

PARTISAN!



The Unity Issue

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Editor-in-Chief

Max J

Managing Editor

Mila Volkova

Content Editor

Edith Fischer

Design

V.

Web Editor

Christina Veselovskiy

About Partisan:

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the 'partyist left' in Australia, and an organ of independent, communist journalism.

Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states. ■

**@PARTISANMAGAZINE****/PARTISANMAGAZINE****@PARTISANRCO****@PARTISANMAGAZINE****PARTISANMAGAZINE@PROTON.ME****Who is the “RCO”?**

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) is a pre-party formation that works towards the re-unification of the socialist left in Australia into a single, mass communist party. We come from diverse political backgrounds and schools of Marxist thought, yet we are united by a common program.

We welcome rigorous debate and disagreement and are open to factions, yet act as one organisation. We are guided by the principle of diversity of thought, and unity of action. The capitalist mode of production is at the root of every social, environmental, and economic crisis today.

We fight for the liberation of queer people, Aboriginal people, and women, a liberation which can only be achieved through the destruction of the capitalist system. We are united by our determination to fight the capitalist mode of production at every turn, and our total commitment to its abolition. We are communists, unapologetically and without reservation.

We engage in every form of proletarian activity, whether protests or union drives, yet do not trail social movements; we aim in every instance to build the base for a mass workers' party, necessary to intervene in the class struggle and advance the communist movement. ■

PARTYISM: That section of the communist movement which sees the re-unification of communist forces into a single party representative of the movement as its primary task.

We do not reject the rest of the left - instead, we aim to work through the existing left to build a communist party. Such a party is united by a shared Marxist program, that is, a program for leading the working class to power and overthrowing the capitalist system.

For this reason, we eschew the malignant sect labels which are often thrown around amongst the left. We view all communist organisations as being “sects” - factional organisations which recruit to a particular tendency and viewpoint, as opposed to a Marxist program.

We aim to unite the sects into a party, being an organisation representative of the movement as a whole, and the political weapon of the working class. ■

If you think you're lonely now...

Much of the last month has been spent debating over Socialist Alliance's refusal to join The Socialists, and the implications. NSW Socialists have been forced to register under a different name. Alliance refuses to engage seriously and in good faith with those of us who have joined The Socialists. This issue of Partisan focuses much on this debate, and debates around Rising Tide. By the time this is released, their 2025 blockade will have concluded.

Why does socialist unity matter? Many think that the sects can co-exist relatively peacefully. This may be the case in the short term, but in the long term, we are mutually undermining. What socialist party should workers vote for? Alliance? The Socialists? Any argument in any direction undermines the other option. Which pro-Palestine front do workers and students join? Students for Palestine? Students Against War? Siding with one undermines the other.

We emphasise the need for socialist unity, because without a shared socialist organisation, we are mutually undermining each other. We will continue to fail to win the working class over to our programs - since the working class has no reason to take a smorgasbord of tiny sects seriously. At most, we can gain piecemeal wins, but we will not score big.

To their credit, Socialist Alternative has made a seemingly serious attempt to reach out to Alliance and to push the unity question - something RCO comrades had been advocating towards for a long time. We in the RCO advocate broadly for socialist unity (where possible), as we support a party made up of the majority of the movement. Our unity discussions with the Spartacist League of Australia are a testament to our commitment to the topic.

Erstwhile comrades in Socialist Alliance scoff at the prospect of unity with Socialist Alternative. In doing so, they show the working people of Australia who they really are: backwards sectarians. But they can change, and they can support unity, and in doing so, come together with the rest of us in building The Socialists as a nation-wide, revolutionary socialist party.

But this is a tough sell to Alliance members, many of whom have their identities wrapped up in their commitment to Alliance itself as a project - as opposed to their commitment to socialist politics, the socialist movement, and the movement to emancipate humanity. To this, we say: well, comrades in Alliance, if you think you're lonely now...

Max J, for Partisan ■



Open Letter to Rising Tide

Dear Rising Tide's attendees,

We are the Revolutionary Communist Organisation. We believe the Australian socialist movement is hopelessly divided into numerous dogmatic sects. In this state, we are less than the sum of our parts. We fight for the re-unification of the socialist movement into a single democratic communist party. We are drawn from a variety of socialist tendencies and life experiences, and we are unified by our democratically drafted program to seize power and smash the capitalist system.

We support direct action. Rising Tide offers an opportunity for people to express their frustrations with the system and their despair of ecological collapse. It offers people a chance to connect with others who feel the same way. People at Rising Tide feel they are taking the fight directly to the system, rather than sitting at home.

But this is not real direct action. The "momentum model" tries to pressure the ruling class to act from the outside as a social minority. Will "climate-conscious", "green" oligarchs really act in our best interests? We believe that workers can take power directly in revolution. Rising Tide's actions barely affect the coal port. With no mass movement, more radical action like train-jumping just gets people arrested for no benefit.

We support a green economy. The planet is dying. Rising Tide is right to demand an end to fossil fuels.

But capitalism cannot be green-ified. Capitalism does not use fossil fuels because it is more cost-efficient than sustainable energy. Capitalism uses fossil fuels because it allows capitalism to move away when workers in one place get too demanding. Solar panels, wind farms, and batteries can't be moved as easily. Capitalism isn't just a system of profit; it is a system of class exploitation.

We support mass action. Rising Tide's experiments in deliberative and direct democracy help teach people that they can run society themselves. The Protestival atmosphere reclaims public space against enclosure and commodification. The only way for the working class to take power is through their own self-organisation and action.

But this is not mass action. Inside Rising Tide, "activist" technocrats and small business owners are given more space and time than anyone else. They spread the lie that the system can be reformed and that our job as poor people is to help them solve the problem for us (and let them profit off it). How can this space be democratic if we let in profiteers like this? We believe that our movement needs to include more workers, more disabled people, and more unemployed people and fewer capitalists and technocrats. We believe that we should decide our politics and our strategy for ourselves, without outside interference, and that we should drive out the capitalists.

We are scared about the future. Every day, it feels more and more that the world is ending and that there is no hope. Bush fires, floods, and drought hurt our communities and our families and are getting even worse.

We need a plan. Waiting for the climate apocalypse to wake people up, or for the green politicians to come in and save us, is not going to work. Capitalism can survive every crisis that it creates as long as we are not organised. We need our own positive vision for social transformation. We need a revolution.

We need communism. Only a world without classes, where production is planned globally, democratically, and according to genuine human need can stop the never-ending ecological catastrophe.

We need a mass communist party. We need to organise to win a majority to revolution. We need to educate each other on how capitalism really works, and what it takes to abolish it. We need a real mass movement rather than a small minority. We need strikes and blockades that actually wins things for us. We need independence from the oligarchs, technocrats, small business owners, and their media apparatus. We need to organise the entire proletariat including coal miners, workers, unpaid workers, renters, the disabled, the unemployed, and young people. We need to reclaim physical and mental space for ourselves. We need our own politicians to agitate others and obstruct the state and its repressive institutions. We need to act in our own collective interests and not in the interests of the exploiters. We need unity of the socialist movement and the proletariat under a common platform.

Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO)

MARXIST MONDAYS

AFTER WORK SOCIAL
DRINKS FOR SOCIALISTS,
COMMUNISTS,
BOLSHEVIKS, AND
DISSIDENTS OF ALL KINDS

MONDAY
5:30 PM

HOSTED BY TALKING REDS
AND THE BRISBANE SECTION
OF THE REVOLUTIONARY
COMMUNIST ORGANISATION

THE BURROW
WEST END
BRISBANE



**EVERY
WEEK**

Socialist unity, an independent perspective

*As the need for unity between Socialist Alliance and The Socialists becomes clearer over the electoral registration of the NSW Socialists, Victorian Socialists member **Daniel Lopez** provides an independent (non-Socialist Alternative) perspective to the unity debates.*

Socialists in Australia agree that we need to build a united socialist party with a strong working class membership that both contests elections and organises in unions and community campaigns. By and large, there is also a fair degree of consensus over the program that such a party ought to have.

But as anyone who's met the Left knows, it's much easier to affirm unity as a principle than to build unity in practice. When Victorian Socialists was founded in 2018, we took an important step towards a united socialist party, even though VS began as an electoral coalition formed by separate organisations and individuals. Some two years later, we took a step back as Socialist Alliance withdrew from VS.

Their decision was precipitated by a fairly fractious internal debate, and in the aftermath, the Socialist Alliance published a document outlining their reasoning. Although I disagreed at the time, I nevertheless regarded the Socialist Alliance's decision as informed by legitimate scepticism. At the same time, the perspective that informed my decision to remain a VS member was unproven, and it involved a good degree of uncertainty.

I don't intend to re-hash those debates. Rather, I want to assess them in light of the results five years on. To put my cards on the table, I believe VS has come a long way since then, and that whatever the merits of Socialist Alliance's analysis in 2020, the situation now is different.

In sum, I believe VS has begun to develop a model of party that can democratically sustain both unity and political difference. And if this is indeed the case, it makes sense to reopen the discussion over unity, whatever that might look like.

Socialist Disunity

Given my role in instigating the debates in 2020, it is first necessary to go over a little bit of my political background. In 2019, after being a member of Socialist Alternative for going-on

Now is the time for socialists to unite

Posted on Monday, 17 November

The Socialist Party Interim National Executive sent the following correspondence to the Socialist Alliance earlier today. For additional background, see the [statement](#) put out last week about party registration federally and in NSW.

Proposal to Socialist Alliance from the Socialist Party Interim National Executive

To comrades in the Socialist Alliance,

We are writing to again raise the issue of unity between our organisations.

As you know, fascism is on the rise around the world. Not just the oft-cited right-wing populism that is increasingly obviously fascism, but even more reactionary varieties. The *New York Times* reports that open Nazis are taking over the Republican Party in the US.

Now is the time for socialists to unite, VS, Monday 17 November 2025.

twenty years, after a lengthy debate, I came to the view that my expulsion was more or less inevitable. So, I resigned under duress. On the surface, the debate was over how socialists should assess Bernie Sanders' campaign in the Democratic Party primaries, although of course, there were other issues at stake. While I still regard the hill I chose to die on with great fondness, the moment for those arguments has passed.

After resigning from Socialist Alternative, I remained an active, independent member of Victorian Socialists because I regarded it as the most viable party-building project in Australia. Around the same time, I began working as Commissioning Editor for Jacobin magazine. In that role, I have commissioned content by over 400 authors — including some who are members of Socialist Alliance or Socialist Alternative. With respect to the various currents and organisations that populate the far Left, I would describe my position as "radically ecumenical."

Despite its promise in 2019, Victorian Socialists had not yet developed into a party, in the full sense of the term. Although a registered electoral party with a few impressive results to its name, VS did not have branches, structures, processes or a constitution that could allow it to maintain itself as a party independent of its constituent groups. Apart from the minority of VS members who were members of its constituent organisations, the VS membership was not active or engaged, and many were non-financial. Nor did VS organise between elections. Of course, as part of its constituent

organisations, VS members were involved in union and campaign work — but not as VS members. There were also no plans at that point to build our membership and dues base, to expand interstate or to found a federal party. From where I stood, it seemed clear that VS was being mothballed between elections.

So, as an independent, I convened a coalition of around forty VS members that referred to itself as the “Active Party Platform.” Many leading VS independents supported this platform, including three then-members of the VS Executive Committee. The Socialist Alliance was also a key part of the Active Party Platform from the beginning. Over a series of discussions, we developed a series of points we agreed to argue for within VS. These included:

- Re-engaging VS’s existing membership and launching a recruitment drive,
- Developing VS into a party that engaged in sustained non-electoral activism,
- Developing VS’s public and internal communications,
- Increasing membership dues, to sustain an independent, professional party organisation, including paid organisers,
- Building a branch structure, including regular public and members’ meetings,
- Developing VS structures to coordinate members’ union work,

The details of the debate that ensued aren’t really the main point. Suffice to say, while the Active Party Platform represented a significant group of active and experienced VS members, we simply didn’t have enough votes to win the day.

But even though we were out-voted at the conference convened to address the points we’d raised, we won a number of important concessions, including on a membership drive and dues, and on party activity and communications. In the early months of the pandemic, VS kicked into action — we hosted well-attended public meetings, set up a newsletter for members, and began recruiting. These efforts put us in good stead for the local council election campaign in late 2020.

It must be said, however, the debate itself was fractious. To some extent this reflected Socialist Alternative’s political culture, half shaped by student politics and half shaped by the idiosyncrasies of an exiled IST offshoot in a country whose culture and workers’ movement aren’t famed for their manners. And in fairness, it’s a culture that shaped my own approach to debate: I’ve read Lenin, I don’t mind a bit of a row.

But it must also be said, the intensity of that debate also reflected the then-recent history I mentioned above. One can hardly expect an organisation to look charitably upon an opposition led by a recently kicked-out leading member — and I say this with no implied recrimination!

The intensity of that debate was a considerable factor in Socialist Alliance’s departure, and although I disagreed with their decision at the time, in retrospect their objections on this front were reasonable enough. Now, however, it’s possible to assess the long term outcomes.

Socialist Unity: A Good Idea Then

Following the 2020 debate, I founded a caucus in Victorian Socialists named Socialist Unity. Unlike the Active Party Platform, Socialist Unity was a caucus; we recruited, held regular meetings (both public and for members) and decided democratically on our principles and structures.

Socialist Unity wasn’t an ideological caucus, which is to say, we weren’t committed to a specific tradition or brand of Marxism. Rather, we were a party reform caucus. We came together to keep pushing Victorian Socialists towards becoming an established party with a significant working class membership that organized outside of elections. It’s not necessary to go over the whole story of Socialist Unity. But two points are salient.

Firstly, Socialist Unity promoted an “open caucus” system. To be clear, Socialist Alternative — the only other caucus in Victorian Socialists at the time — did not disagree with us on this point. Indeed, the model we developed drew in part on how Socialist Alternative relates to Victorian Socialists.

Essentially, we affirmed that some members of Victorian Socialists were and would continue to be members of other organisations. In the case of Socialist Alternative, it’s an organisation with an independent existence, separate activity and a specific intellectual tradition. In the case of Socialist Unity, we did not build an organisation outside of Victorian Socialists; rather we required our members to be members of VS while we affirmed our right to promote our caucus, its events and its views to VS members and publicly.

At the same time, we affirmed our commitment to VS and ensured that our activities didn’t undermine VS or provoke unnecessary conflict with Socialist Alternative. In one or two cases Socialist Alternative members acted in ways you might expect from

an aspiring school captain at Trinity or MLC. But none of that was result of Socialist Alternative's leadership — and it's not as though SU was completely faultless. In the end, however, it wasn't a big deal. The more SU and SA worked together, the better we worked together. The key was being committed to the shared project of building a socialist party.

As you would expect, Socialist Unity put forward alternative perspectives for VS at a number of conferences and members' meetings, and these were often — but not always — opposed by Socialist Alternative. For the most part, these weren't in-principle disagreements, but over timing and details. Because we were committed to the democratic principle of "one member, one vote," when we were in a minority, we accepted the outcome. Other times, we negotiated outcomes we could all support. Other times again, we simply went ahead and tested our proposals for VS in practice — a path that's often more persuasive than moving a motion.

At the same time, SU members stood as VS candidates in local council elections, and we won positions in VS's leadership bodies in proportion to our vote at conferences. SU members, myself included, were also tasked with leading areas of work. Far from being excluded, we often found that the barrier to our members standing as candidates or taking on areas of work was the time commitment involved. The point is, we worked together while maintaining different perspectives.

Today, Victorian Socialists and its interstate branches have incorporated the open caucus model SU helped to develop. In Victoria, in addition to many independent members, there are at present two recognized caucuses, Socialist Alternative and the Communist Caucus. In a few other states, different caucuses have already launched.

Until the conference earlier this year, there was a third caucus within VS, the Socialist Workers' Caucus. The SWC was also a reform caucus, and it campaigned for VS to organise in unions. And they won a major victory when the conference year voted to incorporate the SWC as an official party body. This, in my view, was an important vindication of both the SWC's perspective and the open caucus model — after all, the SWC obviously won the argument, and the result speaks for itself.

The second point to make about Socialist Unity is that we were also successful, albeit in a less clear-cut way than the SWC. Today, with one or two relatively small exceptions, every point that SU demanded has been achieved, and for the most part, this was also led by

members of Socialist Alternative.

This is the main reason why Socialist Unity no longer exists: VS has taken major steps towards becoming the party we envisaged, and indeed, it's gone beyond many of Socialist Unity's demands. So why continue to organise around those demands? And personally speaking, I prefer the aristocratic freedom of independence.

Socialist Unity: An Even Better Idea Now

The point of the above account is to address some of the barriers to unity that Socialist Alliance has raised. In the document published following their departure from Victorian Socialists, Socialist Alliance wrote:

"... we no longer feel that the Victorian Socialist project is capable of uniting broader layers of socialists in an alliance that has the dynamic to move beyond electoral politics. Recent decisions have shown that Victorian Socialists is not open to allowing any groups of independents, for example, to develop its political life outside of elections."

Indeed, the majority faction organised by Socialist Alternative has made clear that it will not accept anything which is not electorally oriented beyond the very limited Membership and Activity Committee decided upon at the Governing Council on May 9. Previously at the May 2 membership consultation, Socialist Alternative mobilised overwhelming numbers of its members to vote down a motion, which Socialist Alliance supported, from independent socialist members of Victorian Socialists."

That motion called on Victorian Socialists to: "... develop its organisational structures and sustain a more active membership". It insisted that, "... avenues must be made available for members to be active outside of the electoral cycle". The motion also noted that, "...the bulk of Victorian Socialist activity is confined to electoral activity, where it should be fighting around multiple issues the whole year round."

Socialist Alternative's preparedness to use its numbers to restrict the democratic participation of independents in the Victorian Socialists means that Socialist Alliance does not believe that our continued participation in the project can be effective."

The second perspective that kept me in VS was an analysis of Socialist Alternative. Obviously, I had criticisms of Socialist Alternative, both as a member of theirs, and later as an independent member of VS. Equally

obviously, I have not been shy about raising them.

But equally, I have disagreed many times with comrades who transformed their disagreements with Socialist Alternative into rigid, sectarian opposition.

For the most part, I understood the negative elements of Socialist Alternative's politics and practice to be outcomes of the culture and mentality that can grow in the isolated and moralistic world of small propaganda groups. There are, of course, huge variations between small socialist groups, which range from the most self-isolated, strange and sometimes destructive, to those that contribute valuably to the Left and the workers' movement, despite their small size.

One of the key factors, in my mind, is the extent to which small groups cultivate meaningful engagements in the real world, and attempt to push beyond the confines imposed by history and the political context they operate in. The further a socialist group retreats into its own structures and culture, the more likely it is to become a sect, in the pathological sense of the term. A sect can survive for decades, but what members of such sects usually don't realize is that they've covertly abandoned the goal of establishing a socialist party in favour of maintaining a sub-culture.

At the same time, however, there are many examples in history of small propaganda groups that have overcome isolation and contributed to founding mass parties. Such groups must learn two basic things: first, they must learn to be involved in mass politics, whatever that looks like. And secondly, they must learn to operate alongside others in larger organisations, where the political uniformity of a sect is simply impossible.

Few would deny that as an organisation, Socialist Alternative is possessed with a perhaps inflated sense of its own correctness about everything, and as a consequence, can sometimes be abrasive or instrumental. Perhaps traits helped Socialist Alternative to survive and grow from the 1990s to the 2010s.

At times, this approach has been damaging. But at the same time, I have consistently argued that it's wrong to assess Socialist Alternative on the basis of this alone. In 2020, I viewed Socialist Alternative as an organisation with elements of sectarianism in their politics, theory and practice, but at the same time, as an organisation that was leading the most serious effort to form a socialist party in many years.

This is important because a party is a qualitatively higher form of organisation than a

small propaganda group. A party can sustain a more pluralistic political culture than small groups can, without ceasing to be radical or revolutionary, and this is by virtue of a party's mass membership and stake in mass politics, as well as its structures, leadership and politics. In short, the only solution to the pathologies of small group politics is mass politics — which, of course, comes with its own set of worse dangers. I dare to say, historical mass socialist parties have also seen their share of unpleasantness.

But as I argued in 2020, although Socialist Alternative represented a minority of Victorian Socialists' membership as a whole, Socialist Alternative was nevertheless necessary to VS's success, owing to their resources and experience, as well as their members' commitment to and capacity for activism.

I also argued that members of Socialist Alternative would learn from the experience of forming Victorian Socialists and campaigning to a mass audience, and that this would gradually diminish the more abrasive and sectarian aspects of their political culture. As the saying goes, practice determines consciousness.

I think this perspective has also been vindicated. I've got no idea whether Socialist Alternative members see things in these terms — they probably don't, but that isn't really the point.

The basic point is that the Victorian Socialists have come a very long way since 2020. We are now a federal party with a small but substantial membership, a democratic constitution and culture, and with promising opportunities ahead. Socialist Alternative has been a part of that, to the benefit of both VS and Socialist Alternative. And if I can get along with them, there's hope for a united socialist Left yet.

Which is to say, the reasons Socialist Alliance cited in 2020 to explain their departure from VS no longer apply. So, it makes sense to explore unity. Together, we'll be in a far better position to elect candidates from the Socialist Alliance — alongside independents, candidates from Socialist Alternative, and from other caucuses.

And if the Socialist Party is successful, this is, in fact, the best way to preserve and extend the achievements of all constituent groups that join. A united socialist movement strengthens the entire Left. And best of all, I believe this is possible without requiring that the Socialist Alliance sacrifice the organisation and legacy they've spent many years building. ■

The Socialist Alliance Problem

*The debate around unity between Socialist Alliance and The Socialists continues. **John Blackford** writes that since Socialist Alliance and The Socialists have near identical politics, there are no legitimate arguments against unity between them.*

In a statement posted on the 12th of November, 2025, the Victorian Socialists executive announced that efforts to take the electoral party nationwide had come up against a significant obstacle. The application to rename the federally registered party Victorian Socialists to “Socialist Party” lodged with the Australian Electoral Commission, in the wake of the VS conference in June, has been provisionally rejected due to its resemblance to the name of Socialist Alliance. According to the AEC, the party’s new proposed name could both be “reasonably confused” with that of Alliance, and implies a connection between the Socialist Party and Socialist Alliance which in actuality does not exist. Likewise, in New South Wales, the only jurisdiction where Alliance remains registered on the state level, the NSW Electoral Commission rejected the application of the Socialist Party under the name “New South Wales Socialist Party” on similar grounds, forcing the party to register under a modified name.



Socialist Alliance members at the Rising Tide blockade in November 2025. Photo: Socialist Alliance FB.

The rejection of these applications has reignited discussion over whether Socialist Alliance can justify remaining a separate electoral party to VS. If Alliance were to cease to be a registered political party, the obstacles to registration under VS’s preferred names would disappear, both nationally and in New South Wales. More broadly however, it has brought into focus the question of why Alliance, which is functionally identical to VS in program, politics, and strategy, does not simply



Jacob Andrewartha (left), member of Socialist Alliance’s executive, with other Alliance members during the National Day of Action for Palestine. Photo: Socialist Alliance FB.

liquidate itself into VS, a party which has achieved more in seven years than Alliance has in twenty-five. Indeed, in their statement, the VS executive reiterated calls for organisational unity with Alliance, on the basis of “full freedom for internal groups to pursue their own arguments and strategies.”

Socialist Alliance, meanwhile, has been reluctant to budge on the point of unity. In an internal bulletin sent to Alliance members, the party’s national co-convenor stated that, while Alliance “want[s] to see electoral unity as a process towards left regroupment,” the “constant calls for unity” from VS “are not designed to do this or to build trust.” Additionally, according to Alliance, “there had been no formal process put forward to us, nor a process for addressing the original reasons why we left Victorian Socialists in 2020 and a way forward.” While not shutting the door completely on unity, the bulletin, in combination with a renewed Victorian membership drive intended to register Alliance in time for the 2026 state election, indicates that Alliance remains aloof to substantive unity with VS.

This is a disappointing development. Alliance’s initial withdrawal from VS was a qualitative setback for the socialist movement in Australia, and it has not been vindicated with time. Alliance justified leaving VS on the grounds that Socialist Alternative was using its majority in the party to block it from developing a political life outside of elections, and to “restrict the democratic participation of independents in the Victorian Socialists.” Five years later however, we find that VS has

managed to develop a life outside of elections, contrary to Alliance's diagnosis. VS has branches, commits to non-electoral campaigns, and maintains a de-facto cadre membership. Socialist Unity, a caucus which took up the same aims which Alliance supposedly left VS over (ie. development of an organisational life outside of elections) folded having achieved most of its goals. These structures and developments are obviously immature and imperfect, but their growth shows that Alliance's prognosis that VS was not worth working within to reform and improve was erroneous at best.

It is clear however that the more fundamental point at play is the control Socialist Alternative holds over VS. In their internal bulletin, Alliance states that "our experience in Victorian Socialists for two years was that undelegated conferences were used to outvote all minority proposals that did not comply with Socialist Alternative's views." Alliance additionally accuses SAlt of branch stacking, saying that while SAlt are "a minority in their electoral fronts," the undelegated conferences of VS franchises are "easily stacked." Alliance therefore characterises SAlt as a minoritarian bureaucracy undemocratically imposing its line on VS.

The fiction that the vast paper membership renders SAlt a minority within their front party is useful to both Alliance and the SAlt-aligned leadership of VS. The former uses it to characterise VS as an undemocratic organisation, given the obvious leading role SAlt plays in it. The latter, including figures such as Jordan Van Den Lamb, use it to distance VS from the generally disliked brand of Socialist Alternative. In either case, the notion is farcical. Whether we like it or not, a large majority of active VS members, who attend VS branch meetings and are engaged in internal VS politics, are either members of Socialist Alternative, or are aligned with Socialist Alternative on most questions relevant to VS. The fact is that SAlt are a majority in VS, and Alliance left because they disliked the decisions that the democratic majority in VS made. Alliance's proposals, sound as they were, were voted down by the majority in the party. The sound and principled decision would have been to remain to continue fighting for them, as many in VS did. The sectarian route taken by Alliance, however, was to use this as a pretext to exit.

When evaluating whether Alliance should rejoin VS, there are only two questions which we need to answer; is there any justification for Alliance to continue to be separate to VS, and

does it advance or hinder the socialist movement for Alliance to continue to be separate to VS? Any right for Alliance to continue a separate existence must be predicated on an affirmative answer to these questions. With regards to the first, we have already established that Alliance's stated reasons for leaving were either always dubious or have been proven wrong with time, but what other justifications can we conceive of?

Perhaps Alliance might have a right to exist separately if it had a substantially different or more advanced program than VS. If Alliance's politics broke with state-loyalism and VS's didn't, then you might make the case that Alliance is justified in remaining independent. However, Alliance is no less reformist than VS is. Its publication routinely takes state loyalist positions on conflicts such as the War in Ukraine, and its platform is no less a left-populist hodgepodge than VS's is. Indeed, in terms of politics, beyond the meaningless shibboleth of "eco-socialism" which Alliance continues to flog, both parties are fundamentally identical. But what about strategy and tactics? Sure, the RCO regards splits as only being justifiable programmatically, but that is a far from universal view. Even tactically however, Alliance is not meaningfully distinct from VS; both parties devote considerable effort to elections, while still undertaking important activities outside of them.

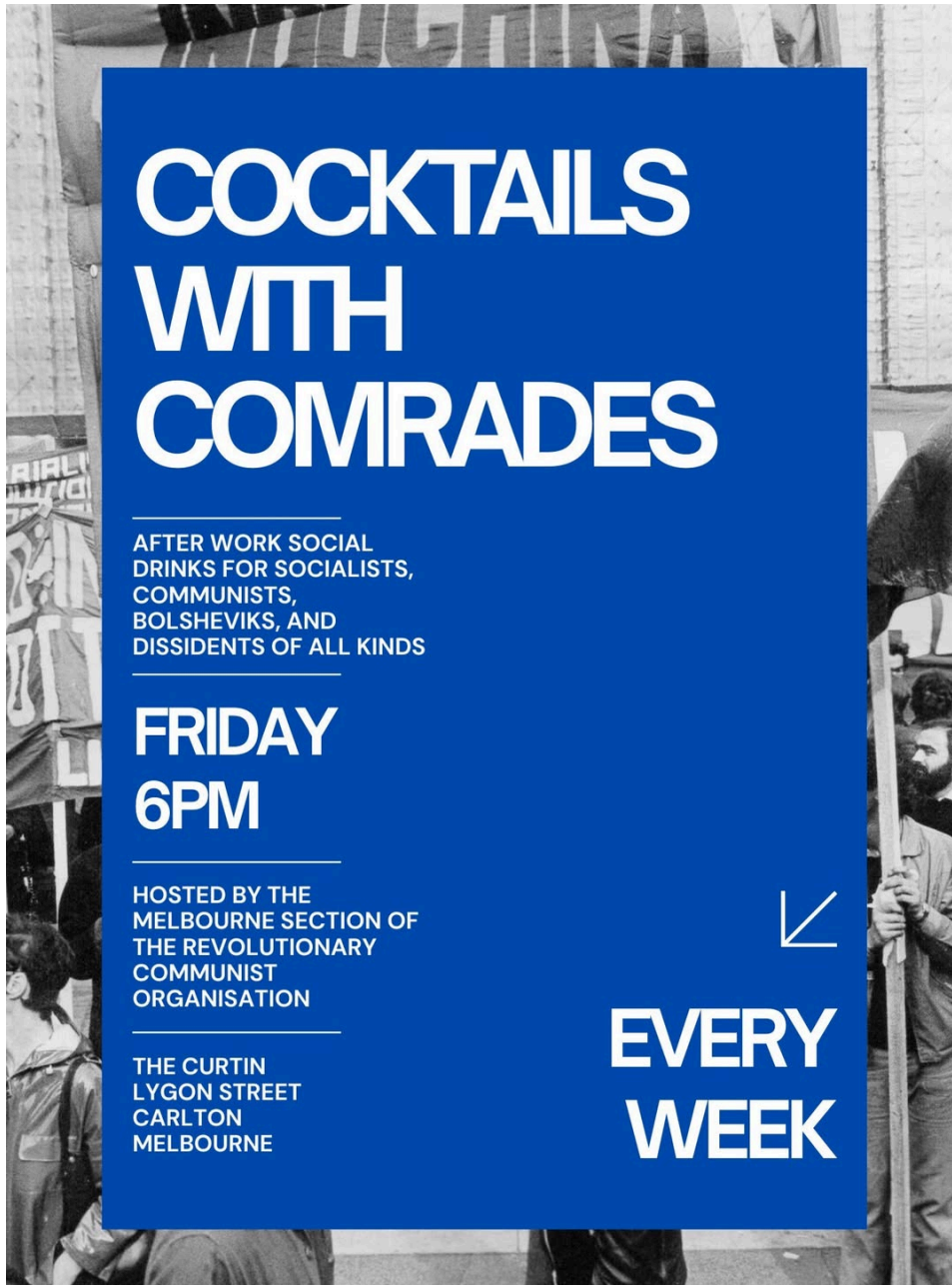
So, given the fact that we have two parties that, in every relevant political sense are identical, we must pose the question; does it advance the socialist movement for there to be two politically identical parties on the ballot, or does it hinder us? We are not the swamp in claiming that organisations have a "right to exist" separate to their obligations to the wider socialist movement. If Alliance has any "right to exist," it must be predicated on Alliance advancing the movement. Instead, the reality is the opposite. In dividing our forces without a sound political justification, Alliance's continued existence, not only as a separate electoral party but also as a separate organisation, has become objectively reactionary. It is the tool by which Alliance's leadership has maintained its power and influence, through control of Alliance's considerable assets, such as its electoral registration and the old Democratic Socialist Party property portfolio, by far the largest of any sect. Alliance's leadership stands to lose much if not all of this influence in the event of liquidation into VS. This is the reason why Alliance has remained independent in spite of

its identical politics.

It has become clear that Alliance must rejoin VS. It should immediately dissolve its electoral registrations or hand them over to VS, and give a list of its members to be admitted to VS en masse. It should then immediately enter into negotiations regarding a full and complete organisational merger between VS and itself, stating openly the conditions that would be required for such a merger to take place. VS should similarly outline its red lines, and accept any conditions put forward by Alliance which advance the democracy of VS (such as for delegated conferences), while rejecting any which give guaranteed powers or privileges to any organisation or bureaucratic clique. VS's open letter to Alliance calling for unity is a positive development in this respect, though the terms offered to Alliance are too generous by half, proposing to allow Alliance to keep an

independent electoral registration from VS. Even still, it is good that the positions of one side are, in principle, being aired publicly.

Discussions surrounding unity must be made public. There can be no secret talks between the two parties which keep their respective memberships in the dark about the actual political stakes at play. In negotiations, the assets of either party, such as Alliance's electoral registrations, must not be used for horse trading or to obtain constitutional or policy concessions. The aim of any such unity process must be a singular democratic party, able to make use of the combined assets of VS and Alliance in the manner of the choosing of the democratic majority of the combined party. Only this would represent the "left regroupment" and "single party on a democratic basis" which Alliance and VS respectively claim to strive for. ■



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Student activists stage school walk out, demand action on climate

Student activists across multiple high schools in Newcastle (including Hunter School of Performing Arts, Merewether High, and Newcastle High) staged a walkout today, drawing a large crowd. Activists marched to Civic Park demanding action on climate change, among other demands.

Activists were part of Youth Rising, the Under-18 contingent of Rising Tide. Youth Rising was formed after Newcastle School Strike 4 Climate folded into Rising Tide in June 2024. Since then, Youth Rising has been active in organising students around issues related to climate change and the environment. The walkout had been in the works for months prior, and is the first to take place in Newcastle since 2023.



Young activist Patrick spoke at the walkout. Photo: Max J

While under a hundred were present, many more were willing to attend, but were held back. "Some students were locked in by schools because their parents didn't give them permission to attend the walkout," a student told Partisan. Students who were allowed to leave were forced to leave quietly, in single file, by school administrations.

Students and youth have been at the forefront of the movement for climate action since the mid/late 2010s, starting with Greta Thunberg's Fridays for Future. School Strike 4 Climate (SS4C) was formed soon after, and made headlines with large school strikes across 2019, protesting the disastrous Morrison government in the wake of the bushfires.

Student activist Fox addressed the crowd and introduced speakers. One speaker, Patrick, emphasised the role of the state in accelerating climate disaster. "The politicians have failed us. Our great, elected leaders will let the Earth burn for quick cash," Patrick told the crowd, "They burn away our very future, and in a



Youth Rising activists march past the University of Newcastle. Photo: Max J

unique cruelty, teach us that it is happening but prevent us from stopping them."

Youth are becoming increasingly engaged in politics, especially around the climate issue. Many on the Left have been slow to engage seriously with the growing trend of political youth. As is often the case, youth activists are far ahead of the organised left.

Youth Rising continues to grow, with plans to establish organising committees at high schools. School administrations have ranged from outright hostile to lukewarm. At Merewether High, students are banned from poster or leafletting for Youth Rising or any other political causes.

It highlights a severe lack of democratic rights for youth, particularly working class youth. As many become politically engaged and potentially militant, they come up against school administrations which aim to restrict their democratic rights and political expression, as well as parents.

"The youth are rising," Fox told the crowd, echoing the slogans written on signs and banners, "no more compromising!" ■ November 21, 2025

Woman holds sign reading "Parents support students who strike". Photo: Max J



Indonesia, where to now?

*In a statement published by the Spartacist League of Australia, **O. Dziga** argues that if the Indonesian working class is to succeed, it must be led by an authentically socialist vanguard. Available in full online.*

“In the Global South, where there is no fat to cut, an offensive by the U.S. will have devastating consequences that will likely provoke massive social explosions. In many countries, all it takes is a spark for massive explosions to erupt. The question is: will these be directed against the imperialists or will workers turn the guns against each other? This all depends on the question of leadership.”

—Editorial, Spartacist, No. 70, May 2025

The wave of large and militant protests by Indonesian youth, which began late August, is among the most significant in Indonesia since 1998, revealing a deep accumulation of anger and political and economic grievance among broad layers of the Indonesian masses. The Indonesian national bourgeoisie finds itself in an increasingly dire impasse, as a declining US imperialism turns the screws on the neocolonial world. The workers' movement and the left are at such an impasse, too. With demonstrations trapped in a cycle of ebb and escalation, the union movement disoriented, and the organised left still programmatically and organisationally impotent.

It is not just “solidarity” or “greater coordination” that Indonesian social movements desperately need, but revolutionary leadership: a program and path towards victory against imperialism. It must be made clear to the progressive layers of the masses that in the absence of such a leadership, social explosions can only remain a platform for conflict and contestation among different factions of elite and imperialist interest—contributing ultimately to a spiral of reaction.

The trajectory of Indonesian politics is uncertain. Conditions for the masses are worsening and the relative political stability of the last twenty years shows real signs of cracking apart. The elite unity which today holds is under increasing threat of collapse as the global situation decomposes, yet all alternatives are underdeveloped. This offers real opportunities for the left and the workers movement, but also even greater dangers. Imperialist pressures could easily turn this powder keg of a situation into an explosive



spiral of reaction. In the current lull in political struggle it is more urgent than ever that the Indonesian left take seriously the tasks of programmatic and organisational rearmament.

Outlines for a Program

The following five points are presented as a basis for political discussion, debate, and consolidation. This report makes no claim to have the answers to the myriad political questions facing socialists and the workers movement in Indonesia. Clarifying programmatic principles is, however, the only basis on which to rebuild a fighting vanguard.

1. For United Defence Against State Repression.

Recent demonstrations resulted in the most significant period of state repression in Indonesia since 1998, with every tool short of a formal declaration of martial law deployed. Thousands were arrested in this crackdown, hundreds detained for extended periods, and many remain imprisoned awaiting trial. This includes both those caught up in the anarchist “Black Scare” (or accused of “anarchic acts” at protests) as well as numerous others facing charges of “incitement,” often simply for social media posts. Many face years in prison, including some prominent liberal activists and NGO figures. There is an urgent need for socialists to take the lead in mobilising a united campaign in defence of all those caught up in this wave of repression. This struggle must be directly linked with the defence of Papuan activists, who have also faced a wave of arrests and escalated military violence in recent months.

2. Towards 100% Merdeka

The anti-imperialist struggle is the democratic struggle. Inequality, corruption, the dire conditions of the Indonesian masses, the predatory and Bonapartist nature of the Indonesian elite—all are ultimately the product of imperialist subjugation and neo-colonial oppression. In the face of a rising Bonapartism,

advancing the democratic struggle demands a break with the politics of liberal Reformasi. Tied to the imperialists and this ideological remnant of US hegemony, the left will never break the hold of the national bourgeoisie on the masses. Marxists must demonstrate to the masses that only our program offers real direction in the struggle against imperialism. Cancel the imperialist debts, expel the imperialist agencies, tear up the capitulatory deals, refuse military cooperation in the war drive against China, complete the tasks of national liberation and 100% Merdeka.

Despite nationalist posturing, the elite have a doomed strategy which cannot defend the country from the imperialist death grip. Prabowo is desperate to maintain the balance between US imperialism and “multipolarity.” But when the hammer comes down he can only sell out in economic negotiations (and beg Trump for an audience with his son). Moves towards greater military coordination with US imperialism—including offers by the state shipbuilder to turn the archipelago into a repair and refuelling platform for the US war machine—promise only greater disaster. When the national bourgeoisie does move against the imperialists, in their own selfish way (as in the past decade of “resource nationalism”), Marxists must fight for the working class to push this forward, far beyond their carefully prepared limits.

3. Against Gradualist Developmentalism.

With the conditions of workers, peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie in decline, the masses continue to yearn for real solutions to the problems of national development. Today's economic woes reveal that, in reality (despite decades of investment and nominal infrastructural development), the national bourgeoisie and their representatives have enriched themselves at the expense of genuine national development for the masses. This is the direct result of their inability to combat imperialist subjugation. Marxists must demonstrate why the national bourgeoisie cannot fight imperialism or truly develop the country, and why these tasks are one and the same. Development under the imperialist boot will never be sufficient. Only a revolutionary alliance of the working class of Southeast Asia with workers of the imperialist centres and the Chinese workers' state offers true allies in the struggle for national development.

4. Defend National Minorities! For the Right to Self-Determination! Papua

Merdeka!

As crises worsen, it is more urgent than ever that the defence of national minorities and the right to self-determination is made central to socialist agitation. History shows that every period of political and economic crisis in Indonesia leads directly to an explosion of the national question. The 1990s saw communal violence across the country (in the major cities, most brutally against the ethnically Chinese) and acute struggles for self-determination in Timor, Aceh, and Papua. There have not been major instances of communal violence in recent years, but the danger remains latent. Likewise, the national question is subdued in most of the archipelago by post-Reformasi “decentralisation.” Still, its re-ignition is not out of the question in the event of a potential splintering of elite unity. In Papua, brutal repression of the national movement continues to escalate in scale and violence. As the bodies of fighters and civilians pile up, and jails are filled with political prisoners, the West Papuan national-liberation movement finds itself at an impasse to which it has no solution.

Only a revolutionary alliance of oppressed nationalities and ethnicities with the Indonesian working class offers a real path to emancipation. Yet for most workers, approaching these taboo issues tends to provoke deep hostility—seen as nothing short of an attack on the nation and its sovereignty. The workers' movement will not be won to the fight for West Papuan liberation through appeals to liberal concern over human rights. Neither are abstract appeals to class solidarity alone sufficient to build unity across national and communal boundaries. What must be demonstrated in struggle (and patient explanation) is the common interest of the peoples of the archipelago in the struggle against imperialist subjugation. This is the only basis on which the special interest of the Indonesian working class in the liberation of oppressed minorities can be concretely revealed.

5. The Workers Movement Must Lead the Way.

The conciliatory and liberal-idealist politics of the presently dominant “leaders” of Indonesian social movements are a dead end. For the struggle to advance, the workers' movement must become its leading force, carrying behind it the rural peasant masses and radical layers of the petty bourgeoisie. But the present leadership of the workers' movement, “yellow” and “red” alike, are not up to this task—committed to a strategy of pro-

government class collaboration or seeped in petty-bourgeois liberalism. Building a revolutionary leadership of the class will require engaging with the workers' movement to advance a genuinely anti-imperialist program counterposed to the existing misleadership. Only behind a revolutionary workers' movement can the masses' anger be

directed productively, and only with the militant youth behind it can the workers' movement advance.

Engaging with and fighting to consolidate the splintered Indonesian left behind united-front actions and, ultimately, a revolutionary program is the first practical step towards advancing this struggle. ■

Your Party, another struggling formation

*The chaos and uncertainty surrounding the new Corbyn/Sultana party in the UK has left socialists across Britain in a lurch. **Andreas Chari** of Prometheus Journal offers a recap of the past few months and an outline of where the fight for a democratic process currently stands.*

Your Party Launch(es)

The founding of a new left-wing formation, however broad, was a source of excitement for many across the British Left. Thousands of activists, from politically drained Jeremy Corbyn fans to revolutionary communists, saw an opportunity to fill the gap in left-wing politics on the national level. Finally, we had a terrain to fight for our politics at the level of the British State; instead of us revolutionaries burning out and getting stuck in a cycle of reproducing our respective sects, we could now build a principled left party with a mass base. This base initially materialised in 800,000 sign-ups to the initial mailing list, and the majority of left-wing organisations in Britain rushed to position themselves either for or against it. We hoped this would be the Palestine solidarity movement taking a party form and, alongside it, uniting tens of thousands of left activists into a single mass political body.

What we hoped and what we got were two different things. Since those early September days when Zarah Sultana, a former Labour MP who became the public face of the project alongside Jeremy Corbyn, launched the initial membership platform, everything has gone downhill. What started as an explosion of enthusiasm ended quickly when the Independent Alliance (an electoral pact of pro-Palestine MPs and Corbyn himself) released a joint statement urging supporters to ignore the "unauthorised email" sent by Sultana and her team, cancel any direct debits they had set up, and announced that they were seeking legal



Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana at The World Transformed event, October 2025

advice. Fellow Prometheus editorial board member, Archie Woodrow, has already covered the farcical launch process and the internal workings of the clique of self-appointed leaders that led us to the current state of Your Party, and I will not repeat them.

After a series of legal threats and the official launch of the membership platform by Corbyn's team, we finally had a plan for a late-November conference. At the time of writing, one week before the founding conference, two Independent Alliance MPs have withdrawn from the process amid ongoing feuds between the Corbyn and Sultana camps in the bourgeois media. With the conference happening in a few days, we still do not know how it will run, how many attendees there will be, what power, if any, the conference has, or which motions the online attendees are supposed to ratify.

Regardless of whether the Your Party founding conference leads to some functioning left-electoral vehicle or becomes the Fyre festival of the British Left, we need an alternative to the Labourite politics whose stench permeated this project.

Unity from the Movement

What has become increasingly clear over the past few months is that the so-called

'leadership' of the left, whether around Corbyn or Sultana, is not up to the task, prioritising backroom shenanigans that have exploded into wasteful public beefs. The small glimmers of hope that Your Party might be viable after the conference came not from them but from the politicised cadre themselves.

In mid-October, at The World Transformed (TWT), in Hulme, thousands of people came together to discuss the way forward for the left, especially how we relate to Your Party and the Greens. Over the three-day festival, organisers held assemblies attended by several hundred people to debate how socialist politics can develop in Britain. Before and after TWT, attendees and sympathisers alike formed political factions to help democratise the process of founding Your Party, strengthening its political foundation, and drawing lines of demarcation around transliberation, ecosocialism, and anti-imperialism. A number of these groups drafted a provisional Unity Platform, which the final TWT assembly adopted. Meanwhile, in the Your Party regional assemblies, the few opportunities to discuss politics came not from the leadership itself but from rank-and-file factions, with mass support from assembly attendees.

By the beginning of November, a second unity initiative, led by various far-left groups and building on the momentum of the original TWT Unity Platform, established the Socialist Unity Platform (SUP). This initiative aimed to intervene directly in the Your Party founding conference with a shared programme and an organised fringe.

While the SUP intervention focuses primarily on raising democratic demands at the founding conference, this is significant. What started as a platform of unity of seven factions around YP became a platform uniting them alongside a substantial portion of the far left in Britain. There is an objective need for unity in the communist movement, and we are witnessing the growing pains of this unity at this moment, happening organically. Even if the conference ends up being a farce, the far left is slowly gaining momentum and engaging with one another for once. There remains hope to unite the communist movement after all.

What happened in the past months leading up to the Your Party founding conference was not an accident or some conspiracy; it was the natural political manifestation of the worst of Labourism and the politics of the trade union bureaucracy. Backroom dealings between unaccountable Labourites that, throughout this process, were unwilling to make the membership sovereign in any decision besides copy-editing the founding documents. Their vision for this Party was not a mass party but a loose party brand for MPs to secure another re-election. Against this politics, we must demand better; we need the politics of the working class. A politics not for the domination of the aristocracy of the labour movement over its rank and file, but a politics of freedom from domination that takes members seriously as their own agents of liberation. ■

POLITICS IN THE PARK

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Now is the time for Socialists to unite

The Socialist Party Interim National Executive sent the following correspondence to the Socialist Alliance earlier today. For additional background, see the statement put out last week about party registration federally and in NSW.

To comrades in the Socialist Alliance,

We are writing to again raise the issue of unity between our organisations. As you know, fascism is on the rise around the world. Not just the oft-cited right-wing populism that is increasingly obviously fascism, but even more reactionary varieties. The New York Times reports that open Nazis are taking over the Republican Party in the US.

Here in Australia, the situation is less dire, but it is all relative. Thousands of far right anti-immigrant racists have marched on our streets, led by Nazis who terrorise immigrants and smash indigenous protest sites.

In working-class suburbs, the Labor vote is collapsing - because of their support for genocide in Gaza; because they do nothing about the cost of living crisis; because they rule for a billionaire elite who care nothing about the lives of ordinary Australians.

The great danger is that the far right will take advantage of this situation, as it has in so many countries around the world. It is the urgent responsibility of the socialist movement to provide a different way out of the crisis in our political system.

And we know we can. The victory of Zohran Mamdani in the New York Mayoral race demonstrates how to fight the right. Not with centrist technocratic platitudes, but with a clear, left wing, unified fightback, that puts forward clear class based slogans that attack the real enemy, the capitalist class.

There is an opportunity in Australian politics that has not existed for a generation, and arguably for more than a century. That is, an opportunity to build a socialist movement to be a force in society, and challenge Labor and the Greens, as well as the Liberals and the far right.

The Socialist Party currently has more than 5,400 financial members. That is a huge expansion from the 800 financial members Victorian Socialists had in December last year.

We are at a third of the Greens national membership, as best as it is reported. Our membership in Victoria, in terms of activists, or in terms of financial members, is by some

estimates not that far off that of the Liberal Party.

We have established an electoral presence in Victoria, both in liberal/youth areas, and in migrant/working-class ones. In the 2022 state election we averaged 5.4% of the vote across the 22 lower house seats we contested. There were standout results in places like Footscray (9.3%) in the west, and across the band of working class suburbs in the heart of the north (8% in Broadmeadows, 7.7% in Thomastown). In 2024 we ran in council elections and contested 76 wards across Victoria, winning an average of 10.8% of the vote. As many as 30 of our candidates got results that would have put them in a strong position to be elected in the now abolished multi-member ward system.

At the 2025 federal election we more than doubled our vote in Cooper, in the inner-north, where we polled 8.4%. We also improved our vote in Fraser (6.2%) and Scullin (6.5%). We recognise Sue Bolton's impressive result in Wills at the same election (8%), and note that we supported her campaign, not just on paper but with a substantial mobilisation of volunteers to letterbox and staff polling booths in a campaign that our party spent \$13,000 on.

And yet where we are at is, in our opinion, wildly insufficient. There was a time when it was fair enough for socialists to get excited about having a few thousand members and a vote that, while much improved, still falls well short of anything that can have a real impact on politics. That time has passed. We need to build a serious organisation that can insert socialist politics into the mainstream, and we need to do it right now. That doesn't mean thousands of members. It means tens and hundreds of thousands of people across Victoria and across the country.

That's why we expanded the Victorian Socialists project nationally. That's why we have begun an ambitious campaign to run in every seat across Victoria in the state election in 2026. And that is why we want the organisation and experience of the Socialist Alliance to be involved with us in this fight.

What we have proposed so far

As you know, on May 19 we wrote to you saying:

"It has been our longstanding position that we are in favour of a single, united socialist

electoral party here in Victoria, and we have the same view nationally.”

We also said that we were:

“disappointed with the characterisation of our proposal in the statement put out publicly yesterday, which said that we [Victorian Socialists] had “no immediate desire to seek greater unity for a national electoral project.” We very much do wish to seek greater unity and a single socialist party, but did not want to seem to be railroading the Alliance into agreeing to something quickly.”

We further elaborated that:

“In states where Socialist Alliance does not have state registration, we would very much welcome Socialist Alliance members joining the new socialist parties. [...]

We would also welcome the Socialist Alliance in NSW joining NSW Socialists if that is something you would consider. There are obvious complications, given that you have your own party registered there, but we are happy to discuss how those issues can best be resolved if you are willing to consider that path.

We didn’t make any immediate proposal for unity in NSW or regarding the federally registered parties on the assumption that the Socialist Alliance was not in favour of this in the short term, which is why we proposed a period of cooperation. If we were mistaken in this assumption then we would be happy to discuss how we can move in that direction quickly.”

In your letter of reply on May 29, you did not address any of the issues we raised to do with uniting into a single organisation, but simply said that your National Council had “voted in favour of further discussion with the Victorian Socialists/Socialist Party about electoral pacts in future federal and state elections and other forms of cooperation.”

From this point on we felt it necessary to be as clear as possible, both verbally and in writing, that we were in favour of uniting with the Socialist Alliance, and were proposing to you that we do so.

We invited representatives of the Alliance to attend our conference, which they did. The following statement on the question of unity was adopted overwhelmingly by that conference:

“We are in favour of there being a single, united socialist party in the Australian electoral sphere, and we appeal to the Socialist Alliance to unite into a single party on a democratic basis.”

The conference also set out the method by which we would attempt to establish a national

party, moved amendments titled “Constitutional changes to expand democratic structures in Victorian Socialists”, and affirmed the provisions in our constitution that outline the rights of internal groupings.

There was also vigorous discussion about the union and campaign work of the party at the conference, which would have demonstrated, to any observer aware of the reasons the Socialist Alliance gave for leaving the Victorian Socialists in 2020, that the arguments from that time had been relegated to history and Victorian Socialists was now fully committed to an approach to politics that went far beyond electoral efforts.

After our conference we received a letter from the Alliance that did not address any of the things that had been raised by the conference. Instead the only reference to unity was the statement:

“It is still firmly our position that Socialist Alliance does not want to fold our election work under the banner of Victorian Socialists/Socialist Party, even if we do remain committed to future collaboration.”

It is disappointing therefore to read comments such as those published on the Labour Tribune website on November 10, that make it sound like we are the ones who do not favour unity.

When asked “What are your objections, if any, to the Socialist Alliance and the Socialists merging into a single socialist organisation?”, Socialist Alliance National co-convenors Jacob Andrewartha and Sue Bull replied:

Socialist Alternative advised us in May, and have told us again more recently, that they have no immediate desire to seek greater unity. Therefore we have not discussed your hypothetical. However, we remain open to further discussion with them about how to advance cooperation. Additionally we have been told that they don’t support left regroupment and were not interested in resuming unity talks (which ended in 2013).

On being made aware of this statement, and knowing that it fits with reports we have heard of comments from leading Socialist Alliance members around the country, Corey Oakley contacted Sue Bull to try and understand the seemingly huge gulf between what we were repeatedly saying, and what the Socialist Alliance was hearing.

Leaving aside the fact that (not for the first time) the response to a question about the Victorian Socialists/Socialist Party was responded to as if it were a question about Socialist Alternative (an obfuscation that is quite infuriating to the vast bulk of Socialist

Party members who are not members of Socialist Alternative), the idea that the Socialist Party had not made clear its desire for unity with the Socialist Alliance seemed incomprehensible.

After talking to Sue, our understanding is that the Socialist Alliance feels we have not done enough to “provide a process” or outline a detailed proposal, and that our appeals for unity are just platitudes. We believe that the multiple statements we have made, and the information outlined in the motions passed at the Victorian Socialists conference, go a long way towards providing a view on what we are for. We also think that the responsibility for finding a path to socialist unity cannot fall on one organisation alone. But nonetheless we understand that that is not how the Socialist Alliance sees it, and will outline below what we would propose in the clearest terms we can, and with as much detail as possible.

How could unity happen?

We propose that the Socialist Alliance join the Socialist Party and its state branches as an internal grouping, and operate inside the party in much the same way as Socialist Alternative does. This would mean the Socialist Alliance leadership, or your conference in January 2026, notifying us of your intention to join and operate as a group within the party, and then encouraging your members to join as individuals, much as Socialist Alternative has done.

The Socialist Party - or more accurately (as we will come to) its state and territory branches - is a membership based organisation. That is to say, it is not made up of constituent organisations, but of individual members, and each one has an equal say over the areas of the party (branch, electoral district, union organisation, state organisation) that they are a part of.

The vast bulk of members of the party are not affiliated to another organisation or members of an internal grouping. After the Socialist Alliance was set up in 2001, Green Left Weekly reported as a positive development that 25% of its then 900 members were not also members of one of the affiliated parties. We would estimate that for the Socialist Party's financial membership nationally, the proportion of people unaffiliated to any internal group is around 80% of the total financial membership.

This indicates the very different nature of the 2001 Socialist Alliance and the 2025 Socialist Party, and explains why the starting point for our conception of party democracy is

the membership as a whole.

Over the past 6 months we have made extensive efforts to expand democracy and local control of the party in Victoria. For example, we have local coordinators who have been convening activities and preselection meetings in more than half of the 88 Victorian lower house districts over the past few months, something we are hoping to expand in the last part of this year and into the next. Local districts are also running their own campaigns around a wide variety of issues. Among the more notable have been the Cohealth campaign, run by our Melbourne and Richmond branches alongside members in the health unions, and the Bendigo branch's activities around the controversy over the Bendigo Writers Festival. Our orientation, regarding both electoral campaigns and community protest movements our members are involved in, is to put control of decision making in the hands of members at a local level.

Central to our conception of this is the idea of “one member, one vote”. We know we will have internal groupings, tendencies, factions etc. But we do not give them any institutional role in the party. Member-based democracy should rule at every level of the organisation.

Leadership at each level should be representative of the membership it covers. Leadership committees are elected via proportional representation, and should represent the cross section of opinion in the party rather than a factional carve up. If a grouping has the support of 20% or 30% or 40% of the members, that should be reflected in the composition of the leadership.

But while we are a membership based organisation, the decision of a group to join does not mean abandoning or downgrading the work of those organisations. Socialist Alternative maintains its full existing organisation, structures, constitution, publications, assets, infrastructure and so on, as well as its own distinctive political standpoint that it argues publicly, totally separate from Victorian Socialists and the other Socialist Party branches. Its members continue to pay dues to Socialist Alternative. It has its own contingents at many protest rallies and its own caucuses in various movements and industrial work. Other existing groupings such as the Revolutionary Communist Organisation do the same.

The rights of organised groupings within Socialist Party branches are extensive. They were written (into the Victorian Socialists constitution initially, though now they are

being adopted around the country) not as a “concession” to minorities, but to protect the rights of all internal groups to maintain their identity independent of the party. If we are to develop and grow as we hope, no single faction or grouping can realistically aspire to dominate the structures of the party, so it is in the interests of all groupings, even the biggest, to enshrine those rights as much as is constitutionally possible.

It is required that internal groupings are declared, and that they not act against the aims of the party. In exchange they have substantial rights, including:

- To promote their views to the membership of the Party, using their own resources, plus the official avenues for debate and discussion in the Party such as the internal discussion section of the website and at conferences and leadership meetings, and members’ meetings.
- To promote their views outside of the Party.
- To use commonly-held Party resources, such as Party offices, to hold meetings of their grouping, and to distribute material advocating the views of their grouping. The holding of events in Party spaces by internal groupings such as meetings, reading groups, activist committees, working bees etc. are permitted.
- To enter into agreements with the Party regarding the sharing of any resources, insofar as this is in the interests of the Party as a whole
- There is no requirement for internal groupings to dissolve other than in circumstances where the Party considers the grouping to have put itself outside the Party by in either theory or practice rejecting the aims of the Party, or acting against the interests of the Party.

Party democracy and local organisation

One of the concerns that has been raised is that the Socialist Alliance felt that it did not get enough say over strategic decisions about campaigns in the early period of Victorian Socialists when it was involved. Regardless of the rights or wrongs of that, the situation of the party was very different then. We were a small organisation that was only capable of seriously campaigning in a few seats in the north of Melbourne. This inevitably meant much greater central control and decision making about what the party was doing.

We are now in the complete opposite situation in Victoria. The decision to run a statewide campaign in the 2026 election, and the interconnected decision to make a serious

push to establish local organisation across the state, has transformed the nature of the party’s organisation. Across the state, local campaign coordinators and activists, wherever they put their hand up, are being encouraged and empowered to take ownership over the party and drive their own campaigns.

It has been raised as a concern by the Socialist Alliance that it was argued to them they should not run in Geelong at a previous election. Well, now we want to run in 88 seats across Victoria. If the Socialist Alliance comrades can take charge of Geelong and the half dozen seats in the area, and combine their infrastructure and knowledge and organisation with the many dozens of new Victorian Socialists members who live there, they will encounter nothing but encouragement. When the socialist left is concentrated in the so-called “left ghetto” in inner Melbourne, it is inevitable that different groups will butt heads to a certain extent. When we are trying to involve many hundreds of new members across Victoria in a statewide campaign, there is more than enough room for everyone to do their own thing.

The decentralisation of decision making power to enable this shift to build local organisation and democracy was a major feature of the June Vic Socialists conference. The amendments to the constitution enable local coordinators, and local groups of members, to go out and establish their own branches and basically do what they want with them.

Preselections in the party are now in the hands of the members who live in the electorate we are preselecting for. There are obviously still a number of places where we don’t have enough active members to meaningfully hold a preselection process - in that instance local coordinators liaise with the party centre to work out whether we can find a viable candidate. But anywhere there are groups of members who want to drive their own campaign and select their own candidates, we have processes in place to facilitate that and then give them the resources they need to run an effective campaign. This has already happened in a considerable number of districts across Melbourne.

Union and campaign work

One point of debate inside Vic Socialists historically was the extent to which it is possible or desirable for activists under the VS banner to campaign in ways which are not directly electoral.

This has been decisively settled in favor of drastically extending the range of party activity

beyond the electoral sphere. Open to all members of VS, the Palestine Action Group organised its own events as well as contingents to other demonstrations to highlight VS's solidarity, and a range of practical assets for activists such as a guide to help people working on motions for their local councils.

More recently the Socialist Workers' Caucus, an initiative by independents in Vic Socialists, was ratified by conference as an official VS group. It has launched socialist working groups in a number of unions now, hosting get-togethers of socialists in those unions and other political events.

The experience of Socialist Alliance members in this would be a welcome addition.

Party registration

It is completely acceptable for constituent organisations to continue their work independent of the party in whichever way they see fit. The only exception to this is maintaining or establishing rival registered parties. This is obviously an issue in NSW, and with the federally registered Socialist Alliance.

It would be untenable for us to guarantee that the Socialist Alliance could maintain its registration in its current form if it joined the Socialist Party, as the fact of that registration is a key factor in preventing the registration of NSW Socialists and the changing of the name federally.

This does not mean, however, that the Socialist Alliance necessarily needs to revoke its registration, either federally or in NSW. We would propose the following as conditions of the Socialist Alliance being admitted to the party

- If the name “Australian Socialist Party” is accepted by the AEC (with the abbreviation

“Australian Socialists”) the Socialist Alliance can maintain its federal registration, but it must not stand candidates in the next federal election. Socialist Alliance members would run on the Australian Socialist Party ticket.

- If the name “Australian Socialist Party” is rejected by the AEC, the Socialist Alliance will change its federally registered name to “People before Profit” or some other name of its choosing, that will maintain the party registration without blocking the Socialist Party from using the word Socialist. Alternatively, It could register a long name that keeps the word “Socialist” but is sufficiently long and distinctive so as not to be confused with “Australian Socialist Party” in the eyes of the AEC. This would enable the Alliance, as the first registered socialist party, to continue to have the right to control use of the term “socialist” if they left the party at some point in the future.
- Socialist Alliance members would not be required to join the Socialist Party for the purposes of party registration.

A similar approach could be adopted in NSW, although it is a bit hard to define the exact parameters until the registration path there becomes a bit clearer.

The Socialist Alliance would also have to refrain from attempting to register new state parties in its own name.

Structure of the Socialist Party

Understandably, comrades in the Socialist Alliance have asked questions about the structure of this new party, and how it has been constituted. Here is a brief attempt to outline that process.

The Socialist Party is currently organised at

The Spark
For Radical Youth
Free for Students

- Let's talk about communism
- Your questions, answered
- Wages for Students!
- The need for a radical young workers collective
- And more

**The youth are rising,
no more compromising!**



Coming soon:

The Spark

**For Radical Youth
Free for Students**

a state level in each state and territory - Vic Socialists, NSW Socialists, Tasmanian Socialists etc. The structures for a national party have not yet been determined, and will be established at a national conference in mid-2026.

The motion adopted at the Victorian Socialists conference in June, outlining our conception of how a national party can be established, reads as follows:

This conference recognises that it cannot reasonably establish a fully-fledged federal party (in the organisational and democratic sense, rather than just the legal sense) when this conference includes only Victorian members. Therefore, as the body seeking to initiate the establishment of such a party, and as a body that is already registered as a federal party, we will only attempt to establish the foundations on which such a party can be formed.

This conference resolves to:

- i) Change the name of our federally registered party to the "Socialist Party".
- ii) Seek to establish state-based parties with which we can unite in a federal party.
- iii) Appoint, via our Executive, interim Secretaries of state and territory-based parties outside of Victoria, and assist them in attempting to establish registered parties in their state or territory.
- iv) Establish a provisional national leadership of the new national party, consisting of the Executive of Victorian Socialists, and the interim Secretaries of non-Victorian parties.
- v) Direct this provisional leadership to develop a constitution for our new federal party. This constitution should propose a democratic constitution that puts control of the party in the hands of members on the basis of the principle of one member, one vote.
- vi) Direct the provisional leadership to establish an interim set of rules for the new federal party that will govern party operations until a national conference is able to meet and approve an ongoing constitution.
- vii) Direct the provisional leadership to organise, call and set the rules for an inaugural national conference, where attendees should be delegated from state/territory branches on a basis set by the provisional leadership.

The following conditions apply to any state party that wishes to establish itself as a state branch of our new federal Party:

- It must adopt as its own aims in line with those of Victorian Socialists
- It must adopt a constitution that is in its general spirit in line with the constitution of

Victorian Socialists

So for now we are operating as a series of state-based parties, with an interim leadership, established by the Victorian Socialists conference, which consists of the Victorian Socialists Executive plus secretaries of the new state branches. Initially, these secretaries were appointed by the VS Executive, and were charged with establishing state and territory branches. Now that process is substantially on the way to being completed, and soon each state branch will be represented on the interim National Executive by a secretary elected by their branches' founding state conference.

A motion will be moved at the next interim National Executive to establish that, by consensus of the body, only Secretaries of each state and territory branch will be voting members of the interim National Executive, in order to prevent any actual or perceived domination of the national organisation by Victorian Socialists, now that viable state branches are being established across the country.

In any case, the remit of the interim national leadership is not to set up a national party, but to lay the basis for doing so at a founding national conference. In the meantime, the state branches will be the primary organisations of the party.

Of the new branches, the NSW Socialists and SA Socialists have just met and established a constitution, elected a leadership etc. In terms of the basic functioning of the party, the parties are modelled on the Victorian Socialists, with a number of changes in their constitutions to reflect local conditions and amendments made by members in the lead up to and at the founding conference. Other state parties are having their founding conferences in the coming weeks and months.

When we wrote to the Socialist Alliance in May, we hoped that you might play a part in shaping the founding state conferences of our new party. Sadly these are upon us now, or have already happened, and that is not possible. But if the Socialist Alliance determines it is for uniting into a single organisation, there is still plenty of time to help shape our first national conference. We have already established a working group that is developing a draft federal constitution and party rules, and plans for our founding national conference. We would be more than willing to co-opt Socialist Alliance members onto that committee, and also onto the Interim National Executive, if you decided you wanted to be a part of this process.

Concrete proposals

- That your conference seriously consider our fundamental proposal: “that the Socialist Alliance join the Socialist Party and its state branches as an internal grouping, and operate inside the party in much the same way as Socialist Alternative does. This would mean the Socialist Alliance leadership, or your conference in January 2026, notifying us of your intention to join and operate as a group within the party, and then encouraging your members to join as individuals.”
- That you provide any counter proposals or amendments to this basic proposal for discussion.
- That we organise a series of meetings between representatives of our organisations between now and your January conference, in which we discuss specific proposals and counter-proposals, and hopefully come to common positions
- That you circulate this document to your members. We are also willing to circulate any documents that you write to our membership if that is what you want us to

do.

- That we engage in a serious practical discussion about the question of party registration
- That a delegation of our organisation be invited to attend your January conference
- That delegations of your organisation attend our state conferences in Canberra, Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland, which are all to be held in the coming weeks or months.
- That a representative of our organisation be allowed to address your January conference on the question of unity.
- That a representative of your organisation be invited to address our state conferences on the question of unity.
- That meetings of members of both our organisations be held in all major cities to discuss the question of unity.

Thank you for your consideration of these proposals.

Regards,
Socialist Party Interim National Executive ■

Letters

In defence of being pretentious *Revмира, Online*

There are a lot of criticisms that the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) receives, some of them are worth engaging with, some not. But one of the more fascinating ones dragged out by our opponents, and critics is that we are “too pretentious”.

This usually takes two forms. The first attacks the way we write and style our articles, and public presentation. The second attacks the fundamental substance of our political demands and strategy and hides behind a sub-reformist logic of “meeting people where they’re at” and must be fundamentally engaged with.

I am happy to concede on the first point, although on a purely personal level I find this critique to be a degeneration into rather quite boring nitpicking. While of course on the left there is a broader need to reevaluate the way we communicate and to drop the oftentimes slightly archaic ‘Marxist standard English’ or as MacNair calls it Trot-speak, it is hardly an

New Message

To

partisanmagazine@proton.me

CC BCC

LETTER: [Letter title]

[NAME]

I enjoyed the article *Article Name* in *Partisan #number*, but have questions about the author. The author says this thing, but I think a different thing.

Something to think about, comrades.

Send

earth-defining critique. In general, the Marxist left needs to understand the basics of scientific communication so we can bridge the gap between the (incredibly insightful and severely under looked) realms of theorisation and study ongoing in Marxism and the concrete agitation and struggles being waged today, this is hardly something unique to the RCO.

The second however is something we must fundamentally oppose. As communists we do not have mild or modest aims of changing the situation, we’re not here to try and tinker with the allegorical “torment nexus” to borrow a phrase, we organise, agitate, and educate with the fundamental aim of changing the entire world, and we not only should but must be

open about that.

As Communists, and even more as organised communists we explicitly set ourselves the goal of constructing the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in our relevant country as part of the universal struggle for the transition to Communism. Hiding our views, downplaying our positions all of these go against the fundamental strategy of Marxism.

When Lenin spoke of the need to “patiently convince” people a core part of that was a consistent agitation of the communist program. We in the RCO uphold that tradition just as we fight against the cultural dominance of irony and fight for genuine sincerity, honesty, and bluntness¹. So perhaps it’s pretentious to outline the need for a mass workers militia at a rally on police violence, but we are in the business of politics not of Sunday schools. We have our views and so we organise around them to convince the majority of the proletariat, which has an objective historical mission, and interest in the construct of communism.

Those who hide their views or bend or waver with every turn of the polling breeze reflect a fundamentally unserious political perspective. Indeed, I would argue it reflects a fundamentally non-communist approach. Communism rests on the creative power, spirit, wisdom, and intelligence, of the proletariat. To be a communist requires seeing that every human, every worker, everyone under the jackboot of capital has the power, spirit, and wisdom to change the world.

If a Marxist considers their program or line something to be changed at the drop of a hat for the potential of greater support, there are only two conclusions that can be drawn. The first is that you lack confidence in yourself, and your politics, that you do not think it possible to argue for an unpopular view or that you can convince people of your ideas. The second is that you believe the working class is stupid and can simply be won over with a few nice sounding phrases, while the real thinking is done behind closed doors. The RCO quite firmly believes neither of these.

Perhaps that makes us pretentious tools. If that is the cost of being principled, so be it. ■

Just merge already!

Simon Blow, Online

With the Australian Electoral Commission blocking the Socialist Party from registering under the name “Socialist Party” on the grounds that it is too similar to “Socialist Alliance,” the question of socialist unity has

once again been forced onto the agenda.

The AEC defends this undemocratic restriction by claiming it prevents voters from mistakenly assuming an association between organisations that are formally unaffiliated. Maybe the AEC has a point here! What are the political differences between socialist alliance and the Socialist Party? For a socialist organisation to justify its separate existence, it must do so on the basis of a distinct program. If it cannot, then it has no purpose beyond the petty sectarianism of its leadership. I doubt that members of either organisation could convincingly explain this separation to anyone outside their immediate milieu without resorting to insults rather than politics.

In practice, the politics of the Socialist Party and Socialist Alliance are virtually identical. Both operate on a fundamentally left-Laborite, reformist program and both pursue an electoral strategy. Socialist Alliance has nothing to lose by merging with the Socialist Party, and the socialist movement as a whole has everything to gain.

More recently, there has been an interesting turn of events. According to correspondence from Socialist Alliance’s national office, the Socialist Party’s executive appears to have abandoned the conference position of allowing Socialist Alliance uncontested runs in certain electorates. Instead, they have adopted the Communist Caucus position: to contest the same seats and openly struggle for political hegemony.

Whether this shift reflects the opportunism of the Socialist Party leadership, the sectarianism of Socialist Alliance or the vindication of the Communist Caucus’s motions will become clearer in the coming weeks. What is already clear, however, is that the socialist movement cannot advance through fragmentation, electoral maneuvering, or unprincipled coexistence. The only viable path forward for the socialist movement is socialist unity based on program, not on branding. ■

About the Socialist Alliance problem

Raven, Online

I am very grateful for John Blackford's often wry account of the dissolution and reformation of Socialist Alliance, SALT and associated entities. I have little knowledge of the attempts at left reformulation in the period following the CPA's self dissolution in '91, quite clearly with hindsight a significant failure of Marxist thinking, leaving many members to chart a course as independent, unattached but

determined vagabond militants. The entire period of attempts to rebuild ended in not much at all. Until now.

The recent success of the Vic Socialists, and that they appeared to me to be pretty much the sort of self-organizing members of the working class I've always found both reliable, determined and honourable, prompted me to join the venture into NSW. That it is an idea whose time has come around again coincides with the objective evidence of capitalism's ecocidal path arriving daily, in the form of weather, is no mere accident of history.

Some observations then. I was struck by Blackford's noting that the point of differentiation between the two being apparently a matter of Alliance finding SALT's electoral focus too restrictive and somehow a limitation of socialist development. My view is that, when everyone is calling for unity, and there can be no grounds for disunity in fighting fascism, you can participate as an anti-fascist and develop into a socialist from any position along the long front of the liberation struggle.

Limiting socialism to electoralism will not build a party on its own. It never does. And Australian socialists are an unruly mob, unlikely to be constrained by such ideas. ■

No one likes a proselytizer

Max J, Newcastle

At the end of this week, Rising Tide's yearly blockade will start. For those who live outside of Newcastle, Rising Tide hosts a yearly blockade of the Newcastle coal port, the largest in the country. At least, that's what they tell you. In reality, they host a yearly music festival which may as well be a launch party for each coal ship that goes past. Often, the government creates a 100m exclusion zone, effectively banning the protestors from actually blocking any ships. The sick irony of the blockade is that the entire thing rests on the government allowing them to blockade the ships. This means that entering the 100m exclusion zone is illegal – and illegal activities are usually kept to the last day or two of the "blockade".

Rising Tide is a growing formation. It has managed to win over parts of the extant activist left, especially those around Extinction Rebellion. It is ostensibly apolitical, but mainly supports the Greens and other environmentalist groups, like Animal Justice. But don't get it mistaken: Rising Tide is hardly a mass movement, though it's not quite a sect either. Since Rising Tide isn't a membership organisation, it's hard to determine how many people are "in" it, but it can be safely estimated

to only be in the hundreds.

Rising Tide adheres to the momentum model, which I've explained in a previous article. In summary, they primarily believe that change is made by a minority of activists who win over a passive majority of people in civil society. This is regardless of background – Rising Tide aims to build a movement of all people, and all classes. For this reason, Rising Tide is fairly loose on who it lets in. It has a vague, generalist handbook and code of conduct.

It's taken for granted by much of the left (organised and disorganised) that what Rising Tide is doing is "right", in some way. This may be true, but it is nonetheless wrong for the left to take Rising Tide at its word. The most important issue is not whether or not Rising Tide's blockade is effective (by all means, it isn't), but whether we should want to blockade the Newcastle coal port in the first place. With a blockade organised by environmentalist activists, very few people have bothered to ask the port workers what they think about any of this.

Since we're communists (and Rising Tide isn't), we aim to build mass organisations of working people, and militant unions. So it would make sense for us to take a position which supports working class organisation. Unfortunately, many people have fallen for Rising Tide's activist charms and as a result been pulled into their ecosystem – this is the purpose of the momentum model. Because of this, few take a step back and ask whether anything Rising Tide stands for is even correct in this first place.

Obviously, we want to end the ecocidal system. Climate change is a real issue. But we have to ask ourselves whether green markets are going to solve the problem. The politics of the environmentalists more often than not amounts to anti-modern posturing, or the deep hypocrisy of post-politics.

Why would we want to blockade the coal port in the first place? There are a few tactical reasons to do so; mainly, coal exports to Israel. But we cannot block coal exports to Israel by camping at Foreshore Park and taking a leisurely paddle into the channel. Previous blockades, such as those in Melbourne and Sydney against ZIM shipping, have shown that the port needs to be blockaded directly. They've also shown that without the involvement of port workers, it won't amount to much or last long. Much of the 'direct action' politics surrounding Rising Tide, which previously manifested in Blockade Australia (and now is camped in 'Whose Future?') is an elitist politics

which more or less thinks the working class is stupid at best and reactionary at worst, and that only a militant minority can take action to strike the system directly and potentially drag the stupid workers kicking and screaming toward xyz. This is a futile effort, as shown by the slow death of Blockade Australia.

The RCO's central committee recently released an open letter aimed at Rising Tide [Since this letter's publication, the CC's open letter has been edited to address the attendees of the event instead of Rising Tide -Editors]. Much of the letter is 'fine', but there are sections of it I think are a bit silly at best, and at worst undermine what Newcastle comrades are doing. There are sections which I take particular disagreement with:

"We support a green economy. The planet is dying. Rising Tide is right to demand an end to fossil fuels. But capitalism cannot be greenified. Capitalism does not use fossil fuels because it is more cost-efficient than sustainable energy. Capitalism uses fossil fuels because it allows capitalism to move away when workers in one place get too demanding. Solar panels, wind farms, and batteries can't be moved as easily. Capitalism isn't just a system of profit; it is a system of class exploitation."

Does the RCO support a "green economy"? It's clear from the relevant sections of the RCO's program that the organisation supports something resembling a planned economy, under the management of the working class. Whether this is "green" is a different question. I would take issue with adopting the language of the environmentalists in order to water our politics down and make it more palatable for them.

Rising Tide is not right to demand a total end to fossil fuels, though it is true that we should shrink them and pivot majorly toward renewables. While we can reduce, for example, coal production, until the widespread adoption of electric arc furnaces in steel production, we are going to need to mine some amount of coal anyway. Etc for mining iron, bauxite, so on. I do not believe it is industrially viable, nor possible, to rely on mass recycling steel or something to that effect. Rising Tide demands a heavy tax on the fossil fuel industry – as opposed to advocating for it to be nationalised. This distinction 'gives the game away' as to Rising Tide's class basis and their aspirations.

We need to stress that only a democratically planned economy under the management of the working class can make a dent on the climate. This means a socialist republic with a planning commission, big monopolies under

state control (nationalisation), with small to medium firms taken under collective ownership primarily via co-operatives. This is antithetical to what Rising Tide openly advocates for.

"We are scared about the future. Every day, it feels more and more that the world is ending and that there is no hope. Bush fires, floods, and drought hurt our communities and our families and are getting even worse."

As an ostensibly revolutionary organisation, the RCO should avoid the sort of alarmism which is common in the activist left: the idea that climate change will bring about the end of the world. While it will only destroy human civilisation (probably), our public statements should de-emphasise appeals to people's fears. We should not want people to panic and be scared all day every day, these sorts of people become demoralised and demobilised. Fear is counterproductive in politics.

Broadly, I fail to see the point in trying to appeal to Rising Tide to support communism. Newcastle comrades have engaged critically with Rising Tide for the last few years, whether that was while in Socialist Alliance, or later on. We don't want Rising Tide to become a communist organisation, and neither does Rising Tide. We engage with Rising Tide in a similar way that we would engage with any other non-socialist activist group or civil society organisation. Would we want the Uniting Church to become communist? I should hope not.

It's all well and good to tell Rising Tide, well we're this and we support that. But what good is it going to do if Rising Tide doesn't care? It's empty proselytising, and no one likes a proselytiser. We're becoming a caricature of ourselves if our answer to every problem is "we need a mass communist party". Of course we do, but we can't just repeat that over and over and over again hoping people spontaneously decide to become Partyists (or whatever we call it now). We need to actually present a strategy and real, programmatic demands that can win over working people, union militants, and disorganised socialists.

I will repeat the point I made in my letter last year concerning the blockade:

"While we can turn our noses at groups like Extinction Rebellion and Rising Tide, we can't deny that adventurist left-liberalism is attracting people to it. When people feel as if they can't intervene politically through the usual left-reformist means, they will turn to adventurism and in extreme cases, insurrectionism/terrorism (see: Blockade Australia et al). The Greens were also in

attendance to fish for voters, as they are prone to do. I myself saw Mehreen Fehrqi at the Greens stall (which, on the second day, was across from ours). We need to be there to present an alternative to left-reformism and left-opportunism/adventurism: a communist program for the working class to take power."

I think we should go to the blockade, have our stall, try to win over people who go there (especially workers of all ages), but we shouldn't have any misconceptions about what our aims are. We don't aim to make Rising Tide communist, we aim to present an alternative to Rising Tide's apolitical reformism.

The main problem with the central committee's statement is that it reads as desperate. The RCO should not come off as desperate for Rising Tide's attention – this puts Rising Tide in a position of power over not just us, but the communist movement in general, even superficially. It's hardly a statement we could, should, or would, distribute openly at the blockade. It makes the RCO look meek and feeble. This is not to say that we should try to present ourselves as "strong", but we should also not aim to present ourselves as being self-hating or self-deprecating, as many in the RCO already do (intentionally or otherwise).

Rising Tide and environmentalist activists will not respect us if we are constantly cowed by them. We gain their respect when we show initiative, show leadership, and demonstrate ourselves as being a viable political alternative to reformism. We aim to be a revolutionary organisation – we should start acting like one.

■

I do want a green economy

Mila V, Canberra

In a recent letter to Partisan, comrade Max J criticised the RCO Central Committee's letter to Rising Tide attendees. They argued against attempting to turn Rising Tide communist, against green politics, and against the idea that climate change is bringing an end to the world. I would like to respond to these points, especially because I wrote this letter on behalf of the central committee.

On the first point, no one is under the impression that Rising Tide can be turned communist. This is not what the letter was intended to do. Rising Tide is dominated by a liberal activist clique. This clique is linked with climate NGOs, pro-green technocrats, and green small business owners. These people are not, and generally will never be, communists. The point, as comrade Max put it, is to win what people we can over to communism and

communist unity. The protagonist of our politics is the working class who have nothing to lose but their chains.

On the second point, comrade Max stumbles. Just because we should recognise that the demands of a global revolutionary struggle may require the re-industrialisation of certain areas, this would only be an unfortunate temporary measure. We must recognise that most of human production is not for human needs. Unnecessary production should be eliminated. Unnecessary waste should be eliminated. means moving away from coal power and towards renewable energy. It means investing in research into green technologies, such as green steel. Implementing this would result in "degrowth", even if we could reject "degrowth communism" for other reasons. This is what a green economy would look like. In this sense, I support a green economy. If anyone's politics are being "watered down", it certainly isn't mine.

I believe all the above without also believing that we cannot ever use coal, or steel, or nuclear power, or that we must never alter the environment for human benefit. I do not see these concepts as contradictory, but a necessary part of communist politics. I want the day-to-day and generation-to-generation reproduction of society to be under the collective and democratic control of the entire species. This is basically communism. This requires a system of production and consumption that is sustainable and renewable.

Thirdly, and perhaps more controversially among the RCO, I am scared about climate change. I do not believe that the world is ending. Though, I stand by the statement in the CC letter that "the world is dying", even if it is a slow death. I believe that our best-case scenario is on where Elon Musk has his way and CFCs are deployed into the atmosphere, artificially lowering atmospheric temperature. In this scenario, we can still expect future generations to inhabit an undead planet constantly wracked with frequent natural disasters, desertification, and mass forced migrations. All of this terrifies me. All of this will lead to immense suffering. I don't think for a second that admitting to this makes me a left-populist reformist who has abandoned class politics or historical materialism. As I have said before, I believe that such arbitrary personal emotions have political potential in the context of material class conditions.

That said, I'd like to admit where our letter was wrong. Comrade Max ends their letter with

the following statement:

"It's all well and good to tell Rising Tide, well we're this and we support that. But what good is it going to do if Rising Tide doesn't care? It's empty proselytising, and no one likes a proselytiser. We're becoming a caricature of ourselves if our answer to every problem is "we need a mass communist party". Of course we do, but we can't just repeat that over and over and over again hoping people spontaneously decide to become Partyists (or whatever we call it now). We need to actually present a strategy and real, programmatic demands that can win over working people, union militants, and disorganised socialists."

The central committee's letter should probably have included relevant RCO minimum demands. I also agree that we need to present a more concrete strategy, though such a strategy would be a more detailed version of "we need a mass communist party".

■

More on the CC letter about Rising Tide

Max J, Newcastle

I appreciate Mila taking the time to reply to my first letter. However, I think she neglects some key points I make, and I feel the need to clarify some things. I wrote my letter in reply to the CC's letter to the Rising Tide protestival. When it was sent in and published originally, it was not clear whether it was addressing the attendees, or Rising Tide itself. Therefore, I wrote my letter with the latter in mind. Fortunately, this was clarified, and Mila herself agrees that trying to appeal to Rising Tide directly to get them to "turn communist" is a silly idea.

In my letter, I argue that reindustrialisation is a necessary stage toward curtailing climate crisis. In her reply, Mila calls this an "unfortunate temporary measure". On the contrary – it is more than an "unfortunate temporary measure", it is an absolute necessity. It is difficult to imagine how we could set the basis for communist society without, once the working class takes power, enacting a program of managed re-industrialisation. This is not to say that we should become Soviet era productivists, but that we cannot address the climate crisis if we continue the current post-industrial regime: we need to start producing steel and other crucial materials domestically, to the fullest extent possible. This is not only more "environmentally friendly" (it cuts down emissions from international shipping that are otherwise unnecessary), but it is also more

efficient and gives us more control over production and distribution.

At no point do I reject the notion that most production is wasteful; in fact, the premise of my argument is that the current post-industrial regime is incredibly wasteful. This is why I advocate for a democratically managed, planned economy, so that production can be controlled and managed in such a way that it addresses human need and minimises waste. A move toward renewables is absolutely needed, but I reject the anti-modernity politics of much of the environmentalist movement which, incorrectly, believes we can drop fossil fuels tomorrow and still somehow maintain a post-industrial, consumerist, modern capitalist economy. I'm not convinced that the politics of "de-growth", which more often than not fall into the kind of anti-modern environmentalism I find unconvincing, is necessary, or an accurate description of the kind of economy communists should want.

Mila also neglects to address the core issue around Rising Tide. It's not simply that they're activists, and activists are bad, but that their politics (insofar as Rising Tide have politics) are necessarily anti-worker. They promote an elitist form of activism which seeks out professionals to take political action on behalf of the class. As I explained in my article explaining the momentum model, they seek out a militant minority of activists who can win over a passive majority of society. They necessarily view the majority of the working class, and therefore a substantial portion of society, as only being useful insofar as they can passively approve what Rising Tide does. No serious thought is put to the organisational or industrial power of the working class, especially those working in the industries Rising Tide aims to oppose. They think that they can topple industries simply by getting enough people to show up to disruptive actions. I wonder where they imagine they can put the Carribean fusion food truck and the grief yoga session tent when they attempt to blockade the Newcastle coal port proper.

It's all well and good for Mila to tell us how scared she is of the climate apocalypse. I'm remarkably disinterested in how scared people are. I'm more interested in hearing how people plan to actually combat it. And importantly, as a member of the CC, it's not Mila's job to use the CC's statements to espouse her own position. The role of the CC is to represent the organisation, not its own views. We can panic as much as we want over Elon Musk apocalypses or wasteland planets or what have you. It only amounts to textbook

environmentalist doom-and-gloom alarmism if there isn't a serious, positive program being put forward (which I don't think Mila rejects – but that it's overall lacking). Statements put forward by the central committee should be declarative (they should state our positions and politics), to the point, and not rely on people caring about the personal feelings of the people on said committee. For example, my personal feelings on how scary climate change is are overall irrelevant, hence, when I write leaflets about climate and the environment for Rising Tide, I don't include them. These kinds of emotional appeals are best left to interpersonal conversations, not official statements from the RCO's elected leadership. These kinds of appeals are also bad, because it's difficult to argue against someone's feelings without coming out looking like an asshole.

Mila's reply relies on a lot of "I believe" statements, but I wrote my reply to a letter from the central committee, not a letter from Mila. While Mila might be defensive as she was the main writer of said letter, I think overall that it's a weak defence if she has to rely on defending her own personal positions, and not the decisions made by the central committee.

In retrospect, I would say that I think the RCO should've held a plenary session so that we could've collectively discussed our position on Rising Tide, as opposed to the CC deciding for us. In Newcastle, where the RCO engages with Rising Tide the most, we do so somewhat critically, and we don't do so on the grounds that we think Rising Tide or its supporters need to become communists tomorrow. We're moreso interested in how Rising Tide develops as more activists join the fold.

I'll summarise my criticisms of the CC letter as such:

- It neglects the political question of Rising Tide and climate change.
- It's a weak letter which is overall unconvincing to non-communists (I've had as much told to me by non-communist activists).
- It reads as an attempt to pander emptily to Rising Tide attendees.
- It cedes ground to Rising Tide by uncritically accepting their premises and adopting their language.

I appreciate the thought put into the letter by Mila and the CC – but good thoughts alone don't make good statements. ■







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