

# PROPOSAL FOR A NEW BROAD PAPER OF THE LEFT

June 21, 1990

Dear friend,

We wish to canvass your support for the development of a new radical paper that could cater for and draw together a wide spectrum of the progressive forces in this country.

The need for such a broad new paper of the left flows from the political situation affecting everyone interested in alternative politics, namely: the weakness and decline of the socialist movement in the west; the crisis of Stalinism; the ecological crisis and the emergence of the green movement. These developments, which challenge us all, may at first pose problems (especially in the form in which they have emerged). But they provide real opportunities for developing a new movement seeking fundamental social change.

This proposal for a new paper also arises from the needs of the Democratic Socialist Party. All through the '80s, the DSP has pursued a process of socialist renewal and rethinking, and has been involved in a number of attempts to regroup socialist forces into a broader organisational framework, whether this has taken the form of socialist unity, a new left party or a broader red-green or green formation.

Regroupment is an ongoing need, and the effort should be continued. While as yet no new clear organisational framework has been created, the necessary search by the left and progressive movements to break out of their isolation remains. A new paper can aid the broader regroupment and renewal process.

So there is a clear need for a new radical paper. *Direct Action* already provides a better basis than other publications in Australia today. New parties and papers can't just be plucked out of thin air. We need to build on past achievements, in this case the persistence and dedication of people who have produced a weekly newspaper for nearly 20 years.

This achievement is something that can't be wasted. But it has to be taken forward by others who, over time, can move it to a higher plane. A broader paper would relate to, and be able to draw on even wider resources within the green movement, other social movements, and other political tendencies and individuals.

## SOME PROPOSALS

So we are proposing to modify the nature of *Direct Action* by a series of modest but real and important steps. We remain open to wider and more decisive organisational and political initiatives if the conditions open up or can be created.

For the moment, we want to take steps to develop a new legal, organisational and editorial structure for our paper. We are convinced this will improve the input and hope it will also increase the circulation of a weekly newspaper that orients both to the constituency already developed by *Direct Action* and to the constituency that is opening up in the left, alternative and environmental movements. Specifically:

1. We would establish an advisory board, which would have meetings as necessary. It would include people who have experience in broader fields and who would contribute their experience, expertise and/or literary talents.
2. We would change the legal structure so a partnership or cooperative that people can buy shares in is established, with the aim of mobilising more resources for the paper. The paper would not be the paper of the DSP and Resistance as such; our own material would be carried in advertisements and contributions by our members.

3. We would look for a new name for the paper, preferably something that expresses both the red and the green nature of our political perspectives.

4. We would broaden the scope of the paper, encouraging debate and discussion within its pages. We would hope to increase the attention given to questions of culture and everyday life.

5. We would thoroughly revamp the layout and look of the paper. If the project starts to succeed, with a wider input and wider circulation, greater financial resources should become available for publishing a better looking paper.

6. We could go on a campaign to expand the size of the paper that would have a real chance of success. We would have a much broader reservoir of people that we could call on to contribute to the paper, distribute it, subscribe to it and support it financially.

So that this doesn't become a leap into the void, we would also continue to rely on the resources that have been developed by the Democratic Socialist Party and Resistance. These include the technical resources that have been assembled over the years and, above all else, the dedication of the members of the DSP and Resistance in distributing the paper — something which gives it an initial base and makes it more than one more utopian pipedream of producing the perfect independent paper.

### POSSIBLE TIMETABLE

We do not expect the project to be without problems or to happen overnight. These changes, to be effective, will need much discussion and fine tuning. The important thing is a clear new start which will, over time, attract more and more people to the project, and the determination to make it a success. A good time to start such a new paper would be during the ~~Socialist Scholars~~ Conference at the end of September this year, when we could schedule a major event to launch it.


So we are canvassing for support from some of those people who have looked with favor on the project of *Direct Action*, thought that it was getting better lately and are trying to work out an orientation for the '90s. Many people have indicated that they've been looking for something they could contribute to that could help rally a left that is moving ahead and **facing up to the new times of the environmental crisis and the end of Stalinism.**

We invite you to consider participating in this project. Your presence on the editorial advisory board would enhance the authority and appeal of a new paper, and we would look forward to the input you would be able to give from your own area of political interest and expertise. Whether you are able to contribute through articles, through your support or through financial help, your involvement in this project would be invaluable.

If you are at all interested in this proposal, and want further information or discussion, please get in touch with us as soon as possible (or contact the branch of the DSP in your city). We would very much like to hear your opinion of this proposal and any other ideas or suggestions on this matter that you might have.

We are proposing to hold an informal gathering of interested people in several cities around Australia to canvass the idea further within a short time. We look forward to hearing from you.

In solidarity,



John Percy,  
National President, DSP



Allen Myers,  
Editor, *Direct Action*