

# Socialist Left

Members Newsletter

16 February 2011

## SL General Meeting

Wednesday 23 February 6.30 pm  
Victorian Trades Hall Council  
54 Victoria Street, Carlton South

### Agenda

1. Membership
2. Secretary's Report
  - National Executive – National ALP Review
  - Federal Redistribution
  - Affiliation
  - Current political matters
3. SL Unions Report
4. Women's Officer's Report
5. State Parliamentary Report
6. General Business

### Left takes the lead in Party reform debate: if not now, when?

Last night the SLX determined to lead the debate in the Victorian ALP around building a Party structure that is fit for purpose. The following motion was passed, unanimously:

*The SLX believes that ongoing cultural and rules reform is urgently required in both the National and Victorian Branches of the ALP. The Left, as in the past, must engage with members and affiliates to generate ideas to drive the campaign for enduring change.*

*We note the impending release of the Bracks - Faulkner - Carr National Review and believe that we should utilise this review to drive debate and reform about how we build a Labor Party that is genuinely an open, dynamic, progressive movement for social change.*

*The SLX notes that, in recent years, the Left has campaigned in support of significant changes to the operation of the Vic Branch Rules. We have sought to open up our Party on the one hand, and sought to combat the manipulation of membership on the other.*

*Accordingly, the SLX directs the Secretary and Assistant Secretary to prepare an options paper on Party reform. This paper should also address the issues canvassed in the National Review as well as issues within the scope of the Victorian Branch.*

*Its purpose will be to inform the Victorian Left's agenda to campaign for change in the ALP. The paper should address reforms to:*

- Grow the Party
- Ensure greater levels of democracy at all levels
- Drive our organising focus outwards, into the community
- Build integrity in party processes
- Make membership and participation more representative

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## SOCIALIST LEFT

The Progressive Faction of the Victorian ALP

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- Strengthen relationships between affiliates, their members and the Party
- Identify new means of effective involvement
- Consider the rights, obligations and opportunities that ought to flow from membership

*The Secretary and the Assistant Secretary are to consult and engage with the Left membership, the Unions Convenor, Women's Convenor and Left ALP Officers of the Party in preparing the options paper. This options paper ought to be presented to the next meeting of the SLX and to inform the SL's campaigning agenda for 2011.*

*This paper will then form a basis for dialogue and negotiation with other factions of the Victorian Branch with a view to having the proposals contained therein adopted by the Victorian Branch of the party.*

We have before us a great challenge - with our primary vote the best evidence of the existential nature of threat we face. But the National Review presents the progressive side of the movement a great opportunity. There will never be a better time than now to make the case for an open, democratic, outwards-looking party that enables ordinary people to work together towards building a more just and sustainable society. And if not now, when?

The first step in this challenge is to ensure that there is a broad debate across the Party around these questions, and to not be confined by the straightjacket of the past. The choice the Party had to make in Broadmeadows should not have to happen again.

Labor voters and ALP members deserve better – a Party in which they can be actors, not spectators and which values their contributions. The SLX resolution is intended to make sure members' voices are heard in this year's debate around reforming our Party, and that this debate is an informed one that leads to practical outcomes in Victoria and nationally. All SL members have important roles to play in campaigning for change – please contact Andrew Giles or Ros Spence (details below) with any input regarding the Left options paper.

## **State parliament**

The first full week of sittings in the State Parliament deserved more detailed reporting than it received in the mainstream media. Not only did it expose the weakness of the Baillieu government, the opposition found its feet. Daniel Andrews and Jacinta Allan dominated proceedings in the Legislative Assembly and the work done by the likes of Lily D'Ambrosio and Brian Tee placed ministers such as Mary Wooldridge, Mathew Guy and Michael O'Brien under real pressure.

Some extraordinary contributions were made in the Parliament. New conservative members showed a depth of hard-right ideological commitment that is simply scary – a useful counter to the suggestion that this government is moderate at its core. And, on a much more positive note, a number of moving and eloquent contributions were made by new Left members. The inaugural speeches made by Sharon Knight, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Maree Edwards, Lee Tarlamis and Jane Garrett all deserve to be considered as effective personal accounts of the very best side of our movement.

## **Challenge – National Left magazine**

Last month I emailed all SL members with email addresses a copy of the first edition of the National Left publication, *Challenge*, with a range of contributions from SL members including Dave Oliver and Cath Bowtell on the challenges before us as a movement. Please contact the Secretary if you would like a hard copy mailed to you – unfortunately cost prohibited a mass mailout.

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