

Newsletter

of the *Alliance for Green Socialism* – January 2010
www.greensocialist.org.uk/



NO LEFT-GREEN COALITION

AGS efforts frustrated

August 2009

In the August Newsletter I wrote:

"I think that AGS priorities (for a coalition) are:

- *a name that reflects the importance we attach to environmental issues as well as socialism*
- *a policy basis fully reflecting environmental issues*
- *a clearly accountable way of working*

The raison d'être of the AGS is to promote environmental socialism. None of the other left groups in Britain seems genuinely committed to the environmental part of this. An underlying question for the AGS is whether we can better promote both aspects - red and green, and the linkage between the two - as an independent organisation or as part of a wider coalition, even if the components of that coalition are predominantly red, rather than green.

*It would be a big decision to write off our huge human and financial investment in the **Alliance for Green Socialism** name and to run as a coalition under a different name. But if we believe that is the way forward I think we should do it - provided the terms are right."*

By September 2009 we had negotiated, with the Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Britain, a founding agreement (enclosed) for a coalition that met all three points: a name with an environmental reference, policies to include environmental issues, and a one-member-per-organisation steering committee making decisions by consensus. The prospects looked bright.

Socialist Party reneges

The Socialist Party almost immediately started to renege on that founding agreement. The period from September to now has shown the Socialist Party at national level to be an untrustworthy partner, prepared to break agreements and misrepresent facts in order to get their own way. Culturally they are very different from the AGS.

Recent months have also raised the gravest doubts about the Socialist Party's attitude nationally on the environment. We never supposed the SP to have any serious commitment to environmental issues, but the recent statements and actions of the Socialist Party suggest a far deeper problem. At the very least, the SP regard environmental politics as something that "you don't talk about in front of the children" - i.e. trade unionists and voters.

On the coalition name, the Socialist Party said they were worried about whether an environmental reference might discourage the RMT – a rail union, bound to benefit hugely from an emphasis on the environment! – from joining. It took them months to admit that this was actually just their own internal Socialist Party decision.

More worryingly, the Socialist Party chose to brush aside the agreement on decisions by consensus. They simply pushed through "decisions" regardless of opposition. Finally, in January 2010, they tore up the founding agreement. Their attitude is that decisions are to be made by consensus - except when the Socialist Party decides they are to be imposed by the Socialist Party.

No trade unions

By the end of 2009 it was clear that no trade union was going to join the coalition. In November the POA had decided not to join, and the RMT made the same decision in December. Interestingly, Bob Crow made it clear that one factor that put off the RMT was the back-tracking on the founding agreement, including the name. The RMT had been looking for an early, clearly defined coalition - exactly what the AGS had pushed for. Instead they got delays, uncertainty and broken agreements.

By early January 2010, the list of organisations definitely participating in the "coalition" consisted of the Socialist Party alone. The AGS suspended its participation because of the behaviour of the Socialist Party nationally. The Communist Party of Britain is also likely to withdraw because there is no union participation.

AGS efforts

The AGS has put an enormous effort into trying to establish a genuine left and green-left coalition. We have invested hundreds or thousands of hours of effort, and large amounts of money in pursuit of this.

Unfortunately it appears not possible to achieve a coalition at this time. What has been lashed together merely repeats the errors of Arthur Scargill's SLP, the SWP's Respect, and other top-down, dictatorial groupings that fall apart because they cannot accept an open, honest and accountable way of working.

Continued overleaf

Future cooperation

Despite all the problems, the AGS remains committed to cooperating with other groups where possible. We have a long record of working well locally with the Socialist Party, the Alliance for Workers Liberty and others. We have cooperated with those and other groups at national level in the Socialist Green Unity Coalition, a limited but successful grouping. We have tried to work with the "green-left" faction of the Green Party. We will continue to work with all these groups where they are willing.

Mike Davies, Chair

Castro on the environment

"... Today, however, is nothing like yesterday. We experience a new era, unlike any other in history. Before, the people fought, and are fighting still, with honour, for a better and more just world.

But now they are also having to fight, without any alternative whatsoever, for the very survival of our species. If we ignore this, we know absolutely nothing..."

Fidel Castro 3 January 2010

Pick up their swords

Betty Baker

Betty Baker, the founding Treasurer of the Alliance for Green Socialism, died on 28 December 2009. Betty was 88 when she died and had packed a huge amount of political struggle into her life, working on the Daily Worker and for Central Books and standing for parliament. She did not retire from ETS until she was 80! She was AGS Treasurer up until 2007. We will miss her sorely not just for her political contribution but for her unfailing cheerfulness and her positive attitude to life and politics.

Rose Apter

London member Rose Apter died in October 2009.

AGS Manifesto

The AGS general election manifesto is our strongest yet. Can you give, send or even sell a copy to a local organisation or a friend? For copies, contact the Secretary.

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General Election

The long awaited general election must be held by June 2010. The likely date is Thursday 6 May, probably with parliament being prorogued in late March to allow a long campaigning period. The AGS expects to stand candidates in at least Clwyd West, Kensington, Leeds East, Leeds North East, Leeds North West, and Scarborough & Whitby. Send any further suggestions to the Secretary.

What's the AGS been doing?

National

Negotiations trying for a general election coalition; dealt with a member's complaint; started circulation of the manifesto; letters to media on welfare state, prosecuting Blair, capitalist rubbish, state rescues capitalism, climate change & life expectancy, growth and CO₂ emissions

London

Organised well attended celebration of chartist Feargus O'Connor at Kensall Green Cemetery

Across the country

Chichester & East Hants: meeting regularly

Epping Forest: public meeting on NHS closures

Leeds: three meetings monthly; Leeds AGS Green Fair with couple of hundred people, raised £300; local radio discussion; press letter on council greenwash.

Letters prize

Getting a mention in the media helps publicise the AGS itself and our policies. Press letters, radio/TV interviews, and web exposure all help if they mention the AGS.

As a symbolic incentive to write letters, etc, AGS member Garth Frankland is offering a prize of £25 to whoever gets works hardest and most successfully at this. If you send in a letter, contribute to an online discussion, are interviewed on local radio, or whatever, send in a copy or a note to garthfrankland@googlemail.com or Garth, 36 Roundhay Crescent, Leeds, LS8 4DT - or tell the Secretary if that's easier.

Points will be awarded for unpublished attempts, but more for published/carried ones, local or national.

National Committee meetings

Meetings of the national committee are normally open to any member to observe. Meetings are on Saturdays, most often at the Calthorpe Arms on Grays Inn Road, Kings Cross, London. Forthcoming dates are:

6 February 2010 Calthorpe Arms, London 12:00

ANNUAL CONFERENCE Sat 27 Mar 2010 London

24 April 2010 Calthorpe Arms, London 13:15

12 Jun 2010 Loughton, Epping Forest 12:00

Holding the June meeting in Epping Forest continues the attempt to increase contact between the members and the national committee. Local members are urged to come and take part.

Liaison Meeting – general election coalition founding agreement

The Liaison Meeting (a post-election meeting of the main participants in the No2EU:Yes to Democracy European election campaign) agreed to establish a working party to prepare recommendations for the general election, to be considered at a further liaison meeting on 1 Sep 2009. The working party met twice, on 6 Aug and 27 Aug 2009, and agreed recommendations. These recommendations were then slightly amended and agreed by the Liaison Meeting on 1 Sep 2009 in the form below and subsequently ratified by the AGS, CPB and SP, as reported back on 3 November 2009.

*The parts of the founding agreement shown in **bold** are those on which the Socialist Party has reneged. All of those clauses have been ignored and/or, finally, removed.*

“Given the current lack of political representation of ordinary people in British politics, we regard it as important to organise a general election challenge standing, as a minimum, against as many current cabinet ministers as possible, together with other ministers and prominent ex-ministers, complicit in New Labour’s anti working class policies.

COALITION:

- 1) We will stand candidates in the coming general election as a federal coalition under a common registered name. Those participating initially, and forming the initial Central Steering Committee, are the Alliance for Green Socialism, the Communist Party of Britain, the Indian Workers Association, the Morning Star, the Socialist Party, plus in a personal capacity, Bob Crow, Brian Caton, Chris Baugh and Nick Wrack. We will make continued efforts to get further participation in the steering committee of trade unions or significant trade union figures.
- 2) The principal structure of the coalition will be the Central Steering Committee, in which **each participating organisation shall have one representative**. The steering committee **will operate by consensus**.
- 3) The coalition will make every effort to engage the support of trade unionists and socialists. The coalition will establish, wherever possible, **regional steering committees** for Scotland, Wales and the English regions on whatever broadly similar basis is appropriate for each.
- 4) When the basic structure of the coalition is agreed and in place, the Central Steering Committee will **consider criteria for widening the coalition** by inviting other organisations to participate. The adherence of further organisations will be subject to the approval of the central steering committee.

CANDIDATES:

- 5) The coalition will aim to stand candidates, as a minimum, against as many cabinet ministers as possible. The coalition shall also consider standing candidates in other seats, dependent upon political, organisational and financial considerations, including where this would provide effective opposition to the BNP.
- 6) **We will select candidates in as open a way as is feasible**. The Central Steering Committee will have the final say on all coalition seats and candidates.
- 7) The coalition may also consider supporting other candidates who broadly share our political positions.

NAME & POLICY:

- 8) The **registered name of the coalition will include explicit reference to both socialism and the environment**, although not necessarily using those terms.
- 9) The joint policies of the coalition will give prominence to socialist, democratic, trade union and environmental issues. Once initially established, the Central Steering Committee will rapidly develop a statement of joint policies.

FINANCE:

- 10) The Central Steering Committee will seek to raise funds for national campaigning. For constituency challenges, the normal expectation will be that local deposits and campaigns will be financed locally.

CAMPAIGNING:

- 11) Both the Central Steering Committee and regional steering committees, together with the participating organisations, will **encourage and organise joint political activities not limited to electoral campaigning**, in the short and medium term.”

Alliance for Green Socialism

Annual National Conference 2010

Saturday 27 Mar 2010

11am to 5pm

plus social afterwards

Calthorpe Arms, Grays Inn Road, Kings Cross, London.

A simple pooled fare system will operate

Individual members are entitled to participate fully

Overnight accommodation available

Nominations are invited for:

Chair

Secretary

Treasurer

Membership Secretary

Editor

Press Officer

National Committee Members (3)

AGS Groups, AGS National Affiliates and individual AGS members
are entitled to submit motions and nominations.

Nominations and motions for debate should be sent to the Secretary.

Motions amending the constitution (except standing orders and schedules)
must be received by Friday 19 February 2010.

Other motions must be received by Friday 12 March 2010.

Nominations must be received by Friday 19 March 2010.

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