



# Debate on a journal for debate

In the previous edition we spoke of discussion that was unfolding around the role of the *South African Labour Bulletin*. From this debate has emerged a mission statement printed on the opposite page. This editorial reflects some of the issues that surfaced in this debate. The initial challenge to the *Bulletin* Board posited a departure from the *Bulletin's* exclusive location in the field of labour. It put forward the idea that the labour movement has become institutionalised and its struggles and procedures routinised. In consequence it has become less innovative and exciting for intellectuals and activists grappling with issues facing our society. Thus it should no longer be viewed as an exclusively labour publication but should locate itself differently and possibly change its name. This idea was taken up as allowing for the creation of a popular left of centre magazine, which would appeal to a new generation of well-informed political intelligentsia and 'informed citizenry'. In essence a cutting edge left journal. Elements within the labour movement would also constitute this popular intelligentsia.

In response to the above it was

argued that we could reposition the *Bulletin* without abandoning its identity. Some felt that more than ever a labour focused publication was necessary. If there is a lack of innovation and energy within the labour movement, then the *Bulletin* should make a contribution to countering this. There are many issues where the labour movement is failing workers and in imparting skills and information it could strengthen and nurture the independence and left nature of the labour movement.

In a review workshop attended by trade unionists, participants commented that the *Bulletin* was relying too much on its struggle reputation and it needed to promote itself amongst a younger generation of unionists and activists who are not aware of it. They also echoed the challenge to the Board that its approach needed to be broadened. Further they felt that a balance should be struck between addressing the needs of the labour intelligentsia and that of ordinary shopstewards. It was dangerous for the *Bulletin* to be aimed primarily at leadership as the gap between it and the base is widening.

Ultimately a compromise position was reached.

The publication should be reinvigorated to be an independent, challenging, publication with a working class focus. In this however it could straddle different audiences which include a union audience as well as that of a broad popular intelligentsia.

Grasping these inputs the Board forged the mission statement. It reasserts the role of the *Bulletin* to provoke debate and analysis through the content of its pages. It sees itself however as informing not only workers, but also their organisations and communities more broadly. In this attempt it should remain firmly located on the left and aim to strengthen the hand of the working class.

We ask readers to participate in this process: to contribute to its content, to broaden its circulation, to read and use articles for discussion as a means of energising the left and of furthering innovation. We also want you to simply relax and enjoy reading it and to come away feeling alive and more informed about the world around us.

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