

## Open Letter to P.N.D. General Meeting (October 31, 1982)

One problem must be apparent to many PND members. The April 4 demonstration was the largest to be held in Melbourne since the movement against the war in Vietnam. Yet, out of the tens of thousands who marched in that demonstration, only a few thousand have ever been mobilized around subsequent PND activities. Our problem, then, is this: to turn as many as possible of those marchers into PND activists. Unless we can achieve this, we will ultimately achieve nothing. It will be no consolation whatsoever to be able to say that we have shown a number of good films, if ever the hard rain actually falls.

During the past year, a number of, often quite significant, disagreements have emerged within PND. We would like to comment on three areas of disagreement that seem both important in themselves, and directly relevant to this meeting.

### FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU POLAND...

The first is that of our attitude to the Soviet Union, its nuclear weapons, and the opposition movements within the eastern bloc. This matter was, of course, hotly debated at the Annual General Meeting. And the Hughes motion to this General Meeting (Motion XXIX on the provisional agenda), to make it impossible to change the PND Statement of Aims without a two-thirds majority, is in fact an attempt to head off any move to insert support for Eastern European opposition movements into the Statement (such a move was narrowly defeated at the Annual General Meeting). We believe that it is absolutely essential that PND take a public stand against Soviet nuclear weaponry, and in support of dissident movements in the Soviet bloc.

One of the most serious obstacles to the growth of our movement is the widespread belief that we are opposed only to western nuclear weapons, that we are covertly pro-Soviet. And we can only overcome this obstacle by publicly pushing our opposition to both western and eastern nuclear weaponry. But simple opposition is not enough. We must also answer the question: how exactly will nuclear disarmament be achieved? And the only possible answer is: by the creation of independent disarmament movements capable of forcing disarmament upon their governments.

But such movements will only be possible in the eastern bloc if existing opposition movements, such as Solidarity in Poland, are able to secure the basic civil liberties necessary for independent political organization. That is why PND must express its public support for the dissident movements in the eastern bloc.

We believe that it would be better to devote an entire future General Meeting to a full discussion of this question, and others related to the Statement of Aims, and that the Hughes motion should not be discussed today. But, if we are to discuss the Statement at all, then we should also debate the Silva/Keating motion, in support of East European opposition movements, which unaccountably failed to appear on the agenda.

### TO ACT OR NOT TO ACT

A second area of disagreement has been around the type of campaign which PND should be attempting to organize. Broadly speaking, the choice has been between a more activist or less activist campaigning style. We believe that the relatively low key style of our campaign, to date, has been one of the major causes of our failure to mobilize more people. It seems to us that the best way to involve people in a campaign is to give them something to do, and that precisely the relative inactivity of PND has contributed to our failure to recruit activists. The truth is that there are only so many films that we can show, only so many educational

topics that we can discuss. We believe it to be essential that the movement provide itself with a series of continuing activities around which it can organize action.

For this reason we urge you to vote for the two motions, moved by the PND Bases Sub-Committee, in support of the demonstration at Omega on November 21 (Motions XXX and XXXI). Given the obvious urgency of reaching a decision on this question, we also urge you to support a procedural motion to move this item to the head of the agenda, after local group reports.

We believe not merely in the need for activism, but in the need for focussed activism. Unfortunately, very many of those who support our movement's aims do not see that there is much that they can do to bring about nuclear disarmament. After all, Australia does not have its own nuclear weapons, and it is difficult to see how Australians can affect US or Soviet government policy. For this reason we have to concentrate our efforts on those of our aims that are practically attainable in Australia, on issues about which Australians can do something. In reality, this means focussing on the ANZUS Alliance and the US bases in Australia. We, therefore, urge you to support those motions which insist that the American bases and the ANZUS Pact become the central focus for next year's big PND rally.

### WARNING! WHITE-ANTS AT WORK!

The third, and final, area of disagreement has been that of the internal organizational structure of PND itself. Broadly speaking, the disagreements here have been between those who favour more open, democratic forms of organization, and those who prefer less democratic forms. We believe that the more open, the more democratic, the movement is, the better it is. This is partly because we believe in the principles of participatory democracy. But it is equally because we believe that open, democratic discussion, like activist campaigning, provides a way in which more people can become involved in the movement. For these reasons we ask you to vote against the Kiers motion (Motion I), proposing that the number of General Meetings be reduced to three per year; and to vote for those motions which seek to enhance the participatory-democratic nature of the movement, especially Motion IV, on sub-committees.

To sum up: our central problem is that of turning relatively passive supporters into activists. To achieve this, we believe it to be necessary, firstly, to develop more participatory, and more democratic, forms for the movement's own organizational structure; secondly, to direct the movement towards a more activist campaign, more directly focussed on the question of the US bases and the ANZUS Alliance; and thirdly, to commit the movement to an uncompromising opposition to Soviet, as well as American, nuclear weaponry, and to support for dissident movements within the Soviet bloc.

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