

# **We stand for workers' liberty**



AWL introductory educational programme

March 2011

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# Introduction

This is an introduction to the ideas of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL). Everyone who joins the AWL should work through this programme with another comrade. The class struggle is fought on the **ideological front** (as well as in politics and economics) and educationalists are a condition of membership.

This programme is a gateway to understanding the world – so you can play your part in changing it. It is designed to create **cadres** – trained, professional revolutionaries who can think for themselves and intervene in struggles to shape them in the direction of socialism.

## What you need

To do this course, you need:

- 1) A copy of these notes
- 2) A copy of the pamphlet, *We Stand for Workers' Liberty* (WS4WL)
- 3) Access to the internet

It also helps to start building up a library of AWL books, pamphlets and articles, so you can immediately extend and deepen the knowledge and understand you gain from this course.

Links to the chapters in WS4WL are on the AWL website:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/we-stand-workers-liberty>

## Tasks

This course is designed for a minimum of 12, one-hour sessions:

- Before each session read the relevant chapter. Underline key words and passages, make notes, comments, questions.
- For each session discuss the key ideas, ask questions, look for examples, and relate the chapter to what you know already, your work/college/community and political activity.
- After the session, do some extra reading, discuss the issues you've learned about with other comrades, do a lead off in your branch, write for the paper and test the ideas in action.

It is okay to go off at tangents, especially if you need more depth or there's a particularly controversy going on at the time. But you should do all twelve sessions within three months.

# **1. What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?**

Chapter 1. What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty? can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5792>

## **Key ideas:**

- Working class
- Capitalist class
- Consistent democracy
- Workers' government
- Stalinist
- National oppression

## **Questions:**

1. Who are the "working class"?
2. Who are the capitalist class?
3. What does independent working class politics mean?
4. Why are socialists consistent democrats?
5. Why can't the left stop squabbling and unite?
6. On what basis can the left unite?

## **Further reading:**

Workers' Liberty 17, January 1994, is a special issue on Socialism and Democracy.  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/taxonomy/term/252>

Left Unity, Workers' Liberty 52, January 1999  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2005/07/26/workers-liberty-52-january-1999>

## **2. The Lies Against Socialism Answered**

Chapter 2. The lies against socialism answered can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5787>

### **Key ideas:**

- Stalinism
- Leninism
- Bolsheviks
- Capitalism
- State
- Planning
- Communist Party
- Social Democracy

### **Questions:**

1. Why was socialism not discredited by the collapse of Stalinism?
2. Explain why socialism is not merely a good idea that is impossible in practice?
3. Did Leninism lead to Stalinism?
4. Why can't we abolish the state?
5. What role did Communist Parties play in the labour movement?
6. What is wrong with social democracy?

### **Further reading:**

The fall of Stalinism in Eastern Europe — Workers' Liberty 3/25  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-315-fall-european-stalinism>

Workers' Liberty 16, February 1992  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-vol1-nos-1-21-may-85-jun-95/workers-liberty-16>

Study guide to The Fate of the Russian Revolution  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/system/files/forr2.PDF>

## **3. The socialism we fight for**

Chapter 3. The socialism we fight for can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2006/03/05/socialism-we-fight>

### **Key ideas:**

- Common ownership
- Democratic control
- Delegates
- Working week
- Standard of living
- Free distribution
- Drudgery
- Individual liberty
- Human nature

### **Questions:**

1. Define socialism in one sentence.
2. How could planning work without bureaucracy?
3. What is needed to make workers' democracy a reality?
4. How would socialism reduce drudgery to a minimum?
5. How will socialism expand individual liberty?
6. Is human nature a barrier to socialism?

### **Further reading:**

Why capitalism should not survive - Published by the AWL in 1991  
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/publications/eduprog/whycapit.htm>

A workers' plan for the crisis  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-plan-crisis>

America Under the Workers' Rule by James P. Cannon  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/cannon/works/1953/workersrule.htm>

What Socialist America Will Look Like by James P. Cannon  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/cannon/works/1953/socialistamer.htm>

## **4. Why the working class is the key**

Chapter 4. Why the working class is the key can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5776>

### **Key ideas:**

- Capitalism
- Labour power
- Exploitation
- Interests
- Social weight
- Democracy
- Working class action

### **Questions:**

1. What is capitalism?
2. How is waged labour exploited under capitalism?
3. Why does the working class have an interest in socialism?
4. Why does the working class have the power to create socialism?
5. What forms does working class action take?
6. How is the working class the democratic class?

### **Further reading:**

Why for socialists the working class is central, Max Shachtman Workers' Liberty 3/11  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2007/04/12/why-working-class-central>

The workers or 'the people' by Chris Reynolds, Workers Liberty 66  
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl66/workers.htm>

Why the working class? by Hal Draper  
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/publications/eduprog/draper.htm>

## **5. Can the labour movement be transformed?**

Chapter 5. Can the labour movement be transformed? can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5773>

### **Key ideas:**

- Class organisation
- Trade unions
- Trade union bureaucracy
- Rank and file
- Labour Party
- Working class political representation

### **Questions:**

1. Why must the working class organise?
2. Why are most trade unions bureaucratic and passive?
3. On what basis should rank and file movements be organised?
4. Why do we think Labour is a bourgeois workers' party?
5. Is running socialist candidates in elections a waste of time and resources?
6. Why does the working class need independent representation in politics?

### **Further reading:**

The Great Miners Strike 1984-5: Twelve Months that Shook Britain: the Story of the Strike,  
By Sean Matgamna and Martin Thomas  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2008/04/08/12-months-shook-britain-story-strike>

Workers' Liberty 3/23: Debate on the unions and Labour Party  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-323-debate-unions-and-labour-party>

Workers' Liberty 3/3: Factory bulletins from the early communist movement  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-33-fac>

The case for a workers' government by Jill Mountford, Workers' Liberty 45, March 1998  
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl45/govern.htm>

Should socialists stand against Labour?, by John Nihill [Sean Matgamna], Workers' Liberty 49, September 1998  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/7472>

The Trade Union Movement, New Labour, and Working-Class Politics  
Class, unions, and party: a debate, by John Bloxam and Sean Matgamna  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-pamphlets/trade-union-movement-new-labour-and-working-class-politics>



## **6. Festival of the oppressed**

Chapter 6. Festival of the oppressed can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2006/03/05/festival-oppressed>

### **Key ideas:**

- Oppression
- Class
- Socialist feminism
- Sexism
- Racism
- Homophobia
- The family
- The state

### **Questions:**

1. Why does the AWL call ourselves “socialist feminists”?
2. How do socialists tackle women’s oppression?
3. What are the main causes of racism?
4. How do socialists tackle racism?
5. What are the roots of homophobia?
6. How do socialists tackle homophobia?
7. Can all oppressions be reduced to class?
8. Does the working class benefit from sexual and racial oppression?

### **Further reading:**

Section 28: Lessons in fighting bigotry by Janine Booth  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/1997/11/30/section-28-%E2%80%94-lessons-fighting-bigotry>

Our History: When women fought for liberation by Cathy Nugent, Workers' Liberty 49, September 1998 <http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl49/women.htm>

Special issue on women’s liberation, Workers' Liberty 58, October 1999  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2005/07/17/workers-liberty-58-october-1999>

Comrades and Sisters, By Janine Booth  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-pamphlets/comrades-and-sisters>

How to beat the racists  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-pamphlets/how-beat-racists>

Radical Chains: Sexuality and class politics; lesbian and gay liberation and socialism, By Janine Booth  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-pamphlets/radical-chains>

## **7. Imperialism, nationalism and war**

Chapter 7. Imperialism, nationalism and war can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5763>

### **Key ideas:**

- Capitalism
- Imperialism
- Globalisation
- Sub-imperialism
- Paleo-imperialism

### **Questions:**

1. Why does it matter that capitalism is global?
2. What forms does imperialism take in history?
3. How has imperialism changed under capitalism?
4. What is working class anti-imperialism?
5. Is sub-imperialism coherent?
6. What do we mean by paleo-imperialism?

### **Further reading:**

Marxism and imperialism By Martin Thomas

<http://archive.workersliberty.org/publications/readings/2001/empire.html>

New forces and passions by Chris Reynolds, Workers' Liberty 63, July 2000

<http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl63/nfp.htm>

Two critiques: "Empire" and "new imperialism" by Martin Thomas.

<http://www.workersliberty.org/files/twocritiques.pdf>

The USA as hyperpower by Colin Foster

<http://www.workersliberty.org/files/usa.pdf>

Permanent revolution after Trotsky, By Clive Bradley, Workers' Liberty 7, June 1987

<http://www.workersliberty.org/pr>

## **8. Why is workers' revolution necessary?**

Chapter 8. Why is workers' revolution necessary? can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5754>

### **Key ideas:**

- Revolution
- Reform
- Parliamentary road to socialism
- Military coup
- Soviets

### **Questions:**

1. What's wrong with the Westminster system?
2. Why do working class revolutions break out?
3. How did workers take power in Russia?
4. Why didn't the French workers take power in 1968?
5. Is Britain too conservative to have a revolution?
6. Do all revolutions end in dictatorship?
7. What's wrong with the SWP's catchphrase "one solution, revolution"?

### **Further reading:**

Workers' Liberty 3/11: 1917 - revolution for freedom & equality  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-311-19>

Workers' Liberty 3/21: General Strike in France, May/June 1968  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-321-general-strike-france-mayjune-1968>

Editorial: Parliament is a pigsty, Workers' Liberty 22: June 1995  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/7984>

## **9. Why is a revolutionary party necessary?**

Chapter 9. Why is a revolutionary party necessary? can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2006/03/05/why-revolutionary-party-necessary>

### **Key ideas:**

- Workers' revolution
- Ruling ideas
- Memory of the class
- Combat party
- Democratic centralism

### **Questions:**

1. Why are the ruling ideas of the epoch those of the ruling class?
2. How does the bourgeois state seek to impede socialism?
3. How does a workers revolution differ from bourgeois revolution?
4. How does a revolutionary party differ from the Labour Party?
5. Why can't the working class simply build a broad party?
6. Is the AWL too small to be a revolutionary party?

### **Further reading:**

Lenin and the Russian Revolution  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2010/03/15/lenin-and-october-revolution-0>

AWL: what we are, what we do and why we do it, Sean Matgamna, 2005 Solidarity 3/72, 28 April 2005  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2005/05/03/w-l-what-we-are-what-we-do-and-why-we-do-it>

## **10. Marxism - what sort of Marxism?**

Chapter 10. Marxism - what sort of Marxism? can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5747>

### **Key ideas:**

- Third camp
- Degenerated workers' state
- Ruling bureaucratic class
- Stalinism as an exploitative class society
- Eastern Europe
- Cuba

### **Questions:**

1. Why did Trotsky regard the USSR as a degenerated workers' state?
2. Why do we think this theory became wrong after 1928?
3. Why was the Second World War a test for theories of Stalinism?
4. How can we understand the expansion of Stalinism after World War Two?
5. What does the collapse of Stalinism tell us about it as a mode of production?

### **Further reading:**

Workers' Liberty 3/7: What is the Third Camp?  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-37-what-third-camp>

Workers' Liberty 3/8: The other history of American Trotskyism  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-38-other-history-american-trotskyism>

Workers' Liberty 3/14 Trotsky: The Spartacus of the 20th century  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-314-tr>

Workers' Liberty 3/30: The 1939-40 split in the Fourth International  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-330-1939-40-split-fourth-international>

Workers' Liberty 3/31: Trotsky and the Stalinist state  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-331-trotsky-and-stalinist-state>

# **11. The AWL's history and tradition**

Chapter 11. The AWL's history and tradition can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5741>

## **Key ideas:**

- Post-Trotsky Trotskyism
- Workers' Fight
- International Communist League (ICL)
- Socialist Organiser
- Workers' Socialist League (WSL)
- Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL)

## **Questions:**

1. How did our founders assess Trotskyism in the mid-1960s?
2. What did we learn in IS?
3. Why was the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV) so important in our history?
4. What issues did we clarify in the 1980s?
5. Why was the AWL formed?
6. What is the central legacy of the AWL after nearly five decades?

## **Further reading:**

Workers' Liberty 3/26: Looking backward. Sean Matgamna reflects on 50 years in the socialist movement. Workers' Liberty 3/26  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-326-looking-backward>

The Bolshevik-Trotskyist tradition  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2005/11/11/our-traditions-where-awl-comes>

The Trotskyist Tendency and IS (SWP) by Sean Matgamna, Workers' Liberty 41, July 1997  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2007/02/27/trotskyist-tendency-and-swp>

What We Are And What We Must Become (1966)  
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/publications/wwaawwmb/index.htm>

## **12. What does the AWL do?**

Chapter 12. What does the AWL do? can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5736>

### **Key ideas:**

- Agitate
- Educate
- Organise

### **Questions:**

1. What does agitation mean?
2. How is agitation different from propaganda?
3. Why is Marxist education necessary for working class self-liberation?
4. What is our main role as educators?
5. How do revolutionaries organise?
6. What do we mean by democratic centralism?

### **Further reading:**

How to organise to change the world By Ed Maltby, Solidarity 3/192, 9 February 2011  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2011/01/31/activism-politics-and-organisation-debate-laurie-penny>

How revolutionaries are formed, by Leon Trotsky, 11 July 1929.  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/9290>

## **Further study courses**

You should aim to build up a comprehensive library of hard copies of our books, pamphlets and papers. You should buy a copy of our book, the Fate of the Russian Revolution. Hardcopies are easier to read and conserve, and can be loaned or given to others. There are some AWL and classical Marxist works that are not online yet or only in poorly translated versions.

There are many study courses on the AWL website <http://www.workersliberty.org/study> The website also has articles on a wide range of political questions. Here are some key links.

### **Afghanistan**

Afghanistan and the shape of the 20th century, by Sean Matgamna, Workers' Liberty 2/2, March 2002 <http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl102/Afghanistan.htm>

Petrograd 1917, Kabul 1978: in defence of the October Revolution, by Sean Matgamna <http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-pamphlets/defence-october-revolution>

### **China**

Workers' Liberty 12-13, August 1989

<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-vol1-nos-1-21-may-85-jun-95/workers-liberty-12>

China at 50, Workers' Liberty 58, October 1999

<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2005/07/17/workers-liberty-58-october-1999>

China and independent working-class politics, by Paul Hampton, Workers' Liberty 2/1, September 2001

<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2001/09/30/china-and-independent-working-class-politics>

Workers' Liberty 3/24: How Mao conquered China

<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-324-how-mao-conquered-china>

### **Cuba**

Debate: Is Cuba socialist? Paul Hampton and Bernard Regan

<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2008/02/19/cuba-socialist>

The Cuban revolution revisited, by Paul Hampton, June 2006

<http://www.workersliberty.org/taxonomy/term/279>

Castro and the Cuban revolution, by Paul Hampton, Solidarity 3/102, 16 November 2006

<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/7299>

Che Guevara: No hero of ours, by Paul Hampton, Solidarity 3/57, 2 September 2004

<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/3025>

Guevara the economist? Workers short-changed, by Paul Hampton, Solidarity 3/157, 20 August 2009 <http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2009/08/29/guevara-economist-workers-short-changed>

### **Ecology**



Australia's red-green pioneers by Greg Mallory, Workers' Liberty 64-5, September 2000  
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl64/greg.htm>

We only want the earth: Capitalism and the environmental crisis.  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-pamphlets/we-only-want-earth>

Climate change: document for AWL conference 2008, by Paul Hampton  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2008/02/26/climate-change-document-awl-conference-2008>

William Morris by Paul Hampton, 12 March 2008  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/category/marxist-theory/history/marxists/william-morris>

Vestas: how wind turbine workers became a power  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/vestas-how-wind-turbine-workers-became-power>

### **Europe**

The left and Europe, by Colin Foster, Workers' Liberty 39, April 1997  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2009/10/06/left-and-europe>

There is only one socialist answer on Europe: workers unite! by Annie O'Keeffe, Workers' Liberty 39, April 1997  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2009/10/06/there-only-one-socialist-answer-europe-workers-unite>

Debate: The socialist answer to the euro. Alan Thornett and Martin Thomas.  
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl53/euro.htm>

### **Iran**

Workers' Liberty 3/5: Revolution and counter-revolution in Iran, 1978-9, by Paul Hampton  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-35-rev>

An Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities? Analysis, debate, polemic, September, 2008.  
Debate between Moshe Machover and Sean Matgamna  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2008/09/10/israeli-attack-irans-nuclear-facilities-analysis-debate-polemic>

### **Ireland**

A workers' guide to Ireland  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-guide-ireland>

Ireland: Lies The Left Tells Itself, by Sean Matgamna, Workers' Liberty 9, January 1988  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2008/05/09/ireland-lies-left-tells-itself>

Ireland: the socialist answer  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-pamphlets/ireland-socialist-answer>

Socialists and the Good Friday Agreement, Workers' Liberty 48, June 1998  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2005/07/26/workers-liberty-48-june-1998>

### **Israel-Palestine**

Workers' Liberty 3/15. How can we best help the Palestinians?  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-315-ho>

Workers' Liberty 3/12: Israel/Palestine - solidarity yes, boycott no  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-312-so>

Two nations, two states  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2010/08/21/israel-palestine-two-nations-two-states>

### **Kosova**

The left during the Balkans war by Sean Matgamna, Workers' Liberty 62, April 2000  
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl62/balkans.htm>

Apparatus Marxism in the Balkan war, by Sean Matgamna, Workers' Liberty 2/1, September 2001  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-2-september-2001/workers-liberty-21-sep>

### **Political Islam**

The rise of political Islam by Clive Bradley, Workers' Liberty 2/2, March 2002  
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl102/political%20islam.htm>

Why isn't Hamas the same as the Algerian FLN? by Clive Bradley Workers' Liberty volume 2, from September 2001  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2007/04/16/why-isnt-hamas-same-algerian-fln>

### **Scotland**

Workers' Liberty 3/9: Scotland  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-39-scotland-0>

### **Spanish Revolution**

The Spanish Revolution and those who killed it  
Workers' Liberty 26, November/December 1995  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-26-novemberdecember-1995>

Workers' Liberty 3/6: The betrayal of the Spanish revolution  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-36-bet>

### **Venezuela**

Workers' Liberty 3/10: Mexico/ Venezuela  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-310-me>

Bonapartism in Venezuela, by Paul Hampton, Solidarity 3/83, 03 November 2005  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/5121>

Socialist Appeal woos Hugo Chávez, by Paul Hampton, Solidarity 3/54, 24 June 2004  
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/2258>