

DISCUSSION  
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## DOCUMENTS

# Developing the common socialist voice

## An open letter to Socialist Alliance members and affiliates

Comrades,

We write as non-aligned members within Socialist Alliance. We consider it urgent to respond to the six-month debate over progressing the move from an electoral alliance toward a multi-tendency socialist party.

There is no particular set of proposals that frames our intervention. We have not sought to formulate a common view on what may resolve the historical, theoretical and programmatic differences among affiliates currently barring this development. However we do feel it is important to bring a non-affiliate membership perspective to bear.

We are “non-aligned” and thus have come to the Alliance project from a diversity of individual views, perspectives and experiences. The single thread that unites us in our diversity is that we have joined the Alliance because of the promise it holds for developing the common socialist voice so urgently required. An electoral alliance has been a good first step and the dividends of that unified demonstration have been realised in terms of our successful exposure in the wider political landscape. While there have been obvious gains in ongoing Alliance political work since establishment more needs to be done to consolidate and expand this success. This cannot be achieved if our collective resources and commitment, particularly from the affiliates, remain centered on a parliamentary election cycle.

It is evident from the debate thus far that there is resistance among most affiliates to pursuing the opportunity of socialist regroupment the Alliance offers. This is disappointing because the conditions for developing a strong, unified socialist voice in this country have not been better for many decades. Australia is in the midst of the first clear-cut imperialist war since Vietnam. The Labor Party has never been so alienated from its working-class base and there is a substantial break to the Left as evidenced by the dramatic growth in Green support. It is difficult to fathom what more political encouragement affiliates require. The Alliance needs to rise to this historic opportunity and the challenge it presents right now—not wait for some mythic future moment when the conditions spontaneously become “just right”.

In some respects socialist regroupment through the Alliance is already underway. Over half the membership is not aligned to any particular tendency. Nevertheless, for a socialist regroupment to be effectively realised and prosper it has to be undertaken with the integral involvement of the revolutionary affiliates. We recognise differences cannot be papered over. Program debates have to be had, theoretical perspectives clarified and the integrity of principled differences preserved. This is to be welcomed as part of the strength and vitality of a growing socialist organisation rather than seen as a basis for political and organisational paralysis.

Non-aligned members are not persuaded by affiliate concerns of the Alliance being dominated by any one particular tendency. For affiliates to abandon the terrain of debate for socialist regroupment on the basis of caution, or worse, on the basis of historical circumstances long past, will be to realise precisely a *de facto* single tendency domination. As long as the Alliance retains its current character as a democratic organisation, where a consensus-building activist culture and the force of the better argument prevails, the case for retaining separate party organisational structures by affiliates rings hollow. Who are affiliates expecting to reach within the politically advanced sections of the working class that does not include current non-aligned members of the Alliance?

We urge affiliates to present their case and negotiate their terms for retaining the organisational and programmatic integrity of their tendency. This must occur within the context of an Alliance functioning as a single and united socialist voice, whatever the current limitations given the differences we all bring to the Alliance. Moreover, it must occur with the full ongoing participation and resources of the affiliates to order to advance the growth of the Alliance. This is the only available guarantee for realising a socialist re-groupment with a revolutionary dynamic.

With a democratic and organisationally united socialist voice non-aligned members will stay the course, and more will come.

United in Struggle

[Signatories at 11 April 2003]

**Bankstown branch:** Raul Bassi, Jepke Goudsmit, Graham Jones

**Brisbane branch:** Dave Riley, David Lafferty, Fay Waddington

**Canberra branch:** Alistair Greig, Lesley Hayes, Paul Kringas, Ian Shepherd, Humphrey McQueen, Bill Tully, Mick de Lange, Narendra Mohan Kommalpati, Rob Hurle, Clare Martin, Ben Smith, Jyoti Ida-Dury, Sami Omar, Lionel Bopage, Sue McKay, Anne Barrington, John van der Velden.

**East Sydney branch:** Kerry Klinner, Maureen Frances, Noel Hazzard

**Launceston branch:** Alan Hasdell, Barry Hicks.

**Lismore branch:** Andrew Watson; Lyn Stewart.

**Marrickville branch:** Mitch Bond.

**Parramatta branch:** Katrina Heckendorf, Alistair Dickenson

**Perth branch:** Kiraz Janicke, Chris Cain.

**Seat of Melbourne branch:** Alejandro Rodriguez.

**Sydney Central branch:** Melinda Smith, Jamal Darwand, Rex McLeod, Adrian Wright, Al Westwood, Austin Witton, Patricia Saddler

**Sydney Northside branch:** Juanita Feldbauer, Michael Morphet.

**Toowoomba (at large):** Alan Bradley.

**Wills branch:** Maureen Murphy

*The above letter was first circulated through the National Executive email network to Alliance branches on March 29, 2003. If any non-aligned comrade wishes to add their name to this letter, or has any questions*

*about it, please get in touch with Michael Morphett at 02 99812349 or John van der Velden at 02 6247 8813 or [jvelden@pcug.org.au](mailto:jvelden@pcug.org.au).*

## Letter to the Socialist Alliance National Executive from the DSP National Executive

19 March 2003

Dear Comrades,

As I wrote in my letter of 3 September 2003 to the Socialist Alliance National Executive, the DSP is convinced that a further step in left unity by the Socialist Alliance is both possible and politically desirable. As the latest barbarous imperialist war commences and the need for a strong socialist pole in Australian politics becomes more urgent, we are strengthened in this conviction. The DSP remains prepared to cease building itself as a public organisation and to devote its resources, instead, to building the Socialist Alliance. While we would urge other affiliate organisations to do the same, we do not insist on this as a pre-condition to the DSP taking this step.

However, as everyone knows, the International Socialist Organisation argued that such a move, carried out unilaterally by the DSP, would provoke them to leave the Alliance. In the interest of preserving left unity, the DSP then withdrew its proposal to cease operating as a public organisation from January 2003 (see our 20th Congress resolution on the Socialist Alliance).

Since then the discussion in the Socialist Alliance about a further step in the left unity process has effectively stalled. In a 18 February 2003 letter from the DSP Political Committee comrade Dick Nichols invited Socialist Alliance affiliate organisations to specify the conditions under which they could accept the DSP's becoming an internal tendency within the Alliance, but to

date no affiliate has replied. Consequently, some Socialist Alliance members have expressed their concern that the Socialist Alliance project is beginning to fail

We think it is urgent that the discussion about deepening left unity be restarted in the Socialist Alliance.

To help restart the discussion in a more productive way, we would like to propose to the May National Conference that the Socialist Alliance launch a formal internal discussion in its membership about the conditions and terms under which all affiliate organisations could operate as political tendencies within the Socialist Alliance while building it as their common public organisation.

This proposal would subsume our request that other affiliates specify the conditions under which they could accept the DSP's becoming an internal tendency, even though it would still be useful for the discussion we propose here for other affiliates to outline their thinking on this particular issue.

We would request that the Socialist Alliance National Executive consider appointing a drafting committee to put together a resolution to this effect. Alternatively, we could draft such a resolution together with others in the Alliance who support such a proposal and submit it to the pre-conference bulletin.

Comradely regards,  
John Percy

DSP National Secretary on behalf of the DSP  
National Executive ■

## Socialist Alliance: towards a multi-tendency socialist party

*By Workers' Liberty*

*[This article was published in Workers' Liberty Number 30.]*

Workers' Liberty's top concerns are that we should not squander the current opportunities to overcome problems that have been dogging the left for decades. We repeat our initial welcoming of the Democratic Socialist Party's proposals to work towards a more unified Socialist Alliance. We also welcome the statement by non-aligned members of the Alliance, asking the affiliates to make their proposals for the Alliance as a regroupment project.

The anti-war movement and the thousands of new activists it is generating make the need all the more urgent for the socialist left to take regroupment seriously. Workers' Liberty particularly appeals to the International Socialist Organisation to stay with the Socialist Alliance project, not to retreat into sectarian

self-isolation and to put forward its ideas for how the Socialist Alliance can progress.

Workers' Liberty's concerns for how the Socialist Alliance can develop differ from the DSP's. The DSP's proposals so far place a much higher premium on stronger, more efficient organisation structures, whereas Workers' Liberty is concerned with political agreement and democratic rights to express differences.

In summary we are for making sure that progress towards a unified party is the result of political discussion that resolves differences where possible, and clarifies the basis of remaining disagreements.

This is fundamental. Socialists first and foremost are distinguished by ideas. Our organisational divisions reflect differences of ideas, and our weak influence in the political life of our countries reflects a combination of factors, including lack of influence of our ideas, especially within the organised working class. If the Socialist Alliance does not as an organisation share a

clear and conscious understanding of where we agree and disagree, our unity will be fragile.

The development of the Socialist Alliance towards a multi-tendency unified socialist party will depend most of all on the conduct of political discussion within the Alliance. Activism will continue, leaflets will be produced, rallies called, street stalls held, campaigns organised etc. But without these activities being based on informed commitment, they will remain predominantly the domain of the majority tendency, the DSP, and they will not expand the participation of non-affiliated members or the other affiliates.

## **Outstanding political issues**

Workers' Liberty proposes specifically that a number of political issues require much deeper discussion:

### **1. What socialism is, and what we can learn about it from history**

We disagree with the DSP on the nature of Cuba, Vietnam, and the former Soviet Union. Workers' Liberty says that the former Stalinist regimes have nothing in common with socialism. The DSP says that state owned property is the foundation of socialism. We say that the self-organisation of the working class is the foundation. The DSP is proposing that the Socialist Alliance needs to publish a book on an introduction to socialism. Such a publication is essential for a socialist party, but the Socialist Alliance has so far not discussed what socialism is, a pre-condition to publishing a book on the topic.

### **2. Imperialism and capitalism**

How do we campaign for the overthrow of capitalism internationally? The DSP emphasises imperialism, implying that big capital and powerful regimes are the enemy, but not smaller, weaker capitals and smaller repressive regimes. For example the DSP has taken with alacrity to using the phrase that there are "two super-powers in the world today"—the USA launching war on Iraq, and the people of the world who are opposed. This is as if socialists in Australia need not be concerned about working class, democratic, secular or socialist forces in the Middle East, who are fighting their own repressive regimes (such as Saddam's) and whose enemy is not just the USA, but is also very much at home. Workers' Liberty rejects the two-camp view held by the most of the left, including the ISO and the DSP, which says that we must be on one side or the other. Workers' Liberty is with the Labour Party of Pakistan, and the Workers Communist Parties of Iran and Iraq, who do not support one side simply on the basis of opposition to imperialism. These ideas are in contradiction to the draft platform proposed by Dick Nichols. Dick's draft is so imbued with the assumptions of the DSP that we have found it impossible to amend. We would like to work with others in the Socialist Alliance to identify the underlying issues dividing us on this topic, and to collate a manageable reading/discussion program that would help us reach agreement.

### **3. Imperialism and national independence**

Workers' Liberty sees national independence as political independence distinct from economic independence, which is a reactionary concept. We are for

the rights of all nations to self-determination as a democratic demand, and a principled basis for working class unity that will remove national antagonisms that distract from class solidarity. We are for independence for example of the Indonesian minority nationalities, West Papua, the Kurds, the Palestinians, and the Israelis. We reject the subjugation of nationalities, even those whose governments may have performed terrible deeds, by any other, as retrograde. (This topic is related to the previous one, in terms of needs for discussion).

### **4. The labour movement and the ALP**

Workers' Liberty's position has always been that we cannot win the majority of the working class to support a socialist organisation and socialist ideas without putting a priority on working within the existing labour movement. We seek to challenge the ideas of trade union and Australian Labor Party leaders on their own territory, and to struggle to earn leadership of working class struggles. This is quite a different emphasis than the DSP has, where unions are only one front, more or less equal to any other campaign, and often a lesser front because of the conservatism of the unions. The draft document for conference, prepared by our comrade Riki Lane, shows that some progress has been made on this issue. But it will need following up with discussion of concrete union issues, and measuring against Socialist Alliance experiences (such as the differences over the NSW workers' compensation dispute) to see if it can be applied with commitment by all tendencies in the Alliance. Further, a trade union education program would be an important supplement to induct new and especially younger comrades, into socialist union work.

### **5. Class and government**

We are explicitly for a working class government; class is the force for change for socialists in politics as in economic struggle. Concretising this requires much closer attention by the Socialist Alliance to specific issues that affect the lives of working class people and oppressed groups in Australian society, and also an in principle commitment to this central point.

### **6. Radical campaigns and movements**

We relate to the radical campaigns by trying to connect them with the organised working class, not just to claim a sociologically working class composition, but to relate consciously as workers. We have advocated this for the Socialist Alliance in dealings with the Greens, from the founding conference of the Socialist Alliance. We think the rise of the Greens since then has vindicated our earlier concerns that the Socialist Alliance has failed to provide a clear enough reason to vote Socialist Alliance rather than Green.

These are central political issues that Workers' Liberty proposes that the Socialist Alliance should set about systematically discussing. Progress towards agreement and clarification on these issues is one of three factors that would lead Workers' Liberty to consider reducing the extent to which we organise separately.

## The organisation of the Socialist Alliance

The other two related factors are strengthening internal democracy and a regular publication, open to all viewpoints in the Alliance.

We make these proposals because we believe that they are essential to having a conscious and committed membership in a multi-tendency party, not only because as a minority tendency we seek to guarantee our own political rights. We consider that it is a role of the leadership of any socialist party to make sure that all viewpoints are heard and considered. It is a responsibility of members to formulate and explain their disagreements, so that their ideas can be considered. These conditions help to ensure an educated membership, that is conscious of the basis on which decisions are made, and which is committed to the decision-making process. Members in a minority can therefore accept decisions even if not agreeing with

them. Workers Liberty will be submitting specific proposals to the May Conference of the Alliance.

We propose a regular publication with an editorial policy of representing all points of view in the Alliance, and with minority viewpoint representation on the editorial board.

The editorial board should be charged with ensuring that:

- different points of view are represented on significant issues;
- that editorial lines are clear, not compromise statements with a form of words to conceal actual differences;
- that regular news stories are solicited from members from a range of tendencies, and are published with their political nuances in tact, not edited “for reasons of space” to match the outlook of the editorial majority.

If all tendencies can have their points of view expressed in Alliance publications it will reduce their need to publish separately. ■

## The US aggression policy against people of Iraq

### *Resolution of the Worker Communist Party of Iraq*

In view of the fact that:

1. The US military threat against people of Iraq is the second round of the same policy which has been followed by the US since September 11, and the triumph over Taliban regime and keeping its hegemony and display of power. The US is practically aiming at preserving its single power and hegemony and control over the world and various areas through its military control and the use of mass destruction weapons, in this concern seeding fear in the hearts of its rivals in the economic, political, and military poles and imposing its terms and interests on them, and subduing its rivals in and outside Europe.

2. The US's target in Iraq is not change of Ba'ath despotic nationalist regime in the direction of securing civil rights, political liberties and freeing people of Iraq from the grip of the fascist regime, but precisely a formal change of power and founding a puppet government having the ability of fooling and marginalizing the people of Iraq and securing safety and stability for bourgeoisies in Iraq in accordance with its interest and strategy.

3. The US reliance on nationalists, Islamists, military generals, and its agents in the Iraqi National Congress (INC), and simultaneously urging and supporting them to form alliances and assemblies, is basically a premature movement and ready plan towards securing its favorite alternative.

4. What is obvious from the US attempts is that, to materialize its objectives the US is prepared to victimize the civil life and lives of thousands people of Iraq and to degenerate the Iraqi society and put the future of Iraq before the scenario of demolishing the economic basis and prolonging starvation and fights of different nationalist, tribal and religious groups.

In this respect, Worker Communist Party of Iraq condemns the US warmongering, war, and militarism show and strives for refuting these policies, and their catastrophic effects on the lives and future of people of Iraq. In this concern Worker Communist Party of Iraq is struggling to

incite and get an international line of freedom lovers, working class parties, left wingers, communists off the ground to oppose the threats and aggressive policy of the US and upsetting them.

The demand of toppling the Ba'ath fascist, nationalist regime and changing it to a government which secures freedom and equality is a just demand of all freedom lovers in and outside Iraq. The Worker Communist Party of Iraq has always been in the vanguard of this struggle, and its achievement. But what is obvious is that the US according to its records and policy it follows and at the same time its reliance on the reactionary groups of the nationalists, Islamists, military generals, and its assistants in the INC, demonstrates clearly its animosity towards the Iraqi people's favorite government which comes to power.

The Iraqi people's interference, getting them off the ground, and the revolutionary struggle of workers and toilers, guarantee and secure uprooting of Ba'ath regime and prevents any anti-people regime. Worker Communist Party of Iraq amid the current circumstances and potential arising of any changes, is striving for awakening and promoting the struggle of workers, toilers, and freedom lovers of Iraq and organizing them in council movement towards overthrowing Ba'ath regime and determine the future of power.

Apart from the capability and willpower of the party and revolutionary movement of the people and the possibility of any interim government comes to power, Worker Communist Party of Iraq will determine its stance in accordance with the extent of that government's commitment to the utmost political liberty, civil and political rights, and to what extent it supports them.

Worker Communist Party of Iraq struggles for founding a socialist republic. This is the only alternative in which the utmost freedom, social welfare of the people are secured and the future of the society is handed to direct willpower of the people. ■

## DISCUSSION

# War on Iraq, Greens preferences and Billy Idol: Western Suburbs branch experiences in the March 2003 council elections

By Linda Waldron (Melbourne Western Suburbs branch)

On March 15 this year the Melbourne Western Suburbs Socialist Alliance branch received a very solid result in the local council elections. We won 6.5 per cent of the primary vote in the Brimbank council elections and 4.3 per cent and two per cent in two different wards of the Maribyrnong municipality.

The wards we contested covered the working-class suburbs of Sunshine (McKay ward in Brimbank), Seddon and Yarraville (Sheoak ward, Maribyrnong) and Footscray (Saltwater ward, Maribyrnong). The strong results reflect not only the use of effective campaigning strategies but also the emergence and development of an increasingly active local Socialist Alliance branch.

## Campaigning for the local council elections

Why we ran:

- The initial reason for contesting the local elections was to build on the gains from our strong showing in the State seat of Footscray (2.6 per cent) in the October 2002 poll.

By contesting the local elections we could take the general politics from our State campaign and work them through more specifically at the local level. This was a prelude to the branch launching itself into local campaigns (more on this below). We could build on the profile we received through effective anti-war campaigning during the State elections.

As well by contesting the local elections so soon after the State elections we could immediately involve the support base we drew around us in the State election with letterboxing, handing out how to votes and fundraising.

- The mass anti-war movement which emerged with such potency in January and February further inspired us to contest the elections to experiment with how local politics could be more than “roads, rubbish and rates”
- The municipalities of Brimbank and Maribyrnong both had objective political conditions which presented very attractive *foci* for socialist solutions to capitalist crises. The Maribyrnong electorate contained the Maribyrnong Detention Centre and was 500 metres away from the Coode Island petrochemical facility. Footscray Central Business District (CBD) is also notorious for its drug-dealing problems. Brimbank council was the site for total disarray of warring ALP factions, who had a long record of betraying the local residents for example by selling out the campaign to keep the local Sunshine swimming pool open.

(I will confine my comments to the Maribyrnong Council Elections as a companion contribution to Comrade Maurice Sibelle’s analysis of the Brimbank

election campaign. See page 9 of this *Discussion Bulletin*.)

## Our politics

In Maribyrnong we ran the campaign around two slogans: “Funding for Childcare not Warfare” and “A Working Council for Working People”. To explain these slogans we focussed on seven key issues: 1) No War on Iraq!: For an activist council to campaign against the war on Iraq. Council funding and resources for anti-war campaigns and such related campaigns as opposition to racist scapegoating of residents from Middle-Eastern countries and opposition to anti-terrorism laws. 2) Free the Refugees! Close the Maribyrnong Detention Centre, fund the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre (Footscray), provide local services to asylum-seekers and holders of Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs). 3) Close Coode Island! Remove the dangerous facility away from local residents. 4) Save Footscray Pool! Oppose the forced relocation of local services to the privately-owned recreation centre at the Highpoint Shopping Centre in Maribyrnong. 5) For Safe Injecting Rooms: for a humane response to Footscray’s medical crisis of drug abuse. 6) Trucks Off Francis Street! Oppose CityLink Freeway tolls, no industry passage through residential areas. 7) Affordable Housing for Local residents! No investment development of the Western Suburbs in the interests of property developers over low-income residents.

## Campaign Strategy

Being a five-week campaign in the middle of the upsurge of the mass anti-war movement we needed to be quite targeted in our use of resources. We also wanted to use our anti-war and election campaigning to support each other. Other candidates loftily informed us the war was not a local issue and not even the Greens Party mentioned the war as part of their campaign. We did nonetheless use the anti-war campaign very effectively through our slogan “Childcare not Warfare” and by effective profiling of Lincoln Hancock (Sheoak candidate) who was one of the March 5 student strike organisers.

Our strategy was fairly straightforward:

- Complete letterboxing of the two Maribyrnong wards as early as possible;
- Saturday morning campaign stalls in the suburbs;
- Evening leafleting at Footscray station;
- Public speaking engagements for candidates;
- Local media work; and
- Vibrant anti-war campaigning stalls on polling day.

A large proportion of letterboxing was completed in the first two weeks of the campaign. With all our

letterboxing we inserted into our pamphlet details of weekend anti-war rallies both local and city-wide. Our leaflet was a very attractive professionally designed A4 3 part fold-in (thank you Comrade Arun Pradhan, Seat of Melbourne branch!).<sup>1</sup> It incorporated a cover photo montage of activist anti-war shots, quite detailed argumentation of our policies and varied exhortations to get involved with Socialist Alliance and local anti-war campaign groups. Our eager plans for door-knocking did not materialise as the last two Sundays before the election were taken up with contacting for the student strike and finishing off letterboxing.

Posters were available for distribution about three weeks into the campaign and were well stuck-up in the Yarraville/ Seddon areas. (Footscray CBD was forgotten about until last few days of the campaign, which may have contributed to the lower vote in Footscray).

Saturday morning stalls in Yarraville took place most weeks of the campaign and a very vibrant speak-out took place in Footscray Mall in first week of the campaign.

We were able to profile Lincoln Hancock very effectively as a Socialist Alliance candidate. He spoke at a local antiwar group forum, addressed the 7000-strong rally at the March 5 student strike and spearheaded local speak-outs. As the activist featured on the leaflets and posters Lincoln also became a bit of a local identity. For example, when Lincoln and I were doing Yarraville station stalls a few days before the election we were surprised at the number of passers-by addressing him by name and saying they would vote for him. June Zappia an independent candidate running in the same ward said Lincoln was the talk of her household and while her son handed out for her on election day due to family loyalty he told Lincoln he thought Lincoln ran a really cool campaign. The quote of the election campaign was when two voters went straight up to the Socialist Alliance stall to get the how-to-vote cards and said: "I really like that guy Lincoln—he's the Billy Idol of politics"!

While comrade Lincoln is unlikely to forgive any of us for making such a deal of this quote, the evident profiling of Lincoln reflected how effectively we drew together the anti-war and election campaign and the ease with which we could build up a branch member into becoming a local identity. Lincoln's profile was based on his role as a youthful, radical anti-war activist, something quite different to the staid, conservative, respectable candidates residents are used to seeing running for council.

Our candidate statements were printed in the local media, although clear bias in favour of the Greens and particular independents was reflected in the Fairfax media coverage. Otherwise we were reliant on articles written by branch activists in the socialist press—*Green Left Weekly* and *Socialist Worker*.

Polling day was a wacky, political day on the hustings. It was on Saturday, March 15, which was a national day of action against the war. We therefore could not rely on support from other Melbourne Socialist Alliance branches until mid-late afternoon. As well, youthful "Youth Against War" comrades were needed with anti-war activism in the city so resources were stretched. Even so we managed to staff very vibrant anti-war campaigning stalls across the six booths, particularly at the two biggest booths in Footscray and Seddon. Overall we mobilised 23 people throughout the day, including nine non-affiliated Socialist Alliance members and two other non-Socialist Alliance members.

While all the other candidates limited themselves to distributing how-to-votes, we used polling day as well to mass leaflet for our anti-war public forum with Jean McLean (Save our Sons) and signing people up to local anti-war groups. Most comrades reported a higher level of familiarity with Socialist Alliance and pledges to vote for us among residents than at the previous State and Federal elections in the same areas.

## Relations with Workers First (AMWU)

Brendan Whelan, a Socialist Alliance member and Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) organiser attended our pre-selection meeting. Hearing of our proposed election budget of \$1500 he offered to raise the full amount by raffling a colour TV among AMWU members. One site at which he was selling the tickets was the Holden plant. A fellow Socialist Alliance member Frank Fairley proposed that all AMWU members contribute a \$20 levy for the Socialist Alliance local election campaign. All the members agreed (most of them not Socialist Alliance members) and \$980.00 was instantly collected. On polling day six Workers First comrades volunteered a couple of hours to hand out for us.

## The Greens campaign

The Greens preferenced us second (as we did them). Both Greens candidates in the wards we contested were elected, Janet Rice (Saltwater) and Colleen Hartland (Sheoak). Rice is the most well-known local Green and had won the highest primary vote at the 2000 council elections but lost on preferences to the ALP candidate Cuc Lam. The 2003 elections was a two-horse race between the same two candidates. This may account for our comparatively lower vote in Saltwater ward (coupled with the fact that eight candidates contested the prized Footscray CBD ward). Rice won 1813 primary votes and Lam 1197. Once preferences were distributed Rice was elected. In the Sheoak ward the Greens' candidate Colleen Hartland won 782 primary votes, a right-wing independent Janis Rossiter won 885 and the ALP candidate Martin Zakharov won 1565. Even so the Greens candidate, Hartland, was elected on preferences. The Greens' results suggests that the Socialist Alliance contesting these two wards did not diminish the Greens chances but in fact was part of a progressive block to

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<sup>1</sup> Copies have been sent to all branches (National Co-convener's note).

unseat the ALP councillors. (This is particularly true of the Sheoak ward where we won 4.3 per cent of the primary vote, Hartland 15 per cent and Zakharov 31 per cent and Hartland was elected.)

The Maribyrnong council has always been an ALP stronghold but now has two Greens (first time Greens elected), one independent and three ALP councillors. This is welcome news for us as we have a pressure point to shift the council leftwards. We have friendly political relations with the leftwing of the Greens, which were consolidated and extended through the election campaign, particularly through working with Sylvie Leber, the River Ward candidate. (Sylvie won 25 per cent of the vote in River ward and would have unseated sitting mayor Bill Horrocks had Greens voters voted according to Greens preferences.) Sylvie has worked with the left before through the refugee rights campaign. She gave greetings at the Alliance candidate launch and agreed to speak at our post-election anti-war forum. We were also invited to the Greens' election night party.

### Election campaign outcomes

Overall, the election was a quiet victory for Socialist Alliance.

- *We received a solid vote.* The 4.3 per cent in Sheoak is very respectable result, suggesting not just good profiling of the candidate but good local outreach through campaign stalls and local anti-war initiatives. The 6.5 per cent result in Brimbank is the highest percentage received nationally by a Socialist Alliance candidate and a sign of good pioneering work in the Sunshine area. It has presented us publicly as local progressives before the Greens have begun working in this area. We should look to capitalising (or should I say socialising?) on this by doing further local work in the Sunshine area, with perhaps the possibilities of establishing a Sunshine branch of the Socialist Alliance in the not too distant future.
- *Our weekly branch meetings through the campaigns consistently attracted local residents (in ones and twos) who wished to find out about Socialist Alliance and help with the election campaign.* We consolidated three unaffiliated branch members from the State election and attracted a further four who are now regular participants in the branch. As well a further three came along to find out about us. As well there is a further layer who are not interested in branch meetings but consistently identify as Socialist Alliance members and do work in kind—such as the Workers First comrades who will do fundraising and help on polling day and others who will do letterboxing, go out on polling day, give donations, attend functions etc.
- *The local election campaign gave the Melbourne Western Suburbs branch an immediate focus for the new political year.* The post-election discussion revealed that comrades want to take our recent outreach into the local

community onto a deeper, more ongoing implantation into local campaigns. We decided on four immediate local campaigns: 1) Collect 1000 local signatures for the “Make Howard Face the People: Block the Budget” petition and present them to local Federal member for the ALP, Nicola Roxon; 2) get involved with the Save Sunshine Pool/ save Footscray Pool campaigns; 3) get involved with a political campaign to save the local Asylum-seekers Resource Centre; 4) Initiate a freedom of speech campaign to highlight the \$100 fine given to Socialist Alliance member Tony Iltis, for leafletting at Footscray station for the 250,000 strong February 14 anti-war rally.

- *The local election campaign highlighted the need for administrative infrastructure, by establishing systematic contacting, information distribution and political discussion.* Recognising this weakness the branch elected a working executive after the election campaign.

Finally, in his contribution comrade Maurice Sibelle raises the important issues of the training and education of Alliance members and the relation between our election campaigns and movement campaigns. Both these issues will become more pressing as the Alliance develops, and we always need to be assessing how well our work in each campaign area is reflected in—and reinforces—our work in the other. It would be useful to have more detailed discussion of the issue as the Alliance approaches its second National Conference, and hopefully Maurice can spell out his views in more detail in a further contribution.

### Budget

#### Expenses

Nomination fee	\$300
(3 candidates @ \$100.00 each)	
20,000 double-sided A4 leaflets	\$760
9,000 double-sided A4 how-2-votes	\$480
(cut to 3 DL size)	
4 card tables	\$120
Photocopying	\$80
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1740</b>

#### Income

Candidate Launch dinner	\$650
Election night party	\$100
Holden AMWU levy	\$980
Raffle	\$300
Refund from 2 candidates who received more than 4 per cent	\$200
Donations	\$50
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2280</b>

**Profit \$540 ■**

# Brimbank Council Election Report

*By Maurice Sibelle (Melbourne Western Suburbs branch)*

The elections in Brimbank were a circus. Ninety-five candidates stood in the nine wards that make up Brimbank Council. The large field reflected the disarray in the ranks of the Australian Labor Party. A huge faction brawl is going on in the ALP in the area. The brawl has involved the state members of parliament and the new state secretary of the ALP, Andres Puig, who was the outgoing mayor of Brimbank. This brawl has resulted in scuffles in the council meetings and all out brawls at ALP branch meetings. This has been openly reported in the media. The ALP could not agree on candidates to endorse for this election.

We stood in the ward of McKay where, thankfully, only five candidates stood. The large field of candidates in the other wards made it difficult for the Alliance to stand out. We only had one candidate, who was overshadowed by the big teams running. Besides the ALP factions there was a team called Brimbank First. This group was led by the chairman of the local business association and included ALP members, Liberals and some local activists. They claimed that they had a member of the Greens and activists from a few campaigns against development. The Brimbank First candidate in the McKay ward ran a confusing campaign where at different points he claimed he was an ALP member, Community Labour (sic) or simply an independent.

## Labor is like a football team

The Sunshine area has recorded 80 per cent first preference votes for Labor in State and Federal elections. Whoever is endorsed by the ALP or can demonstrate that they are the ALP candidate usually wins the election. The best way to describe the ALP support in the area is to compare them to a football team. Their supporters follow their team regardless of their policies. It is hard to explain to some people that, because you are not Labor, that does not mean you are Liberal. Explaining this to migrants whose first language is not English is also very difficult.

## The tickets

The outgoing mayor was elected state secretary of the ALP and did not stand. However, he did have a team running. Despite not running he was the spokesperson for the team that called themselves Community Labor. The media was dominated by debate between him and the St Albans state MP, George Seitz, who was the mouthpiece for the Voters Action Alliance. Other Labor party members ran as Community Labor, Independent Labor or simply ALP members. Many of the candidates could not put two words together.

## The stooge tactic

A tactic used by Labor party members to win elections is the practice of running stooge candidates. These candidates run on the same platform as the opposition candidates and use the preference system to pass votes back to the main candidate. The ALP calls this practice “running

mates.” In McKay, Glenda Townsend ran a campaign that stole policies from Brain Carroll. She then distributed preferences to Ian Douglas who had the opposite policies and he won by 80 votes. On the crucial issue of the Sunshine pool all opposition candidates ran on a platform of saving the 50m outdoor pool in Sunshine. Their combined vote was 62.1 per cent. By running a stooge candidate, Ian Douglas was able to trick voters into electing him to council. In every ward except one, where an ALP candidate was elected outright, this trickery saw people elected that did not reflect what the majority of Brimbank residents wanted. An analysis of the policies presented to the people of Brimbank compared to the first preference votes of all the candidates will show that the new council does not have a mandate and it does not reflect the views of the people of Brimbank.

Another phenomena of the election was the frustration of many people with the ALP attempts to frustrate democracy. Scrutineers reported a very high incidence of people voting “1” for the candidate of their choice and then donkey-voting down the ballot paper. They also reported a high incidence of donkey-voting which is partly the reason why Ian Douglas was elected. The informal vote was 14 per cent across all wards and up to 19 per cent in some. The Brimbank council does not have the confidence of the people of Brimbank. In fact the elected candidates only received a grand total of 26,212 first preference votes out of the 90,144 votes cast. That is a miserable 29 per cent of the vote. One candidate was elected after receiving 8.8 per cent of the first preference vote. (See Figure 1 at the end of this contribution.)

## The media

Despite working on a constant flow of media releases and letters to the local media we got very little media. It was better than in other socialist campaigns I have participated in. However, there was no front page news like most of the other candidates got. The media tended to cover the tickets as a whole and feature the local MPs and former Mayor.

We were able to have a substantial candidates statement as did all the other candidates. Our candidates statement with John Bowles was published two weeks out from the election. The other candidate statements were published the week before the election giving them an unfair advantage.

I had one letter to the editor published the week before the election and three after the election. Socialist Alliance was mentioned on three occasions in local papers.

There were two *Green Left Weekly* articles.

## Campaign methods

Besides our limited media campaign we relied on the traditional methods of campaigning.

### 1. Letterboxing

We letterboxed the whole ward. Seven people letterboxed the whole electorate. I did more than half with a substantial contribution from another active member of Socialist Alliance and small chunks done by the other five supporters and members. From a candidate's point of view I found that doing a large amount of letterboxing was an advantage. I stopped everyone on the street or in their yards to personally hand everyone a copy of the leaflet and to explain who we were and why we were running. I can't be sure, but the polling booth that we performed best in was the one where I did all the letterboxing myself. I spoke to many people in the area. I focused on the circus theme, the role of the ALP, the Sunshine pool and the war. I spoke to over hundred people in this fashion. I got to know some of my neighbours. I had discussions about garbage, graffiti, dumping, drugs, privatisation, socialism and much more. It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

## 2. Stalls

We had stalls every Saturday in the local shopping centre. These were also great occasions to talk to people and build activities we were involved in.

## 3. The truck

I also painted a banner with "Stop the War on Iraq", Vote for Maurice Sibelle, Socialist Alliance and stuck the banner on the side of a truck. Unfortunately, I only used this in the last few days of the campaign. The truck lifted visibility dramatically and gave me more of an opening to talk to people about the campaign.

I tried to find opportunities to talk to people at shopping centres, railway stations, shops or walking around letter boxing. I even campaigned as I shopped or went to the library.

## Impediments to our campaign

Because of a death in the family there two weeks in the campaign when nothing happened, and in the last week I found it hard to muster the energy to finish a campaign which relied heavily on my own efforts. While being unemployed did give me some time to campaign I was also forced to attend a full time Job seeker training course for two weeks. I was furiously trying to find work, write applications and attend job interviews!

## The results for McKay ward

Given the impediments to the campaign we should be encouraged by our results. Our result in McKay of 6.5 per cent or 489 votes was the highest Socialist Alliance result so far. We should not under-rate our performance. While there was no "Green" candidate, Brian Carroll did try to occupy that space. He got the front page of the local paper with his one-man campaign to clean up Brimbank and save our local environment.

Ian Douglas did three or four letterbox drops. John Bowles did five. Glenda Townsend did one and got equal coverage in the local papers. She was never exposed as a stooge. Brian Carroll got the most media, including front page of the local paper. They all ran misleading campaigns. Bowles called us a stooge for Ian Douglas.

Our campaign which featured "Child Care not Warfare" was effective and did strike a chord with many people in the area. We ran a clear anti-Labor campaign in the heart of ALP territory. At times I felt like I was urging Bulldogs supporters to support Collingwood at a football match.

Moreover, despite not having Socialist Alliance on the ballot paper we ran a clear socialist campaign. So the vote was a clear vote for a Socialist. There were no distortions to our vote such as having first spot on the ballot paper.

## Our propaganda

I think our leaflet hit the mark. It focused on the council being a circus. Local people could see that by reading the reports in the local paper. It clearly identified the ALP as a problem and the need to build an alternative. It did not get stuck on localism, but managed to tackle the key platforms that the Alliance had decided were a priority (the war and refugees). It managed to draw the links between the war and local issues, ("Child Care not Warfare") and it took the local concerns over the fate of our pool and the environment seriously. It did not pander to parliamentarist illusions. It developed the socialist position on elections: opposition to the notion that you can vote for us and we will do it for you; promoting the concept of "people power", i.e., that you have to become active and use protest and struggle to achieve what you want.

## Limits of our campaign

Our campaign was limited by the fact that it was largely a propaganda campaign. This makes it harder for us to communicate the socialist politics we are trying to promote. Our vote was not the result of local struggles that we had been involved in. If we are going to win people over to our politics it must be as a result of engaging in local struggles that demonstrate how people power works. Consequently, this campaign, as with all our electoral work, highlights the need for us to engage in local struggles such as the campaign to save the Sunshine pool and to stop the destruction of our urban environment.

## What we got out of the campaign

Running in the election was the quickest way to find out about local politics. The process of determining preferences helped to clarify what the competition was about. All the other candidates spilled the beans on each other. In talking to people you find out all the concerns that people have about their neighbourhood and also the big picture. People tell you about the history; about the struggle to get trees planted or to stop high-rise developments.

The campaign has raised the profile of the Socialist Alliance and people will expect us to run again in other elections.

It gave us a chance to win leadership among activists in local campaigns. The pool action committee leaders have been keen to discuss our ideas and strategies for the pool campaign. They have been talking among themselves and word has spread that there is a new force that may bring some fresh ideas into their campaign. I have already spoken to all the key leaders of the Pool Action Committee and

local identities such as Gwen Goedecke have rung up to have a yarn about local politics.

## **Polling day**

Polling day was relatively successful. In all 19 people participated on polling day clocking up 94 hours between them. We covered all five polling booths on the day. My friends put in a big effort. One came from Warrnambool for the whole day and another spent the whole day on the polling booths. Only three Independent Socialist Alliance members participated. We were able to talk to these members, find out more about them and integrate them through the politics of the campaign. I spent considerable more time with them on the polling booths.

## **Recruitment**

We had one new contact from the letterboxing who helped out in the Maribyrnong campaign. However, one of the greatest encouragements was that through the campaign we were able to draw one person closer to joining the Alliance. This person slowly got into the groove of talking to people about socialism and was encouraged by the response to our campaign. All of the participants in the campaign were encouraged by the response and our overall result.

We also managed to get six new contacts for the Alliance at the polling booths.

## **The local council is a site of struggle**

We learned that local councils are a site of struggle that socialists can engage in. There are resources there: meeting rooms, grants, web sites, etc. We should be looking at ways of utilising those resources to advance the struggles of the working class. For example, we should be drafting a resolution for the council on the war and put pressure on the council to adopt it.

The small wards and geographical spread make it just the sort of campaign we can easily participate in. It is conceivable that we can get around and talk to a large proportion of the ward.

Local councils do not have to be about gutters and drains. We can raise the broader questions in elections and we got a significant hearing.

Local council elections are not expensive. Our campaign in Brimbank cost \$500. One comrade commented that we got the most votes per dollar in this election.

Local elections are more of a level playing field. In federal elections the debate is dominated by the leaders of the parties. The election is largely fought and won on a national level. In state elections it is similar. Local councils on the other hand pit our rank-and-file members against rank-and-file members of the ALP and the other parties. Our local branch goes head to head with the local ALP

branch. While they have a huge head start it is clear that we can make some inroads into ALP territory.

## **Possibilities for the future**

This campaign has opened up a number of possibilities. We have the opportunity to build something in Sunshine. Through the networking we are starting to get an idea of the local politics and are winning leadership among activists in local campaigns.

The election has also shown that we need to be active in local campaigns. These include Sunshine Pool campaign and the campaign against developments along the Maribyrnong River. I have already been advising the committee to run the line in the local newspaper that the council has no mandate to proceed with the Sunshine pool development in its current form. We may have to lead the campaign with direct action if we are to win.

It is clear that if the Socialist Alliance is to build itself in the area we will need to play an active role in local campaigns and look at fielding a full ticket at the next council elections. By running a serious ticket to win we will get a bigger hearing and force the local media to take us seriously. It can be an important part of tackling the ALP strangle hold over politics in the west of Melbourne. I can already see us running a principled campaign with no stooge candidates, exposing the ALP, tackling privatisation of council services and supporting the many campaigns that are happening in Brimbank.

## **The training of Alliance members**

Something that arose in the course of this campaign that disturbs me is the training and education of Alliance members.

Firstly, I think we need to have more discussion about electoral strategy and tactics. The relationship between campaigns and our electoral campaigns need to be strengthened. There is a tendency to separate the two and at times to see them as competing priorities. It also leads to running propaganda campaigns that people will not take seriously because “we don’t really want to win”.

Secondly, the skills of campaigning need to be developed by Alliance members. These skills include being able to talk to people and connect with where they are coming from. It means talking basic socialism, using of petitions to draw people closer, using the media and getting a broad enough understanding of socialist theory so that they can apply it in local situations.

Thirdly, I think that elections are the best time to train and educate members. By seeking out opportunities to talk to people members are forced to think through their politics. A combination of talking to people and active learning will build confidence and strengthen the Alliance.

## Appendix – Fact and Figures

### Brimbank City Council 2003

#### *McKay Ward Results*

Ian Douglas (ALP Socialist Left)	2844	37.9 per cent
Maurice Sibelle (Socialist Alliance)	489	6.5 per cent
Brian Carroll (Brimbank First, ALP)	1682	22.4 per cent
Glenda Townsend (ALP Stooge)	779	10.4 per cent
John Bowles (ALP Unity)	1708	22.8 per cent
<i>Total vote for the Sunshine Pool</i>	<i>62.1 per cent all candidates besides Ian Douglas</i>	
Total Valid Votes	7502	
Informal	726	8.8 per cent
Total Votes	8228	

#### The Informal Vote

	<i>Informal</i>	<i>Formal</i>	<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Koroit Ward	2019	8503	10522	19.2
Robertson	1276	9729	11005	11.6
Furlong	1787	8096	9883	18.1
Derrimut	1305	9061	10366	12.6
Overnewton	1257	9914	11171	11.3
Glengala	1413	7984	9397	15.0
Padley	1436	7692	9128	15.7
McKay	726	7502	8228	8.8
Casurina	1387	9057	0444	13.3
	12606	77538	90144	14.0

#### Winning Candidate's First Preference Vote

	<i>First Pref</i>	<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Koroit Ward	2192	10522	20.8
Robertson	4143	11005	37.6
Furlong	1240	9883	12.5
Derrimut	3584	10366	34.6
Overnewton	5983	11171	53.6
Glengala	3416	9397	36.4
Padley	801	9128	8.8
McKay	2844	8228	34.6
Casurina	2009	10444	19.2
	26212	90144	29.1 ■

## ORGANISATION OF THE SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE

# Resolutions of April 4 National Executive hook-up

*NOTE: The following resolution as well as the three appendices in this section should provide comrades with the information they need on the elections of delegates for the Second National Conference, as well as on travel funding and deadlines for the submission of resolutions.*

*If any member has a query they should talk to their branch convener or get in touch with the National Conveners on 02- 9690 1032.*

*...Dick Nichols (National Co-convener)*

## 1. Conference financiality

*Resolution on eligibility criteria for delegates and delegations to the Second National Conference of the Socialist Alliance*

### **Agreed unanimously:**

a. All branches that have paid the Socialist Alliance national office the 25 per cent of dues paid by members who have joined or rejoined in the first quarter of 2003 are eligible to have delegations to the conference. The deadline for payment is 21 April 2003.

b. All members who are in good financial standing at the time of the election of delegates are eligible to stand as delegates.

c. The size of branch delegations will be based on financial membership at the time of election of delegates or at April 21, whichever is the sooner.

## 2. Delegate ratio and registration fee

### **Agreed unanimously:**

a. That the delegate ratio be set at one delegate for every nine financial members or greater part thereof;

b. That the registration fee be set at \$140 per delegate, to be paid by the body the delegate is representing;

c. That at-large delegates have one-ninth of a vote; and

d. That the draft letter from the National Executive to all members contained in Appendix A [see below] be adopted

as governing the remaining detail of conference finances, registration fee and travel arrangements

## 3. Method of delegate election

### **Agreed unanimously:**

a. That the election of conference delegates be by the Single Transferable Vote system;

b. That the national office forward an explanation of this system to all returning officers as soon as possible [see Appendix C below].

## 4. Deadlines for resolutions and amendments

### **Agreed unanimously:**

a. That midnight, Sunday, May 4 be the deadline for resolutions to be presented to the conference;

b. That amendments to resolutions be allowed up until debate and voting on the resolution takes place at conference;

c. That all comrades thinking of submitting resolutions and amendments be urged to submit them as soon as possible in order to allow adequate discussion in the branches.

## 5. Friday, May 9 public meeting

### **Agreed unanimously:**

a. That the theme of the meeting be “Building the alternative to capitalism and war”;

b. That we seek to recruit the following line-up of speakers: Harry Noble, Kylie Moon, Humphrey McQueen, Verity Burgmann, Craig Johnson, Michelle O'Neill and Sue Johnston, with Riki Lane to chair.

## 6. Organisation

### **Agreed unanimously:**

That affiliates be urged to supply volunteer labour for conference organising.

# Appendix A: Letter to members on conference finances, registration fee and travel arrangements

April 10, 2003

Dear comrades,

At its April 4 National Executive hook-up the Socialist Alliance National Executive adopted the procedures that will govern our second National Conference, especially with regard to funding the conference. The minutes of the meeting contain all the relevant resolutions and have been sent out to all branches and are reprinted in this *Discussion Bulletin* [see page 14].

However, the National Conveners have also written the following covering note to explain how the National Executive arrived at a registration fee of \$140 per delegate and how delegates' travel costs will be reimbursed. The note is in question and answer form.

Hopefully it will answer all queries. However, if your concern is not answered here, please don't hesitate to contact the National Conveners on [ne@socialist-alliance.org](mailto:ne@socialist-alliance.org) or 02-9690 1032.

## **1. Why is the registration fee set at \$140?**

The National Executive is convinced that any national conference of the Alliance has to be fully representative. That can only happen if we are committed to covering all delegates' travel costs as much as possible. On the calculation of travel costs according to the cheapest method available total travel costs will be \$19,234 (see Appendix B below: *Registration fee proposal at 9 to 1 delegate ratio for Second National Conference of the Socialist Alliance.*) To this has to be added the costs of staging the conference (around \$2740), giving a total cost of \$19,234. We expect to raise \$4100 from non-delegate registration, catering, etc. This still leaves a net cost of \$17,874. When this is divided by total number of delegates eligible to come (we estimate 126) then the cost per delegate works out at around \$140.

## **2. Why is there are single registration fee and not a graduated scale of fees, as for Socialist Alliance membership?**

The conference is the key decision-making gathering of the whole Alliance, and delegates will be present not in an individual capacity, but as delegates elected by local branches. Therefore the fairest way to cover our conference cost is for this to be spread evenly across the whole membership (and hence its delegates).

## **3. Why can't non-delegate conference participants bear a higher portion of the cost?**

The estimation of the National Executive is that \$20 for the whole conference (\$10 concession) is about the most that we can expect non-voting observers to pay. This means that we will probably collect up to \$2000 at most from this source.

## **4. How will the system operate?**

It is the responsibility of delegates and/or local branches to find the money to pay for the \$140 registration fee and travel. Obviously, reimbursed travel payments will be distributed according to how the delegates trip was funded (whether by the delegate, the local group or some combination of both);

Branches should set up a travel subsidy fund immediately and work out how best to fund it (some ideas: solidarity donations from better-waged members, raffles, quiz nights, etc)

Branches should make travel plans for the number of delegates to which they are entitled *as soon as possible* (remember, the delegate ratio is 1 to 9 or greater part thereof). Given that membership is still growing it may well be wise to book one or two more places for delegates, and then cancel them if no additional members are assigned to local groups over the next two weeks.

When delegates get to the conference they should hand over the receipts for their ticket to the conference organisers, so as to be able to be reimbursed. Therefore, *conference delegates must keep their travel cost receipts.*

## **5. What if a delegate cannot pay the \$140 registration fee?**

Delegates must be able to pay the fee. Once the fee is paid, all delegates will be reimbursed their travel costs.

## **6. What if a delegate can obtain a cheaper fare than the standard fare to be reimbursed (for example, if a delegate has a student or pensioner concession)?**

Delegates will only be reimbursed the actual cost of travel.

## **7. Are at large delegates eligible for reimbursement of travel costs?**

No. But at large delegates pay only one-ninth of the registration fee, corresponding to the one-ninth of a vote that they are eligible to at the conference.

## Appendix B: Registration fee proposal at 9 to 1 delegate ratio for Second National Conference of the Socialist Alliance

NOTE: This calculation assumes full fare. A proportion of delegates will obtain concession fares, so that total travel costs will be lower than on the full fare basis used in Section 1 below.

### 1. Total travel expenditure

	<i>Likely no. Total of delegates</i>	<i>National Executive</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Cost of return Travel</i>	
		<i>dels</i>		<i>trip (full fare)</i>	<i>mode</i>	<i>cost</i>
Adelaide	3	1	4	90	Bus	360
Brisbane	13	1	14	278	Flight	3892
Canberra	6	1	7	100	Bus	700
Darwin	3	1	4	578	Flight	2312
Geelong	4	1	5	20	Train	100
Hobart	5	0	5	198	Flight	990
Illawarra	4	0	4	108	Bus	432
Launceston	1	1	2	198	Flight	396
Lismore	3	0	3	286	Bus	858
Melbourne	25	6	31			
Newcastle	3	0	3	130	Bus	390
NSW country	1	0	1	150	Bus	150
Perth	11	1	12	418	Flight	5016
Rockhampton	1	0	1	398	Flight	398
Sydney	26	4	30	108	Bus	3240
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>126</b>			<b>19,234 (A)</b>

### 2. Other expenditure (still to be confirmed)

Flemington Community Centre	550
Catering	480
Childcare	800
Publicity (poster, banners)	400
YMCA hall	360
Other	150
<b>Total</b>	<b>2740 (B)</b>

### Grand total

**(A + B) 21,974 (C)**

### 3. Potential income

Catering	600
Observer registration fees	2000
Sale of <i>Discussion Bulletins</i>	100
Collection at public meeting	400
<b>Total</b>	<b>4100 (D)</b>

### 4. Cost per delegate to break even

Expenditure minus income (C-D)	17,874 (E)
Expected number of delegates	126 (F)

$$E / F = \text{cost per delegate} = 17,874 / 126 \approx 140 [141.86]$$

# Appendix C: Proportional Representation (Single Transferable Vote)—in a nutshell

*Note: The following guide to Proportional Representation was provided by comrade Janet Burstall for the Founding Conference of the Socialist Alliance, when it was used to elect the delegates to that conference. The April 4 National Executive hook-up voted to again use the system for the election of delegates to our Second National Conference, which is why it has been reprinted in this Discussion Bulletin. The Socialist Alliance national office will also soon forward a complete kit for conducting Proportional Representation elections to all branches so that Returning Officers who have not used it before can familiarize themselves with the system.*  
...Dick Nichols, National Co-convenor

First, as in most preferential elections, it is important to realize that **each person has just one vote**. Proportional representation seeks to have as many voters as possible contribute directly to the election of candidates. Rather than creating ‘winner-take-all’ situations, it minimises wastage of votes.

The marking of preferences on your ballot-paper indicates **the order in which you want your vote to assist individual candidates**. Marking later preferences cannot be detrimental to the prospects of candidates to whom you have given earlier ones.

If your vote helps contribute to the election of a candidate, part of its value is used in the quota of that candidate, and the remainder is available for continuing candidates (ie those not yet elected or excluded).

To maximise your chances of having a fully effective vote (ie all of its value contributing towards the election of one or more candidates), it is sensible to mark as many preferences as you actually hold.

## What’s involved in the counting of the ballot?

### **Voter’s perspective**

You have told us the order in which you wish to assist candidates, and now we’re going to try to have all of your vote used up in the direct election of candidates. The rules are designed to minimise wastage of votes.

### **Candidate’s perspective**

You have one of two possibilities – being **elected** (with either a quota or more of votes, or, at the end, because there are only as many candidates left as vacancies still to be filled) or being **excluded** (because you have the fewest votes when there are no surpluses left to distribute and therefore we have to reduce the number of continuing candidates).

### **Process perspective**

All the way along, it’s about whether or not any candidate is ready for election. At each stage (or count), either a surplus gets transferred (someone’s just been elected and fractions of votes are left over for further preferences) or a candidate gets excluded (and we try to pass all the remaining vote value to others).

### **Vote wastage perspective**

A **continuing candidate** is one who has not yet been elected nor excluded. Once a candidate has been elected or excluded, no further ballot-papers can be transferred to that name – for all further intents and purposes, it is no longer on the ballot-paper

We minimise vote wastage by

- accepting as many votes as possible as formal;
- keeping the quota as low as mathematically possible (so elected candidates are not required to obtain more votes than they really need – if some or most do, others are likely to get in more easily than they should towards the end of the scrutiny); and

- trying to avoid exhaustion of ballot-papers when surpluses are being transferred (by aiming to include within the quota of the elected candidate the remaining value of ballot-papers without a further preference for continuing candidates).

## Flow-chart for a quota-preferential election

**1. Calculate the quota as your first step. Then keep asking the one key question below – Does any candidate have a quota, ie is anyone ready for election?**

---

**2. Does any candidate have a quota?**

**YES**

Distribute **earliest surplus** to continuing candidates who share the votes not needed as part of that quota (a transfer value will have to be calculated for the last parcel received)

**NO**

**Exclude** candidate who has fewest votes and transfer these to next available preferences (after combining parcels of the same transfer value, start with those of the highest value)

---

**3. If the number of continuing candidates falls to the number of unfilled vacancies, declare them all elected without carrying out any transfer from the last candidate excluded.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Distributing a surplus.** This is done in the order that candidates are elected (highest votes first if two or more pass the quota at the same time). Take the **last parcel** of votes received by the elected candidate (examine all papers if elected on first preferences), work out how often each continuing candidate has next available preference, and move these different piles close to the previous votes for these candidates. Calculate the transfer value by dividing the surplus (excess beyond the quota) by the total number of ballot-papers with a next available preference (drop back to the previous transfer value if your answer exceeds it because many papers are not transferable). Multiply the number of papers for each candidate by the transfer value, disregard any fractions and add these products to each progress total. If any continuing candidate goes beyond the quota (securing election, and joining any current queue for distribution of surpluses), no further votes are transferred to that candidate.

**Excluding a candidate.** If no-one has a surplus, the candidate with lowest progress total is excluded (if there's a tie, go back to the last time they weren't equal, and draw lots if they were always equal). Allocate the first preferences and any other ballot-papers still of full value to the next available candidates on each ballot-paper and adjust their progress totals. Continue with any other aggregated parcels one by one in the descending order of transfer value at which they were received by the excluded candidate, multiplying numbers with each continuing candidate as next available preference by the transfer value at which they were received and disregarding any fractions. If a candidate's progress total goes beyond the quota during any transfer from a parcel of particular value (guaranteeing election), no further parcels are transferred to that candidate during the rest of the exclusion (which must be completed before any new surplus distribution begins).

**Finding the next available (continuing) candidate on any particular ballot-paper**

When votes are being transferred, the number next to the name of the elected or excluded candidate involved must be smaller than that alongside the name of any other (continuing) candidate not yet excluded or elected. Provided that there are no duplications or omissions of numbers, the ballot-paper will next be credited to whichever continuing candidate has the lowest number alongside (this is the same as having the highest preference). If there is no such continuing candidate, the ballot-paper is non-transferable when coming from an elected candidate (an attempt is made to include all of its remaining value in that candidate's quota) and exhausted otherwise (in which case the remainder of its value is wasted).

## Guide for returning officers conducting a Proportional Representation (STV) ballot

Calculate the number of delegates the Branch is entitled to, one delegate for every nine members (plus one if there are 5, 6, 7 or 8 more members in total than can evenly be divided by nine)

Take nominations for delegates. Members may self-nominate.

When nominations close, are there more candidates than the delegate entitlement? If no, declare the nominees elected. If yes, conduct a ballot.

### CONDUCTING THE BALLOT

Have a list of all eligible voters.

Bring a calculator.

Bring plenty of paper and pens.

The order of candidates' names on the ballot is determined by lot, drawn with the candidates, or nominated scrutineers present. If voters are writing out names on their ballot-paper, if they change the order inadvertently, that vote is valid provided that the voter's intention is clear from the marking of preferences.

EITHER list all candidates on a board in front of the meeting where the ballot will be held, and use blank ballot papers OR type up the names of the candidates on a sheet of paper and make a ballot paper, with enough copies for each voter to have one.

Make sure any policy speeches are given to the election meeting

Hand out ballot sheets to voters, marking voters off the membership list, and initialling each ballot paper.

Explain how many delegates are to be elected and that a valid vote can indicate one or more preferences, numbered consecutively from 1 (ie optional preferential voting applies). A ballot-paper will be invalid/informal if there is no first preference (symbols such as ticks or crosses are not acceptable), or there are two or more first preferences.

Ask voters to place completed ballot-papers in a container, or a pile.

When sufficient time has been allowed, declare the ballot closed.

### USE TALLY SHEETS FOR COUNTING PR BALLOT

The 3 types of tally sheets come with an outline of the *Counting procedure* which outlines the concept behind the tally sheets.

1. Tally sheet A - for recording changes in progress totals for candidates - 1 only needed
2. Surplus Distribution Worksheet B - for distributing surplus votes of elected candidates. You may deal with X surpluses before having to start on another sheet. Make enough copies to cover the number of delegates to be elected if necessary.
3. Exclusion Worksheet C - for distributing the votes of the candidate with the lowest progress total when there is no surplus to distribute. You may be able to deal with as many as X surpluses before having to start on another sheet. Make copies to match the number of candidates in excess of the delegates to be elected.

These tally sheets have been designed to score for up to 15 candidates in one ballot. If there are more candidates in your ballot you will have to insert extra rows, or use 2 sheets per count, with the TOTAL at the bottom of one sheet..

#### To calculate a quota

How many valid ballot papers (**BP**) have been cast?

Multiply by 100 (effectively working to two decimal places for mathematical accuracy)

How many delegates (**Del**) to be elected?

Quota = **100BP divided by (Del +1)**, rounded up to next highest whole number (add 1 if there is no fractional remainder).

(eg 12 votes, 3 delegates, quota =  $1200/(3+1) + 1 = 301$ )

14 votes, 3 delegates, quota =  $1400/(3+1) + 1 = 351$

17 votes, 6 delegates, quota = whole number above

$1700/(6+1) = 243$

## **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE RESOLUTIONS**

*The following resolutions were all adopted at the April 4 hook-up of the National Executive*

### **National Executive functioning**

**Agreed unanimously:**

The National Executive recognises the frustrations about National Executive functioning raised in Alison Thorne's email letter and also by other National Executive members in verbal communication, and resolves that:

1. The agenda of National Executives should be constructed around proposals and tasks and all resolutions for Friday hook-ups of the National Executive should be

in by the previous Wednesday, except in exceptional circumstances;

2. There should be the following time limits for contributions: five minutes for reporter, four minutes for speakers first intervention, two minutes for subsequent interventions; and

3. Chairing should be spread around the National Executive, based on a pool of National Executive comrades who wish to volunteer to chair.

### **Anti-war work and campaign against the 2003 federal budget**

**Agreed unanimously:**

That the public meetings about the budget should not be projected around a block the budget theme (even though this will be the message of Socialist Alliance speakers), but should seek to assemble a broad base of speakers;

That, money allowing, we design a poster for the budget meetings as well as proceeding with a broadsheet along the lines projected in Appendix B (also stressing link between Howard's war policy and domestic policy and cuts in spending on indigenous Australians

### **Solidarity with "Books Not Bombs" movement**

**Agreed unanimously:**

To endorse the statement issued on this issue by the National Conveners.

### **Distribution to branches of petition in name of John van der Velden, Michael Morphett and four other comrades**

**Agreed unanimously:**

That the National Executive endorses the principle that the National Conveners are bound to distribute documents from any member to all other members if so

requested, subject to the usual provisos regarding slander, abuse etc.