in the 2007 federal election; and
- \* write up the main points and content of the election campaigning workshop in Alliance Voices.

*Motion carried.*

**Moved by Paul Benedek, seconded by David White that:**

- \* SA branches initiate and support, wherever possible, actions on Saturday November 18 against black deaths in custody; and
- \* SA design a national leaflet on 'Stop Black Deaths in Custody'.

*Motion carried.*

**National Treasurer's report**

Lisa Macdonald spoke to the following report from Neville Spencer on behalf of the National Executive:

**General situation of SA national finances**

Socialist Alliance National had a loss of \$4,750 for the 2005-06 financial year. This compares to a loss of \$1,702 for the previous year and surpluses of several thousand dollars for the couple of years preceding that. The previous surpluses and a \$10,000 loan to help set up *Seeing Red* meant we were able to cover this shortfall and still had a bank balance of \$7,695 as at June 30.

Our balance sheet as at June 30 shows a figure of \$19,874. However, this is largely accounted for by debts owed by branches. The elimination of the branch pledge system and the paper debts that had built up due to it, reduced the debts to SA National from \$52,074 as at June 2005 to a much more realistic \$23,803 as at June 2006. This is largely made up of debts for nationally-produced publications and merchandise. Even though this is more realistic, it can probably still be expected that a large proportion of this will not be paid off in the near future. In the first quarter of this financial year, we did not produce any new publications or merchandise to bill branches for, allowing some branches to catch up on debts. About \$3,000 in debts was converted to cash in our bank accounts.

Probably a more realistic assessment of our financial balance sheet is that if we were to pay all our bills owing and repay the \$10,000 loan, then chasing up a few extra debt payments from branches would see us just in the black.

**Income and expenses in 2005-06**

The biggest change in our finances for last year was the elimination of the branch pledge system. This meant that our income from this dropped significantly and will disappear altogether for the current financial year.

Income from branch payments for nationally-produced publications and merchandise also dropped, though this was largely due to the fact that we produced less of these items during the year and so was mostly offset by the drop in our expenditure on printing and merchandise production.

Our national conferences continue to make more money than they cost by several thousand dollars. This helped our figures significantly for the year and hopefully will do again this year.

A big expense for SA National is telephone costs, which is largely for the national phone hookups. While expenses on things like publications and merchandise ought to be covered by payments from branches, the cost of these phone hookups is not so easily met. In the past it would have been the branch pledges and the conference profits that covered them. With the elimination of branch pledges, we need this to be replaced by the new system of branch appeals for donations to SA National (with branches being give a 30% credit against their debts for the donations). This hasn't been carried out very much among the branches yet, so the income from it to date would not be sufficient to cover things like the national phone hookups.

We made a loss of \$4,436 for the year on *Seeing Red*. The *Seeing Red* project has made a loss of \$10,808 since its inception, though it did have a \$10,000 loan to start with, which has covered this so far. However, in the past, comparing the sales recorded by branches and the money paid for *Seeing Red* seemed to show that more money is actually collected for sales than is actually passed on to SA National and, hence, included in the above-mentioned figures. So the project is probably not such a drain on SA as a whole as these figures seem to show.

### **Future projections**

With the elimination of the branch pledge system, it is more important than ever that we insist on *branches paying in full for their national publications and merchandise bills*. These are generally charged to branches at around cost price so it is not sustainable to produce them if branches do not cover their cost.

If this is done, that just leaves us with the problem of covering our other costs, of which the telephone expenses and the *Seeing Red* losses are the big two. If we could eliminate the cost of the hookups by getting them working via the internet rather than teleconferencing, this would make this task much easier. *The National Executive has decided to put some effort into making sure that everyone on these phone hookups is set up such that they can be done via the internet.*

Since this still leaves SA National needing some source of income to cover the cost of remaining expenses, getting branches to seriously take up the new system of appealing for donations is imperative. The income appeals has generated in the few months since it replaced the branch pledge system is nowhere near sufficient to make our budget sustainable. *The National Executive is proposing that a specific target of \$10,000 be set for the appeal for the coming year and that targets (to be negotiated) be set for each branch to achieve as their contribution to this.*

The national conference is the other significant source of income that has given our budget a bit of a boost in past years. The profit we have made out of them has tended to be more of a pleasant surprise than something we had been banking on in our budget. While we hope they will continue to give our budget the same boost, it is probably inadvisable to count them as a means to fill any shortfalls.

*The National Executive also proposed that we look to producing more SA merchandise.* This has been a good source of income for branches in the past and should help branches meet the costs of leaflets, posters etc. produced by SA National, as well as their own operating expenses.

### **Motion from the National Executive that conference adopt the projections contained in the National Treasurer's report, and ratify the national account statement for 2005-06 circulated to delegates.**

*Motion carried.*

### **Constitution and national leadership changes report**

Lisa Macdonald reported for National Executive on the following proposed amendments to the Constitution:

#### **1. Delete 6.2, which states:**

6.2. Local branches are required to have paid their National Executive-ratified national pledge in full in order to be entitled to elect delegates to national conferences.

#### **2. Delete 6.8, which states:**

6.8. The following method shall apply for the election of the National Conveners:

- \* The National Conveners shall be elected by slate;
- \* Nominations of slates shall be open from the time of ratification of the National Executive by conference and close at the beginning of the final session of conference;
- \* Nominations for the positions of representatives of affiliate organisations on the National Executive shall be made by the affiliate organisations and made known by the opening of conference;
- \* Any conference delegate shall be eligible to present a slate;
- \* Nominees may decline nomination if they so wish;
- \* All slates nominated shall be available for scrutiny by conference;
- \* Voting shall be by show of hands;
- \* If no slate receives a majority of votes in the first round of voting, the slate with the least number of votes shall drop off and further rounds of voting conducted until one slate gains a majority.

#### **3. Delete 6.6 and 6.7, which state:**

6.6 The National Executive shall elect a National Treasurer, a National Coordinator, and Sub-committees as required to implement the decisions of the National Executive in between meetings.

6.7 The National Executive shall be composed according to the following formula:

\* 15 persons to be elected by the same proportional representation system used in the election of conference delegates from the branches to guarantee minority representation (single transferable vote), with no more than 40% to be elected from any one affiliate, tendency or organised political current.

\* In addition, any state or territory executive/committee which does not have a state member in the NE so elected shall have the right to send a delegate with voice and vote to all NE meetings, that delegate to be selected by the relevant state executive or state committee."

**and replace them with:**

6.6 The National Conference shall elect a National Coordinator, National Trade Union and Anti-war Committee Conveners, a Socialist Alliance-*Green Left Weekly* Editorial Board Convener and the National Website Manager.

6.7 The National Executive shall be composed of:

\* The National Coordinator, National Trade Union and Anti-war Committee Conveners, the Socialist Alliance-*Green Left Weekly* Editorial Board Convener, and the National Website Manager; and

\* 12 state representatives composed of 3 from NSW, 2 each from Victoria and Queensland and 1 each from the other states and territories, those representatives to be selected by the relevant state executive or state committee.

6.8 The National Executive shall elect a National Treasurer and further national sub-committees as required.

**4. In 8.1 and 8.8, replace the word “Conveners” with “Executive”:**

8.1 The basic unit of the Socialist Alliance is the local branch. A branch shall have at least seven members. Each new branch must be ratified by the National executive taking into account the location of other branches, including in relation to federal and state electoral work. All Alliance members will be assigned to a branch by the appropriate district organising committee (see below) or, in the case of remote regions, by the National Conveners.

8.8 Where branch meetings will conduct elections for office bearers, delegates or candidate pre-selections (except where a public election called at short notice makes this notice impossible), or consider a motion to close the branch, then 28 days’ notice of the meeting and the intended ballot or motion shall be given to all members of that branch, and the National Conveners shall be advised of the motion.

**5. Delete 9.8, which states:**

State and Territory conferences shall:

\* Ratify their unaligned State/Territory representatives on the National Executive;

\* Elect any additional National Executive representatives from their State/Territory as required;

\* Take reports from their State/Territory representatives on the National Executive.

**and replace it with:**

State and Territory conferences shall:

\* Elect/ratify the National Executive representative/s from their State/Territory, as required;

\* Take reports from their State/Territory representatives on the National Executive.

*Each Constitution amendment was voted on separately. All amendments were carried.*

**Elections of national office-bearers**

**Motion from the presiding committee that Barry Healy be elected returning officer for the election of national office bearers.**

*Motion carried.*

**National Coordinator**

Dick Nichols nominated by Lisa Macdonald

Lisa Macdonald nominated by Niko Leka

Lisa declined to stand.

*Dick Nichols elected unopposed.*

**National Trade Union Committee Convener**

Sue Bolton nominated by Chris Johnston.

*Sue Bolton elected unopposed.*

**National Anti-war Committee Convener**

Pip Hinman nominated by Garry Walters.

*Pip Hinman elected unopposed.*

**Socialist Alliance-Green Left Weekly Editorial Board Convener**

Dave Riley nominated by Paul Benedek.

*Dave Riley elected unopposed.*

**Motion from the National Executive that the national conference not elect all the members of the SA-GLW Editorial Board, but instead instruct the Editorial Board Convener to issue an open invitation to all SA members to participate in the Editorial Board.**

*Motion carried.*

**National Web Site Manager**

Peter Boyle nominated by Chris Williams.  
*Peter Boyle elected unopposed.*

**Dick Nichols moved a motion of thanks to outgoing national coordinator, Lisa Macdonald; to Geelong members Chris Johnston, Sue Pillikers, Robyn Anderson and Rowan Stewart; and to Bronwen Jennings, Chris Latham, Emma Clancy, Sue Bull and Tim Gooden.**

*Motion carried by acclamation.*

**Lisa Macdonald moved to extend the vote of thanks to Dick Nichols.**

*Motion carried by acclamation.*

The conference closed with two raps by Jakalene X-treme, a poem by Kerry Mulholland and the singing of the Internationale.

## **Greetings to the SA national conference**

### **Nelson Davila, Charge d'affaires, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Australia**

Companeros, delegates to the Building a Fighting Alternative SA national conference

Revolutionary greetings from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, where we are in the process of constructing our fighting alternative, our Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which offers hope and a future to not only Venezuela, but to people in struggle everywhere.

That in a place so distant, where socialists and organised workers are struggling to stake out your own rights, you still offer solidarity to other peoples struggles is an honour to Venezuela. International solidarity, revolutionary solidarity, is two-way. Venezuela also stands in solidarity with the struggle of the workers and the peoples of the world, to show that *we can win a better world*. Venezuela is fighting against injustice, against capitalism and against imperialism, which continue to create wars and misery across the planet, and we unite with all those in this common battle.

Together, united, peoples power can rid this planet of injustice and death. Only revolutionary unity of the workers, without borders, can open the doors to a new dawn for humanity.

In the name of President Hugo Chavez Frias, and the Venezuelan people who are mobilizing to defend the Bolivarian revolution, I send you combative and revolutionary greetings from the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Canberra.

*Nelson Davila  
Charge d'Affaires*

### **Party of Labour (Turkey)**

Dear comrades,

The objective of socialism guides the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peoples of the world. For more than twenty years, imperialism and the international bourgeoisie have tried to crush the hopes for liberation of the peoples, since the fall of the Berlin wall. They proclaimed the birth of a "new world order" and the treasure of capitalism as the highest and definitive level of economic-social development to which humanity could aspire.

But this did not mean the failure of socialism, but of the capitalism that had been restored in the countries calling themselves socialist. The revolutionary movement should draw conclusions from this process to avoid this degeneration from being repeated.

Only socialism is capable of resolving the contradictions to which regimes of exploitation have given rise, such a class contradictions and those between mental and manual labour.

It is a fact that in each of our countries the revolutionary processes will have their particularities and specific forms of accumulating revolutionary forces, but the general laws of the revolution and socialism remain unalterable and are indispensable for all countries.

Only socialism guarantees in a definitive manner the winning of social and national liberation.

Long live socialism.

Long live Socialist Alliance's struggle.

Long live internationalism.

*Turan Ertekin  
The Party of Labour (Turkey)  
Melbourne*

## **Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth**

Peace be Up on you all:

We thank the organisers for allowing FAMSU (Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth) to make these written greetings.

The war on Lebanon, recent siege of Gaza and ongoing occupation of Palestine has provided an opportunity for FAMSU to be involved in the anti-war movement in Victoria. A collaborative effort with peace movements and socialist organisations is something that we wish to continue to grow as the challenges facing peace in the world will only increase in the short term. The recent peace conference which hosted Cindy Sheehan, Dr Salam Ismael and Anas Altikriti is a good example of this growing relation.

Muslims in Australia and around the globe are under intense pressures for their political stances and expressions e.g. stance against war on Lebanon. We have also seen the recent media attack on a socialist organisation e.g. the *Age* article: "The Un-holly alliance" in response to the collaboration with Muslim groups against the war on Lebanon. The same title was used word for word in a similar article in the UK.

In my view, collaboration to achieve common goals will strengthen the anti-war movement in Australia.

I am heartened by the amount of political pressure that George Bush and Tony Blair are now facing due to their misguided foreign policy and utter and complete failure in Iraq. The "coalition of the willing" became the "coalition of the killing" and is now becoming the "coalition of the wavering".

I am also heartened by the fact that socialist movements and Islamic movements are working together at an organisational level around the globe. At a national level, the growing relationship between strong leaders like Chavez and Ahmedijahad is also very encouraging. These leaders are giving the strength to others to say "no" to wars, "no" to occupation, "no" to imperialism, "no" to bullying tactics, "no" to interference in politics in the world and especially in the Middle East.

*Mohammad Helmy  
Victorian President  
FAMSU*

## **Islamic Girls' and Women's Group**

Islamic Girl's Women's Group would like to apologize for not being able to attend the conference today due other prior commitments (ie Eid celebrations). IGWG have enjoyed working in partnership with the Socialist Alliance on various activities and events. Thousands of Victorians attended major rallies against the war on Lebanon and Palestine which IGWG, the Socialist Alliance, and other organizations helped facilitate and organize.

We believe it is extremely important to educate the general Australian public on local and international matters. This is exactly what the Socialist Alliances does; it provides a 'voice' for those who are not heard and is a movement towards social awareness, fairness, and equality. We wish the Socialist Alliance all the best with their future endeavors and looks forward to working together in the future.

*Maryum Aziz  
Islamic Girls' and Women's Group  
Melbourne*

## **Australians for Palestine**

Australians for Palestine would like to this opportunity to thank all of the members and friends of the Socialist Alliance for their support of the Palestinian people and their struggle for their right to establish an independent and viable Palestinian state.

AFP is a group of like minded individuals who work together with a very clear objective. We are here to promote the Palestinian voice in Melbourne and Australia. To that end we have begun a number of programmes to advance this voice.

Firstly, we have embarked on a letter writing campaign that sees us submit several letters each day to the daily papers. We have successfully managed to get 9 letters printed since mobilising 8 weeks ago.

Secondly, we have developed a format for a briefing paper that is submitted once a week to all politicians in Canberra. Each week we select a topic on Palestine that is then researched and a document is created that in a clear, concise and most importantly factual manner.

We extend our support to the members of the Socialist Alliance and their friends gathered here today.

We look forward to working with you in achieving a common goal – the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Free Palestine!

*Moammar Mashni  
Australians for Palestine*

## Letter from Illawarra SA

*The following letter was sent by the Illawarra branch of the Socialist Alliance to the Illawarra Greens on October 16, 2006, proposing a joint candidate in the seat of Keira in the 2007 election.*

Dear Scott and our friends in the Greens,

We understand that as yet the Greens have no candidate to contest the seat of Keira for the 2007 election.

In light of the growing public discontent with the ALP, we would like to reaffirm our commitment to working with the Greens in an effort to actively strengthen progressive politics in the Illawarra, for fear that said discontent could potentially turn the electorates to the Coalition - something we can agree would be disastrous.

In light of this we wish to raise, for discussion, the possibility of running a joint candidate in Keira; endorsed and supported by both the Greens and the Socialist Alliance, on an agreed platform.

In the current political climate maximising our unity and strengthening the working relationship between progressive parties is a positive & necessary thing. The Greens and the Socialist Alliance share much in common, particularly our policy platform (e.g. We wholeheartedly agree with the four Green principles), and work together very well on the ground. We are confident we could reach agreement around many issues.

Socialist Alliance members have been leading a number of important campaigns of late, including playing a strong role in running the Wollongong Undergraduate Students' Association (WUSA) and their important struggle against Howard's Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU); solidarity with the people of Lebanon, Palestine & Iraq; young workers' rights and the fight against Work Choices; solidarity with international movements such as in Venezuela and Bolivia; initiating action around climate change and the international day of action on November 4 (Walk Against Warming); to name a few.

A number of Socialist Alliance activists would be very good candidates for such a united campaign.

Our proposal would be that we meet to discuss this option further should you be interested.

We sincerely hope that you will all consider this proposal as a possibility to strengthen ties between our two parties and an attempt to make sure that the 2007 election campaign is one dominated by real issues affecting people, not the pragmatic manipulation of "issues" fed to the electorate by the ALP advertising machine. In any case, we look forward to working closely with you and Greens in the future. Not only in election campaigns but also in other grassroots & community campaigns where our members are active.

In solidarity,

Chris Williams, Jess Moore, Callum Blanchard, Matt Barden, Katie Cherrington  
Organising Committee, Illawarra Socialist Alliance  
Contact Chris Williams on 0425 329 963 or bendigo1977@yahoo.com.au

## Two new SA campaign e-lists to join

Two new national campaign discussion lists have been established for Socialist Alliance members – one on environment issues and one on Latin America solidarity.

To join any of the SA e-lists below, established for members to exchange information and ideas about specific campaigning areas, just send a blank email to the following addresses:

**Environment issues:** saenvironment-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

**Latin America solidarity:** SALatinamericasolidarity-subscribe@socialist-alliance.org

**Civil liberties/democratic rights:** sademocraticrights-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

**Women's liberation:** sawomensrights-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

**Justice for Indigenous people:** saindigrights-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

**Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex rights:** sasexualityrights-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

**Refugee rights:** sarefugee-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

**Anti-war:** sa\_anti-war-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

**Welfare issues:** sa\_social\_justice-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

**Green Left Weekly content:** saglw\_copy-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

**Trade unions:** There are a range of national e-lists for members of particular trade unions. For more information about the union e-lists, contact national\_office@socialist-alliance.org or [sue\\_bolton@hotmail.com](mailto:sue_bolton@hotmail.com)

## Howard's Muslim-bashing won't advance women's rights

*The following media statement was issued by the Socialist Alliance on November 2, 2006.*

"When hypocritical old sexists like John Howard, Peter Costello and Alan Jones start delivering pious sermons about the rights of women, something very suspicious is happening in Australian politics", Pip Hinman, the anti-war spokesperson for the Socialist Alliance, said today.

Hinman was commenting on the media furore about remarks by the imam of Sydney's Lakemba mosque, Sheikh Tajel-din Al Hilaly. The Sheikh apparently told a service at the mosque that women who do not wear the hijab, or headdress, are like uncovered meat.

"The Sheikh's comments, that women dressed in a certain way incite rape and violence, are hardly original", Hinman continued. "Over the centuries, many—man and women, Muslim and non-Muslim—have been happy to blame rape victims for inciting the violence against them."

The Alliance spokesperson said that the Sheikh's view simply reflects the sexism that is rife in this society — something that cuts across all religions and communities. Feminists and their supporters have been campaigning against such backward attitudes for decades.

"We'll start listening to Howard and Costello on discrimination and violence against women when, for example, he condemns his mates in the Anglican Church for banning the ordination of women," she said.

"The shock jocks call for the Sheikh to be deported for his backward views on women, but what about that pillar of Anglo-Celtic righteousness, His Honour Justice Bollen of the South Australian Supreme Court? Just over 10 years ago he infamously said:

'There is, of course, nothing wrong with a husband, faced with his wife's initial refusal to engage in intercourse, in attempting, in an acceptable way, to persuade her to change her mind, and that may involve a measure of rougher than usual handling.'"

Hinman added that former Liberal PM Malcolm Fraser had hit the nail on the head when he said that Howard was gearing up for a Muslim-bashing election campaign.

"Manufacturing an election around the 'clash of civilisations' is a deliberate distraction from the issues that all Australians feel very strongly about—the Iraq war, Work Choices and runaway climate change."

## **Climate change: time for some long-term solutions**

*By Elena Garcia, Queensland at-large member*

*I submitted the following to Premier Peter Beattie's survey on climate change solutions for Queensland (<http://www.thepremier.qld.gov.au/climatechange>) and thought it might be of interest to others in SA.*

1. We should not jump on Howard's pro-nuclear bandwagon. The whole nuclear power debate is a dangerous red herring. Nuclear power will not reduce greenhouse gases. It's not a viable alternative to oil and coal. There are already viable alternative power sources that can be used: solar, wind turbine, water turbine, tidal, ethanol, hydrogen. Any deficiencies can easily be resolved by investing into research and development a fraction of the money that would be required to build and maintain nuclear power stations. Another fraction of that money could be spent in subsidising consumers to use power more efficiently. Canada gave free power-saver light bulbs to its citizens and instead of having to build new power stations to fill demand, they ended up taking some power stations off-line (source: David Suzuki). The Queensland Remote Area Power Scheme/RAPS program (subsidising rural consumers' conversion to solar power) was a huge success until the money ran out. Increase the funding for it, expand it to cities, and leave the existing electricity supply for industry. Mandate passive solar, fully insulated new houses. Put money into developing the UNSW roof tile solar panels developed over 20 years ago out of a very cheap silicon, where tiling the roof supplies enough power for the average home, and then subsidise consumers' conversion to them. Add on a solar hot water service. The options to save power are endless, and paying consumers to do it would still be cheaper than building and maintaining nuclear power stations- let alone the cost of dealing with the resultant nuclear waste.

2. Re-open the rail lines (bringing life back to many country towns), put solar panels on the roofs of the carriages to feed back into the grid (as regenerative braking does), and pay for it by stopping the subsidies to freight companies. Give city people a real option to cars. Make public transport free in cities, expand it to give decent suburban and late-night coverage, and expand the cycleway networks. Bring in trams to country towns.

3. We should not be mining uranium at all. By mining uranium we open ourselves up to accepting the end result- highly toxic nuclear waste. Martin Ferguson already argued in favour of this on an SBS Insight debate, posing it as both a question of taking responsibility for the end results of selling, and as a lucrative money-spinner for our wide deserts. This tramples once again on the rights and wishes of traditional owners, who have been vocal in saying their sacred lands should not be a toxic dump. Let's buy out of the whole argument- if we don't mine and export uranium, we don't have to accept responsibility for toxic nuclear waste. Statements on safeguards by regulating who we sell uranium to are just that- statements. We cannot enforce who our uranium clients sell our uranium on to, or what they do with it. Australian politicians need to look at new ideas and long term solutions for the future, not dig up outmoded and dangerous stupidities from the past.

4. We need to use power more efficiently, and we need to recycle the little water that we have. There is no point digging vast new holes in the ground when rainfall cannot be guaranteed, and could easily become even less in the future. Particularly if we are covering some of our precious decent farming land in water. Instead, get the heavy machinery in to existing dams while they are so empty, and dig them deeper. The silt on the bottom is useful farm dirt and can be recycled by spreading it on some of our poorer farmlands. Deeper dams lose less water to evaporation.

Recycle water. Tertiary treated sewage is cleaner than most of the river water and low dams our present drinking supplies are drawn from. A lot cleaner than most bore water. Even cleaner than water from rainwater tanks: no bird poo, no giardia. Present the facts and ignore the fear campaigns.

Mandate rainwater tanks to be connected to every new home, and retrofitted to existing homes and government buildings. Subsidise them, so if people don't want to drink recycled water, they can drink and wash in tank water, like most rural Australians already do.

Harvest stormwater instead of letting it run out to sea.

Implement the above suggestions instead of building a hugely expensive network of pipelines, and it will still be cheaper, and much more sustainable and reliable in the long-term. If we do not conserve our water, no dam will ever be big enough, particularly when we can't guarantee rain to fill it.

5. Even desalination plants would be cheaper than dams and pipelines. At least with desalination, the money invested produces a guaranteed amount of water, unlike dams, which only guarantee a big empty hole in the ground. Put some research money into working out how to use the salt waste.

6. Conserve power also. Offer subsidies for the most power-efficient appliances. Set up design awards to reward efficiency. Let government buildings set the example- insulation, double-glazing, and ceiling fans in schools, prisons and offices.

7. Harvest methane from tips, bottle it, and sell it for cooking gas. Offer incentives to farmers to convert manure to methane for harvest, as an alternative to letting the manure from intensive farming run off into our rivers. Harvest methane from sewage plants. Offer incentives to manufacturers to design and supply gas cookers that can run on methane. Research other uses for methane.

8. Offer prizes for innovative ideas and solutions. Invest in some of the ideas that come up on the ABC's The Inventors program. Put Queensland's clever brains to work. After all, we are the Smart State. Let's lead the way for Australia.

## **Right Vs Left**

*Gregory Rowell, Sydney West branch*

It has been an ongoing battle for decades, the battle between left and right. One side believes that their view is correct, whilst the other believes likewise. So what are some of the dividing values that pitch one view against another.

### **Equality**

The first concept that we must address if we are to understand this division, is equality. Equality can be defined as the equal value of each individual; the belief that each and every one of us is valuable and important.

This is a very difficult concept for many to understand, because our society is built around competition; competition at school, competition at sport, competition at work. We are constantly trying to be better than the next person, and this is encouraged throughout our life. This competition and wish to be better than the next person helps to enlarge our ego and develop our feeling of superiority, and our superiority is what justifies our feeling that we are better, or deserve more than the next person.

This is where the division between left and right begins. Those on the left have come to realise that they are no more important than the next person, that they share a world with billions of others, and that all of us deserve to live in comfort and have a decent life. This is not a view shared by the right, for they believe that some people are inherently more valuable and more important than others.

It is important to note here that we are not comparing the skills of an individual, but the inherent value of each individual. Stripping away the things that make us an individual leaves us in a similar position to that of a grain of sand on a beach, just one amongst billions. The moment we consider that we have more value than another person in the community, we create a division that helps us to justify our greed, our ego and our arrogance.

### **Skills**

The right sometimes justifies their belief that some people are more important by suggesting that some skills are more important than others. On the surface this would seem apparent, but this depends only on the circumstances that require the skill. For example: we know that doctors save lives, and therefore are very valuable to a community. After all, if we are on our death-bed, only a doctor may save us, a carpenter for example, could not.

Some people would therefore say that a doctor is far more valuable than a carpenter. However, if our house were falling over or a new building was required, a doctor would be useless. Under these circumstances therefore, a carpenter is much more valuable than a doctor.

An artist and an actor also highlight the different requirement in skills. Artists must have a good imagination and be able to vividly see their creation in their mind as they paint. Actors must be exceptionally good at remembering very long texts to repeat to the audience. Once again this does not determine that one person is more valuable or superior, only that individuals have different skills and abilities. The same could be said of every skill that we use on a day to day basis, demonstrating this principle.

It is true, however, that to develop different skills, varying amounts of money, time and effort are required. This does not determine that a doctor is more important than a carpenter, only that our society is such that it does not always support those developing different skills. This is a fault of our society and not an indication of superiority or importance.

### **Intellect**

The right also use intellect as an argument to further divide the community and to justify the belief that some people are more valuable and superior to others. This would seem a difficult one to argue against, because it is true that some people are born with different strengths and weaknesses, different mental capacities and different abilities. This cannot be an argument however, because different abilities or capacities only serve to guide people in which skill to further develop.

If we use the doctor/carpenter as our hypothesis, we can get a clearer picture of this concept. One could assume that a doctor would require a higher degree of mental acuity than a carpenter. While this may be true, it should be clear that a carpenter would require a totally different set of abilities. A carpenter may require a better sense of balance, a stronger physique and an ability to understand engineering stresses in buildings.

We can eliminate therefore, intellect from the argument, because once again we come back to the skills debate, where we have already shown that different skills do not necessarily mean more importance or superiority.

### **Responsibility**

The right also uses responsibility to justify importance and superiority. They believe that if a person is in a position of responsibility, then they are more important, superior and deserve more than others.

Managers, for example, regularly suggest that they are more important, have more responsibility and deserve more than their employees. To argue this we can use the example of a carpenter and a manager. It would be rare to find a manager in Australia that does not think that he is more important than a carpenter. He may justify this by suggesting that he is in a position responsible for the running of the company, and that the company could not do without him. However if a company were to be given a contract to build a building, the manager himself would not be able to do the work required. The manager would forward the job to the carpenter.

In this example, it could be argued that the manager is therefore surplus to requirements; that the carpenter could do the work without a manager at all. Who, then, is actually in the position of responsibility? Not only is the carpenter responsible for building the building, he is required to take responsibility for the construction of the building, the safety of the building during construction, and upon completion certify the building safe and habitable. In this example the carpenter is clearly in a more responsible position than the manager.

We could also use the example provided by cigarette manufacturers to further refute the argument of responsibility. We know that smoking causes cancer, heart disease and other serious health problems, but do CEOs and managers of cigarette companies take responsibility for the disease and harm they cause to the millions that smoke them? No. Surely if these CEOs and managers are as responsible as they suggest, then they should take responsibility for the damage they cause. As we have seen from examples in the media, cigarette companies appear to go to any length to actually avoid taking responsibility. In this example, CEOs and managers are clearly not more responsible.

Similarly, we could use the performance of military hardware and of munitions manufacturers to demonstrate this lack of responsibility. Both military hardware and munitions are designed for one purpose only – to kill. Surely if the managers and CEOs of these companies were in a position of responsibility then they should “take” responsibility for the billions who have died during war, the millions assassinated, or for the arming of warlords and warmongers that have killed many more millions. Again do the CEOs or managers take responsibility for these deaths? Unsurprisingly, no.

So if CEOs and managers are not responsible in the above examples, are they then responsible to the public? Clearly not. If this were the case then the banks and the big corporations would not be slashing thousands of jobs. James Hardy would not be giving the board giant pay rises before dying victims and future victims of asbestos were well provided for. Big corporations would be looking after their employees instead of slashing conditions and wages in order to make even larger profits. People would come before profit. Does this actually happen? No. Again in these examples, CEOs and managers are clearly less responsible.

### **Conclusion**

Are CEOs and managers more important than their employees as they would suggest they are? If a company had no employees the company would not function. There would be no food produced, no phones answered, no shelves stocked, no checkouts manned, no buildings built, no furniture made, no clothing to wear. Therefore are CEOs and managers more important than their employees? Unless the CEO or manager can carry out all of the tasks that a company requires, the CEO or manager are clearly not more important than their employees. The example set by millions of co-operatives operating successfully around the globe, prove this point.

In arguing these points it is not my intention to denigrate CEOs and managers, only to show that everyone in a community is equally valuable and equally important; that the arguments the right use to justify their importance, greed, arrogance and ego, are false and without foundation. I have no doubt failed to convince those on the right, but this was not my goal. By arguing the points above, I threaten the right's sense of superiority and their ego. I make them think, if only for a moment, about their sense of self and their self importance!