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# The Alliance Standard

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## Housing crisis looms

Secure housing is critical in achieving stability for our children and enhancing a sense of community, say a group of South Aucklanders who are campaigning for affordable housing.

The group, supported by Nga Manga o Mangere (a coalition of community groups), was spearheaded by South Auckland Alliance members who worked with others on a popular planning exercise to produce a submission into the Government's Housing Strategy. The group is sponsored by the Council of Trade Unions through its Organising Fund.



In our submission, we said that in a society as wealthy as Aotearoa/New Zealand, there is no need for any citizen to be living in unhealthy, inadequate housing or to be paying housing costs that plunge them into poverty. This is the reality for thousands of South Auckland families and is a matter of

political choice - not necessity.

Participants in the popular planning exercise (which involved three public meetings held in Mangere between May and July) identified unaffordable housing as a major cause of poverty, poor health and transience or moving around frequently, which affects the educational success of children.

We said in our submission that the \$1 billion being spent annually on the Accommodation Supplement (essentially a taxpayer-funded landlord supplement) could be used more productively in funding public housing - building State rental housing and supporting low-income people and families into home ownership.

Buying or leasing 3300 State houses across the entire country over the next four years is simply not enough. There needs to be considerable investment in building new State houses. Leasing houses does nothing to alleviate the shortage of quality housing.

Our submission supports increasing the number of State rentals through a Government-owned construction programme to ensure good quality, secure housing, but as a universal entitlement,



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rather than targeting extreme need, as is the case now.

One woman told us she is paying \$255 a week for a one-bedroomed flat. Her son has behavioural difficulties and sleeps in the bedroom while she sleeps in the living room. She has waited three years for a State house.

Our submission quotes another example from the Manukau Courier of a mother with two sick children who is living with another couple as she awaits a State house. All three share a bedroom. She has been assessed by Housing NZ as having moderate needs, which puts her somewhere between 750 and 1500 on the South Auckland list.

A recent study showed that more than one-third of Aucklanders in rental accommodation pay more than 40% of their income on housing. Just to make ends meet, low-income families in this situation are forced to take out loans with interest rates as high as 20% from the many money-lending shops in our area. Low-income workers have to work 20 hours a week just to pay the rent (in Auckland, it is 27 hours a week).

Making the link between low incomes and poor housing, we are calling on the Government to make further improvements in the minimum wage, to protect vulnerable workers, to support collective bargaining and unionisation of workers and to commit to full employment.

We also support a Universal Child Benefit to assist families with children, as well as other taxation and social assistance measures that increase the take-home pay of families on low incomes or benefits.

- Jill Ovens

## **Government Allows More Job Losses**

Another 100 Christchurch manufacturing jobs have just been lost, with Eaton Corporation shifting production to China. The work cannot be done any more efficiently in China, but as the standard of living, wages, and employment conditions are far worse than in New Zealand, labour is cheaper. If New Zealanders were forced to work under such conditions, there would be an outcry, and it is no more acceptable for us to benefit from the excessive exploitation of Chinese workers for cheaper goods.

The Alliance calls for the restoration of tariffs on imports, and other measures to protect local industry, jobs, and employment conditions. Many more jobs in manufacturing and CTF are likely to be lost if the Government proceeds with its Free Trade agreement plans.

- Kelly Buchanan

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## **People's Moratorium Anniversary**

October 29 marked the first year of the People's Moratorium on the release of Genetically Modified Organisms in to the environment. Despite the government moratorium on GE expiring a year ago, there have been no applications for commercial release of GE in New Zealand - a great success for the People's Moratorium! And around the world, GE is failing to live up to the wild promises of those seeking to profit from it.

However, there is no room for complacency. Field trials begun before the expiry of the government moratorium continue, risking contamination of the

environment, and GE contamination of imported seeds remains a risk. Labelling requirements for products with GE content are hopelessly inadequate, preventing consumers from making informed purchasing choices. We must demand stronger regulation of GE to protect New Zealand's economy and environment.

Strong public opposition to GE makes it an unattractive proposition for investment, and there is a huge world-wide market for GE free products that New Zealand is ideally placed to take advantage of. And contrary to the claims of GE companies, most of that opposition is based on hard scientific concerns, not superstition.

The Alliance is not opposed to GE in principle, but strongly opposes reckless release of GMOs before the risks are properly understood, and commercially driven development designed to maximise private profit rather than benefit humanity.

- Kelly Buchanan

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## **Northerner Rail Service Axed, More Cuts Likely to Take Their Toll**

This week saw yet another cutback to passenger rail services with the announcement that the Northerner, the night service between Auckland and Wellington, would cease operation on the 12th of November.

Tranz Scenic claim the service is no longer economic, citing declining passenger numbers as a reason for the closure.

Toll NZ undertook a takeover of Tranz Rail this year, and bought back Tranz Scenic from another operator in May. In July the Government reached an

agreement with Toll to take ownership of the rail tracks and promised \$200m of non-recoverable investment in the rail network, a rail network in a disastrous state of repair after over 10 years of private sector management.

The fact that Toll reviewed the business following its takeover of Tranz Scenic suggests Toll is behind the closure. According to Tranz Scenic passenger manager Ross Hayward, the operator now sees its "long-term future lying in high-value tourist operations such as the world-class TranzAlpine service between Christchurch and Greymouth."

More cutbacks and closures are likely, as the July deal between Toll and the Government stated there would be no new scheduled passenger operations for three years. So even if another operator decided they wished to run a service cancelled by Toll, they would be unable to do so. After three years, Toll is only required to run three return passenger services on a line to maintain its monopoly.

With oil prices expected to continue in a skyward direction, it is vital that passenger rail is not reduced to "high-value tourist operations". Wider economic development objectives, as well as social and environmental factors also should be considered before 'the end of the line'. But consideration of such wider policy objectives will be difficult while the operation of the railways remains in a public-private partnership and private overseas ownership.

While taking back the track into public ownership was a step in the right direction, it is clear that the Government did not go far enough. If rail is truly to be saved, it must be returned to full public ownership, trains, trucks, tracks and all.

- Joe Hendren

## About the Alliance

The Alliance is a broad inclusive party of the Left with policies based on socialist principles of democracy, equality and social ownership. It combines a concern for the protection of the environment with the need to create a democratic economy and a modern welfare state.

### The Alliance principles are:

- All people are entitled to free, high quality public health and education.
- The natural resources and national infrastructure of Aotearoa/New Zealand belong to all the people and should be publicly owned and democratically controlled by the people.
- All workers are entitled to meaningful work without exploitation and to a secure wage for themselves and their families, recognising the contribution of unpaid workers.
- Every person is entitled to the income and resources needed to fully participate in society and the purpose of the social welfare system is to guarantee this.
- Wealth should be redistributed through means such as a highly progressive taxation system to achieve a just and equitable society without poverty or discrimination.
- There can be no social justice in Aotearoa/New Zealand until the injustices against tangata whenua are addressed and institutional racism is overcome.
- The society we envisage is one in which racism, sectarianism, homophobia, ageism and discrimination against women and people with disabilities have no place, where diversity is recognised as a strength and each individual's contribution is valued, where every person is treated with respect in accordance with their basic human rights.
- The destruction of our natural environment must be halted and we must actively promote its restoration and protection.
- Aotearoa/New Zealand must play a positive role globally with an independent foreign policy that promotes social justice, peaceful resolution of conflicts and opposes all wars of aggression.
- Global capitalism is not permanent or invincible, and we must challenge that conventional assumption and fight for a socialist alternative for society.

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### Alliance Membership/Information Request Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me more information

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to join the Alliance.

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Minimum \$5, recommended \$25)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Return completed form to the Alliance Party, PO Box 2948, Wellington*