

A proposal for
*A People's
Government*

submitted for discussion by the
Communist Party of Australia

Comments and opinion are invited
and may be submitted to the
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Introduction

The CPA supports the concept of a People's Government. We seek to win support for and raise discussion around what we consider a realisable and achievable means to transform society.

Corporate globalisation has created enormous problems for the people of the world. Australia has not escaped the difficulties and injustices, arising out of a process that places the accumulation of wealth for the few above the needs of the people.

The way society is run is creating more hardship for the majority of people. There is an almost universal recognition that the path society is taking is unsustainable in terms of the very existence of the planet with its fragile and endangered eco-systems.

Many see the need for vast improvements in our public education, health and transport. Many are aware that there is a dire need for the creation of real jobs for people who are struggling on inadequate and often difficult to attain social security benefits.

Workers are continually outraged at the vicious attacks on their working conditions and standard of living with many having their entitlements stolen by employers.

Most agree that there is a need for positive change in the interests of the vast majority of the people.

The point however, is that while there is a widespread belief in the need for change, the main political parties have not put forward a means to achieve change or offered a vision for the future that is attainable, realistic and desirable to the majority of people.

The People's Government concept puts the people before the interests of the big corporations. We argue that this crucial measure will open the way to winning a better way of life for the vast majority of the people in Australia.

We invite your comments and views on this proposal.

For a new direction in politics

The two-party system has dominated Australian political life for almost 100 years. The two main parties offer cosmetic changes in an effort to win the support of the people at election time. They frequently say one thing before an election and do the opposite when in government. Howard's statement that the Liberal Party would "never ever" introduce a GST is one example of such dishonesty.

Experience over a long period of time has shown that whichever of the two major parties is in power makes little difference as both give priority to the interests and demands of the big corporations — the banks, insurance companies, the mining conglomerates and other huge monopolies and transnational corporations.

The growing struggle against the economic rationalist policies the major parties embrace is a very positive development. Economic rationalists believe in a total reliance on private enterprise and on market forces. They see money making and profit as the dominant objective of society and place these objectives above the needs of the people.

Policies based on these ideas are implemented by all the major parties. They include privatisation, deregulation, casualisation and the GST. Economic rationalists champion "free trade" and globalisation. The destruction of Australian shipping and the sacking and replacement of Australian crewed ships with cheap overseas labour is an example of what "free trade" actually means.

The advocates of economic rationalism are the spokespersons of the biggest and most powerful sections of private capital. They are the representatives of transnational corporations who have undertaken a new drive to expand their control over the markets and resources of all countries by whatever means necessary, including war. This is the real meaning of globalisation and the aim of the New World Order proclaimed by the United States.

Economic rationalism has created an expanding web of social problems, mass unemployment, poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, inadequate or no education, lack of medical care and environmental damage.

It has created a growing gap between the rich and the poor in every nation and between the major industrially developed countries and the underdeveloped countries.



It is for these reasons that the Communist Party believes that a government of a new type is needed, a government committed to a massive redistribution of wealth in favour of the majority.

A democratic front

A broad democratic movement which unites all left and progressive parties, trade unions, community organisations and progressive individuals is needed to build the momentum for a new type of government. Some in this democratic front will campaign on the environment, others will defend public education and the public health system, others will defend jobs and the industrial rights of the trade union movement. Country people will fight for adequate services and against the fleecing of small farmers by the processing companies, the banks and the huge supermarket chains.

A place in the democratic front has to be found for all the streams of opposition to what is being done to the working people, the poor, the unemployed, the homeless, the farmers, pensioners, small business, the professionally employed, indigenous people, women, migrants and others.

These sections of society have much in common. The common link between their concerns is that the interests of the big corporations always come first in the policies of the major parties. Only small concessions are made to cater for the interests of all other sectors of society.

The forces creating environmental devastation throughout the world are the same as those attacking the rights and working conditions of workers. Big capital is behind agri-business that has driven many farmers off their land. The huge transnationals, including the arms manufacturers, are responsible for the drive to war.

Although there are many small shareholders in some big corporations it is big capital that has really taken over the privatised Commonwealth Bank, Telstra, Qantas, the Sydney Airport and recently privatised rail networks.

The spate of large corruption scandals in Australia and in the United States has revealed the real face of capitalism and its insatiable greed. It is the working people who have suffered the devastating consequences of the various corporate collapses.

However, there is strong and, we believe, growing resistance to this direction in Australian politics and economic life.

The very broad anti-globalisation movement reflects the common interests of many who are feeling the dire consequences of corporate globalisation.

The treatment of the vast majority of the people by big capital is creating, we believe, the social force that will lead to a change in political direction of society.

The varied social forces must be brought together to fight this struggle in a unified way. We believe that a vital element of this broad front is an active and involved working class. Moreover, the working class must adopt policies to win the support of other anti-corporate sections of society.

We believe that a broad coalition of left and progressive forces will be strong enough to stand up to the power of the corporations and be capable of changing the direction of politics in Australia, and taking steps to redistribute the country's vast wealth.

In building a democratic front and establishing a new type of government, care must be taken not to exclude any potential supportive party, organisation or individual, even though different opinions and policies will inevitably exist on various questions.

Principles of united action

Building a political alternative to the two major parties means being prepared to work together with other organisations and individuals for real change, irrespective of some differences.

It means building co-operation and unity on a principled basis. The CPA believes there are some principles, which are fundamental in establishing a representative coalition or alliance.

These principles include mutual respect and honesty and consultation at every step of the unity-building process.

Through the process of joint work, trust will be built between organisations and individuals and this will be the binding force that strengthens the coalition and makes it a viable and lasting organisation. Unity and agreement should grow as a process. It cannot be ordained by any particular organisation through their domination over others.

Where agreement is not reached on an issue, the issue should be put aside with each organisation free to express its views using its own facilities. Once agreements are reached, however, all organisations must help to popularise and win support for policies.

Discussion and agreement at leadership level must be backed up and deepened by co-operation at all levels of the organisations involved.

Ideological differences should not stand in the way of co-operation on issues held in common. It is logical to expect that there will be a contest of ideas between co-operating organisations but such a contest should be stated in a manner that does not undermine the unity achieved but contributes to clarity and to strengthening unity and the solidarity of the organisations involved.

Of course, each organisation should be free to publish its views and carry out activities in support of its own policies that are not the subject of agreements. In this way the autonomy of each organisation is protected.

Parliament and winning Government

The parliamentary arena is an important area in which coalitions or alliances of organisations can work together against reactionary policies. At the same time, parliamentary work has to be based on work outside parliament to encourage activities by NGOs, trade unions, professional organisations and others.

These two fields of work do not exclude one another but go hand in hand. It is the responsibility of parliamentarians to ensure that voters are kept informed of work done in parliament, have a say in formulating policies and are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of political life.

Many more left and progressive parliamentarians are needed at all levels of government. Respected, knowledgeable and active participants from left and progressive political parties, trade unions, environmental, peace, educational, indigenous and community organisations, health and democratic rights bodies, should be encouraged to stand for office.

Progressive parliamentarians can publicise, resource and help to build the people's activities outside parliament. When a sufficient number of such parliamentarians have been elected they could form a government committed to fulfilling an agreed program of policies.

Such a government would be democratic, multi-party and answerable to the people. As the vast majority of the population is made up of working

people, we believe that the representatives of the working class would form the core of the new type of democratic government.

To be effective, a new type of government would have to implement policies to substantially curb the power of the big corporations and increase the democratic rights of the people and encourage supportive activity by community organisations, trade unions, parents and citizens groups, etc.

The many organisations that could come together to form a new government must each contribute to the formulation of an agreed program of policies.

We believe that there are already many policy issues on which there is even now widespread agreement. This list could be expanded by more discussion between organisations.

As a start, the Communist Party suggests the following brief policy proposals:

Some policies for consideration

Medicare and health

The maintenance and extension of Medicare.

The full restoration of a publicly funded national health and dental service providing care to all at home and in the workplace.

Priority to be given to preventative medical services.



Progressive taxation system

Government taxation policy and revenue raising to be based on:
Repeal of the GST and its replacement with a progressive tax system;
Personal income tax, to be levied on a progressive scale with no tax on incomes less than the minimum wage;

A tax rate on private profits of not less than 36 per cent.

A significant reduction in Australia's swollen military budget.

Housing

I n c r e a s e d government funding for public housing to end homelessness and provide housing for cheap rental and for purchase. State governments to exercise their powers to control rents.



The environment

A comprehensive program for the protection and regeneration of the environment — protection and care of river systems, land care, measures to deal with salination, waste management, urban and workplace pollution, loss of bio-diversity, and protection of old growth forests.

Urgent implementation of internationally agreed measures to control greenhouse gas emissions.

Collective bargaining, awards and workers rights

Collective bargaining and the restoration of legally binding awards or other agreements covering all workers in an industry.

The restoration of fully indexed wages. A guaranteed minimum living income for all people of no less than the minimum adult wage.

The repeal of the anti-trade union clauses of the Workplace Relations Act and Sections 45D & E of the Trade Practices Act. The repeal of similar State anti-trade union legislation.

The enactment of industrial legislation to guarantee the right of workers to strike and to act in solidarity with others, both nationally and internationally.

Jobs and working conditions

The implementation of comprehensive job-creation schemes guaranteeing the right to work for all who want to work.

The immediate introduction of a 35-hour week without loss of pay. Hours of work to be eventually reduced to 32 without loss of pay.

The curtailment of casualisation and the imposition of limits on overtime and the protection and expansion of permanent, full-time employment.

Farmers' needs

Priority support for the social and economic needs of small and family farms. The creation of cooperative marketing facilities democratically controlled by small producers.



All large agricultural corporations to be publicly accountable for the preservation of the environment and the use of resources. Large privately operated agri-businesses to eventually become publicly owned.

The banning of GM crops until proven fully safe for consumption and the environment.

Women's rights

The right of women to work, to equal pay for work of equal value, and to equal opportunities in work, education and all social fields.

The provision of publicly funded before-school, after-school and long day child-care facilities for all who need them.

The right to publicly funded health services, family planning, women's refuges and to free and legal abortion.

Young people and public education

The right of young people to education and to full-time work. The provision of sufficient funding to provide free, secular and universal public education from elementary school to university. The substantial reduction of public funds going to private schools and colleges.

Indigenous people

The recognition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original inhabitants of Australia and their right to land and to the resources both above and underground and in adjacent seas.



Support for the maintenance and enrichment of the culture and beliefs of the indigenous people.

The commencement of negotiations for a treaty between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the Australian state.

Economic controls

Price controls on major commodities and services. Opposition to privatisation and contracting out.

The maintenance and extension of public ownership. Adoption of a national investment policy that will outlaw control of the national economy by foreign investors.

Strict control over the movement of money in and out of the country to the detriment of the nation. The Reserve Bank to control interest rates, credit policy and currency exchange rates.

Publicly-owned media

Strengthen all publicly owned media outlets. Protection of cultural and educational standards and Australian content when reviewing the allocation and renewal of commercial broadcast licences.

A second full-time ABC TV channel and adequate funding for the ABC and SBS radio and television networks.



The establishment of a new publicly owned body similar to the ABC to publish newspapers, magazines and books.

Assist and encourage the media of democratic and progressive organisations such as trade unions, environment, cultural and other community organisations.

Multiculturalism and anti-racism

The promotion of multiculturalism that recognises the contribution made by migrants from many countries to the cultural richness and diversity of present-day society. Provision for the teaching of the languages of migrant communities at public education facilities.

The elimination of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of ethnic background, religion, race, gender, sexual preference, age, disability or parenting.

Migration and Refugees

A migrant and refugee policy that gives priority to humanitarian and family reunion considerations.

The implementation of the rights for refugees set out in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

The immediate cessation of the mandatory detention policy. The holding of refugees in centres to be limited to the time necessary to process applications for refugee status to be determined.

No children to be held in detention centres under any circumstances.



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