

February 12, 2012

To Socialist Alternative,

Dear Comrades,

We are writing to express our concerns at the disruptive behaviour of some Socialist Alternative members at the protest against forced deportation of Afghan Ismail Mirza Jan called by the Victorian Refugee Action Collective on the afternoon of Tuesday 7 February.

A number of Socialist Alternative members were so concerned to harass (and precipitate a confrontation with) members of Solidarity that their behaviour completely dominated the conduct of the rally, showing a complete lack of respect for the purpose of the rally, for the speakers and for others attending.

Despite numerous requests that they desist, Socialist Alternative members persisted with the harassment for the entirety of the rally. Ultimately their behaviour forced Solidarity members to leave the rally and made the rally extremely embarrassing and uncomfortable those attending. Socialist Alternative members even followed Solidarity members leaving the rally.

A number of other refugee supporters approached Solidarity members involved with the Refugee Action Collective during and after the rally to express their concerns at the behaviour.

The fact that leading members of Socialist Alternative, Sandra Bloodworth, Mick Armstrong and Cory Oakley did nothing to restrain their members disruptive behaviour, even when asked, adds to our concern that the behaviour was sanctioned by the leadership of Socialist Alternative.

This kind of behaviour does nothing to build the refugee movement. It reflects badly on Socialist Alternative and indeed only serves to discredit the left in general.

Rather than a united protest of the refugee movement to oppose moves by the government to deport Sri Lankan and Afghan asylum seekers, the rally became an unseemly spectacle of one left group attacking another, confirming the caricatures so often used to portray the left.

Socialist Alternative members have been contributing to the Refugee Action Collective. That other Socialist Alternative comrades would behave in such an inconsiderate way shows little respect even for their own members' efforts in the refugee campaign.

We trust that the behaviour on display at the refugee protest is an isolated incident.

We hope our letter will contribute to a discussion within Socialist Alternative that will allow your members to constructively participate in rallies in the future.

The refugee movement is far too important to be overshadowed by the singular concerns of one or another left group. To build the movements, the left most of all has to learn to work constructively together and ensure secondary concerns do not dominate or disrupt building united campaigns.

Comradely yours,

Chris Breen - Solidarity
Peter Murray - Freedom Socialist Party
Alison Thorne - Freedom Socialist Party
Anna Sande - A Greens member

