

Australia: New era of left unity as DSP votes to merge with the Socialist Alliance

Thursday 7 January 2010, by [BOYLE Peter](#) (Date first published: 2 January 2010).

The following speech, to the opening rally of the seventh national conference of the Socialist Alliance on January 2, 2010, was delivered by Peter Boyle, former national secretary of the Democratic Socialist Perspective.

Comrades,

My job tonight is to make the unusual - if not unexpected - announcement that the Democratic Socialist Perspective (DSP) decided today at its 24th congress to effectively dissolve into the Socialist Alliance and to transfer all that it has built up, over some four decades of its existence, to the Socialist Alliance.

Sadly, it is an unusual and rare thing for socialist groups, like the DSP, to break from the idea that they are the “true” party of socialism, with the sole correct political program, and seriously embrace left unity.

I say this not to boast but more by way of an apology and excuse for the DSP taking so long to take this step. After all, the Socialist Alliance was launched in 2001 and now it is 2010! I want to thank Comrades Bea Bleile, Dave Kerin, Sam Watson, Pat Eatock, and our many other partners in the Socialist Alliance for their patience and encouragement.

We may have taken a long time to take this step, but at least we can say that when the decision was taken by the DSP today, it had overwhelming support from the DSP members. And this support was also so enthusiastic that we can anticipate that this enthusiasm will be felt in the seventh national conference of the Socialist Alliance over the next three days.

Energy

There's a lot of energy unleashed by this historic decision of the DSP - energy that will give the Socialist Alliance a big boost in the year ahead.

This was the right thing for the DSP to do.

The Socialist Alliance presents an historic opening for the left in Australia because it is an opportunity to unite in a new socialist party

socialists from different political traditions, some from pre-existing socialist groups and others who are not members of those groups. And, among those proud members of the Socialist Alliance are some important leaders of the working class and other oppressed groups: people like Comrade Craig Johnston, who went to jail for fighting for workers' rights; and veteran Indigenous activists like Comrade Sam Watson and Pat Eatock ...

Indeed, in the Socialist Alliance today, thanks to our Indigenous comrades, we have an historic opportunity to restore the powerful collaboration between the socialist and the Aboriginal movement, a collaboration that made its mark on the history of Australia, through epic struggles like the Pilbara Aboriginal stock workers strike in the 1940s and the Gurindji walk-offs in the 1960s.

Campaign to link up with working-class leaders

If socialism is not just to be a good idea then it has to become a movement of the working class and other oppressed groups. And it flows from this that to build the socialist movement we have to wage a permanent campaign to link up with the activists and leaders of the working class and oppressed groups who are fighting capitalist oppression.

Of course socialist groups can and do link up with other activists in movement campaigns, in various "united fronts" around specific issues, such as the campaigns against "Work Choices" or Work Choices Lite, or for Aboriginal people's rights. But when the activists and leaders of such movements want to join us in the broader and ongoing struggle against the capitalist system itself then what is our duty? Surely it is to unite with them in a party to wage such a struggle, a socialist party.

To build such a socialist party we must be prepared to look for agreement before disagreement. That's just commonsense. And if we find - as we have in the Socialist Alliance - that we have 80-90% political agreement, then, it is a "no-brainer": we need to be in a common political party!

But what about those outstanding differences among socialists? What about the 10% (or perhaps even less) that we don't agree on? Surely, the sensible thing is to not let this stand in the way of us working in a common party for real change. Surely, we have a better chance of resolving the differences that need to be resolved after we have gone through a period of collective struggle to advance what we agree on. Surely, in the process of that struggle we'll draw some lessons collectively that will deepen our political unity.

Blind Freddy can see that there is still a lot of work ahead of us before we unite the notoriously fractious left. If you roll up to any protest action in any major city, you will still be confronted with a smorgasbord of socialist groups, each harbouring the illusion that it is the true party of socialism with the correct socialist political program. What a sad sight!

DSP decision to merge

However, we've made a start in uniting more of the left in the Socialist Alliance. And today, another significant step towards unifying the left has been made with the decision of the DSP to merge into the Socialist Alliance.

In the wake of this decision, we can anticipate that more more people will join the Socialist Alliance or step up their commitment to the project. As Comrade Dave Kerin said tonight, the DSP's decision opens the way for others like him to take a further step in commitment to the Socialist Alliance.

Earlier today, the members of the DSP ended a stage in our political organisation and embarked on a new stage. This was both a break from our past as well as a change that grew out of our collective political experience. We said good bye to a party to which we have devoted a tremendous amount of loyalty, energy, sacrifice and indeed the life-long commitment of many comrades over many years. However, we are not mourning this end. Rather we are celebrating. We are celebrating our transfer of that same commitment and energy to the Socialist Alliance.

In his greetings to the DSP congress, Comrade Abelardo Cueda, the ambassador of revolutionary Cuba to Australia, summed up the broad political situation today in one poetic sentence: "Today the capitalists cannot sleep and they cannot dream ..." But we, he added, have a dream of a radically different world.

We embrace that profound reality. We have a dream of a radically different world, a world based on solidarity and sustainability. And at this seventh national conference of the Socialist Alliance, we have greater means to plan and organise the struggle to advance the transformation of that dream into a reality.

Long live the Socialist Alliance! Long live left unity! Long live the power of the people!