

To Solidarity,

We are writing to you to protest in the strongest terms possible about your behaviour towards our organisation.

Your inexcusable disruption of the RAC speak out on Tuesday 7 February in Melbourne, which prompted this letter, is but the latest example of your disgraceful activities. At this event, several of your members spent the whole time loudly abusing, pushing, shoving and even punching Socialist Alternative members.

In particular, the behaviour of Tom Orsag was so appalling – constantly and loudly abusing our members – that he was repeatedly asked by activists (not SA members) to stop it and show some respect for the scheduled speakers, who he was drowning out. When the crowd were chanting “Free Ismail”, and “No deportations” Orsag tried to get a chant going against Socialist Alternative. All of this is particularly reprehensible when put in the context of Solidarity member Chris Breen’s admission that Orsag had only come to the speak out in order to harass Socialist Alternative members.

One of our women members was repeatedly pushed, shoved and punched by three Solidarity members – Chris Breen, Lucy Honan and Jasmine Ali (Ali being the one who punched her). David Glanz went out of his way to approach Mick Armstrong to abuse and harangue him, adding to the disruption to the speak out. To make matters even worse, Jasmine Ali repeatedly threatened to call the cops if any of our members spoke to her – as she had done earlier in the day at Melbourne Uni when some of our members argued with her and Jimmy Yan. She went around taking photos of Socialist Alternative members which she said she would use to show police – incredible harassment by a socialist or other activists. For a member of a socialist group to be threatening to call the police on anyone on the left, when nothing but a verbal argument (lasting about 10 mins only according to Jimmy Yan’s own account) has occurred beggars belief.

This extreme response to a couple of arguments cannot go without protest. For several years now Socialist Alternative has tried to remain laid back and to avoid confrontation in the face of your relentless attacks and the lies you try to spread among activists. We know that you routinely ring around or meet up with activists in campaigns in which our members are active, trying to prejudice them against us with slanderous accusations which if openly debated would be shown to be the lies they are.

Instead of trying to build your organisation and contribute to the number of people convinced of socialist ideas as other groups on the left do, you have for years been fixated on harassing, disrupting and undermining Socialist Alternative. Your members systematically target anyone who begins to come to our meetings and talk to our members, telling them lies about our organisation – for example, that we are bureaucratic and undemocratic – to try to prevent them joining or staying involved. Even when these people make it clear that they do not want to speak to members of Solidarity, the harassment not only continues, but often increases, as your members try to demoralise them and drive them out of politics. This has reached extraordinary heights at times. One young woman last year was harassed with constant phone calls for two months after she asked Jasmine Ali to stop calling her. This is common

practice by your members, especially at Melbourne Uni over the last year. Recently one of our new members received over 60 phone calls in a 48 hour period.

No other group on the left – except the Spartacists – behave in anything remotely approaching this manner. We have political disagreements with the Revolutionary Socialist Party, Socialist Alliance and the Socialist Party, and at times we compete for new members and argue out our political disagreements. The difference is, these groups do go out and try to build independently. Their central focus is not trying to smash up Socialist Alternative and driving new people out of left wing politics.

Socialist Alternative works closely with Socialist Alliance members in RAC, we were able to give support for and work with Steve Jolly's election campaign in Yarra last year. We work with a wide range of organisations in the campaign in solidarity with the Palestinians, including Muslim and Arab groups as we do in the Equal Marriage campaign. Solidarity, on the other hand, are virtually impossible to work positively with in campaigns. In Occupy Melbourne, other groups and independent activists worked together to form a left caucus. Solidarity was notable for their refusal to work with us all unless they could impose their agenda on what the caucus did.

For years Socialist Alternative has repeatedly offered to discuss the possibility of unity with Solidarity, because our basic politics are the same. We have refrained from making formal complaints about your parasitical harassment of our new members and contacts or your sniping and lying to campaign activists. But we cannot stay silent any longer if this continues.

National Executive, Socialist Alternative

To Socialist Alternative:

Dear Comrades,

Your National Executive has sent us (and the Melbourne Refugee Action Collective) a letter outlining their version of events at the refugee rally in Melbourne on 7 February.

It would seem that your National Executive seems to have completely lost touch with reality. Socialist Alternative's letter is an attempt to rewrite the history of the event on the basis of fabrications and bizarre allegations.

But facts are stubborn things. No independent person at the rally supports the NE's version of the rally events. Members of other groups have signed a letter to Socialist Alternative expressing their concern at Socialist Alternative's orchestrated disruption of the refugee rally.

Despite the public protestations from your NE, most of you will know that Socialist Alternative members in Melbourne have embarked on a deliberate campaign of harassment of Solidarity members in that city.

It is also well known that Socialist Alternative members were responsible for the attack on Solidarity members at the Refugee Action Collective rally in Melbourne on 7 February.

The contempt of the leadership for the refugee campaign and the rest of the left was on display at the rally when leading Socialist Alternative members refused appeals from Socialist Alliance, Solidarity and Refugee Action Collective members to restrain other Socialist Alternative members doing the attacking.

Sadly, leading members have continued to play a direct role in the harassment campaign. Although Corey Oakley has admitted to Socialist Alliance that he thought there was a problem with the harassment of Solidarity members at the rally, he has revealed himself to be a serial offender – threatening Jimmy at Saturday's RAN meeting and then joining the childish gang of Socialist Alternative members yelling at Solidarity members attending the branch meeting at Trades Hall on Tuesday night.

You can judge for yourself who is responsible for the harassment –take a look at Daniel Lopez's shameful behaviour on Tuesday night outside Trades Hall ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GAEt2whrzE&list=UUAq4IdaBoDniHiZmB\\_UtINA&index=1&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GAEt2whrzE&list=UUAq4IdaBoDniHiZmB_UtINA&index=1&feature=plcp)), and ask yourself who is doing the harassing? Daniel's behaviour truly is something from the Spartacist school of political polemic but it is typical of the behaviour encouraged by the NE.

If the NE is unable to see its folly and unwilling to end its campaign, it is beholden on the members to do so. Socialist Alternative already has a reputation around the left. Any continuation of the harassment will only further discredit and isolate Socialist Alternative.

There is a pattern emerging: the inability of the leadership to address the mistaken

attack on the Labor for Refugees speaker at the refugee rally at the national Labor conference in Sydney; the fantastic internal mobilisation taken to respond to Jimmy's criticisms and subsequent expulsion; the attempts to concoct a narrative of Socialist Alternative being placed under siege by Solidarity. Attempts to cohere members on the basis of finding internal heretics or imagined enemies have historically been an unfortunate characteristic of other internalised groups on the left.

And then there is the absurd suggestion that anyone from Solidarity would call anyone 60 times in 48 hours. Did the NE really think anyone could take that seriously?

In previous letters, we have raised our concerns regarding Socialist Alternative practices of interrupting conversations, and harassing Solidarity stalls and members. It is not a surprise that you never responded to that issue.

A Daniel Lopez email (25 August 2011) to other Socialist Alternative members at Melbourne university reveals something of the concerted manoeuvres by Socialist Alternative to harass Solidarity as well as the dismissive attitude towards the refugee campaign:

“So if you ask her [ie Jasmine] to do shit, either a) she will have to explain why she can't (most likely) or b) she'll take them. If she takes them and does them, fine. If she takes them and doesn't do them, it's possible to subtly discredit her as a result. And finally, she is just human, and she does a lot of wonderful movement work... so a little more might just stress her out!

Anyway, they are my thoughts. –D p.s. none of this should be taken to indicate that I have now seen the light of RAC! I'll believe in it when I can see that we can recruit people from it that are both worth recruiting and that we couldn't have gotten elsewhere.”

Socialist Alternative's approach to Solidarity has now become even more exaggerated and puts the lie to any idea that Socialist Alternative was ever genuinely concerned with unity with Solidarity.

We remain confident that there are comrades within Socialist Alternative who can see that nothing useful can come out of the destructive path that the NE has embarked upon – nothing for Socialist Alternative, nothing for the left in general and nothing for building campaigns or movements.

We appeal to those comrades to begin the discussion needed to transform the group. The energy being put into harassing Solidarity would be so much better directed to fighting Gillard and Abbott.

Solidarity is actively building our branches on and off campus in union activity and through our involvement in the refugee, climate and anti-Intervention campaigns among others. It is in the struggle – in the unions and social movements - where we all learn how to fight to change the world.

Comradely yours, Solidarity National Committee 17/2/2012