

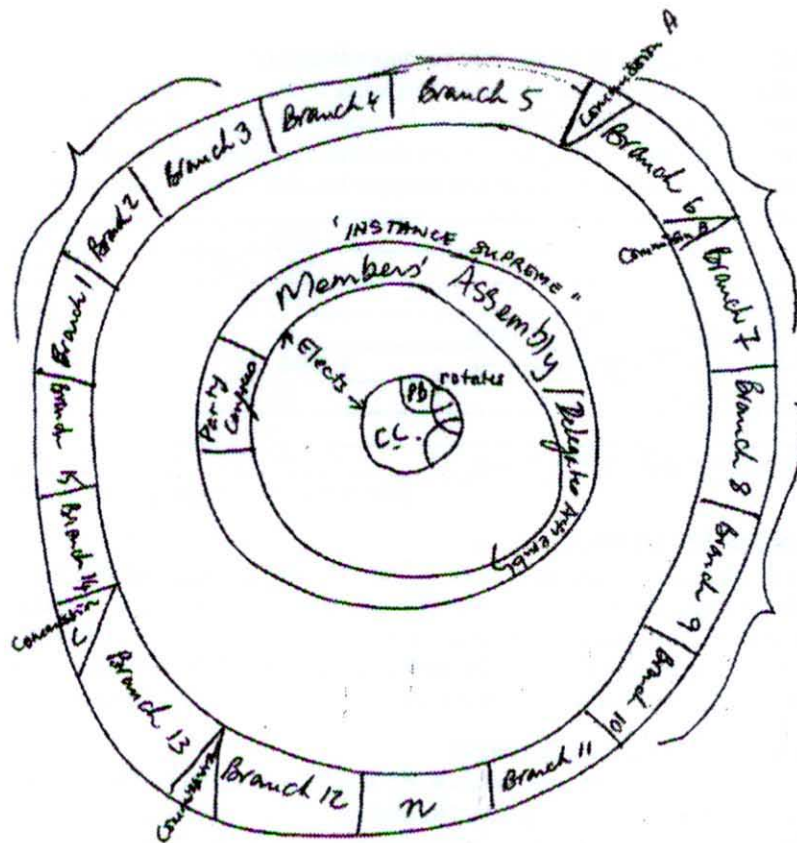
LALIT's 5-Year Report & Program

Prepared as General Elections Approach in 2010

Two visuals may be worth keeping in mind while reading this Program Document:

Who has done the Work in these five years?

WHAT LALIT IS



Branches

Create Ideas, send them to Central Committee & Members Assembly

- Regular meetings (weekly or fortnightly)
- Members compare branches to "lungs" of the party
- Recruit members (work of individual members)
- Distribute LALIT newspaper/magazine
- Distribute party leaflets
- Put up posters with party slogans
- Organise neighbourhood meetings, forums, public meetings
- Collect contributions from party members who are not yet full auto-tax-paying members
- Keep a list of party supporters in the area (who pay annual dues)
- Take position on things, prepare and publish communiques

Central Committee

Centralizes the party's program

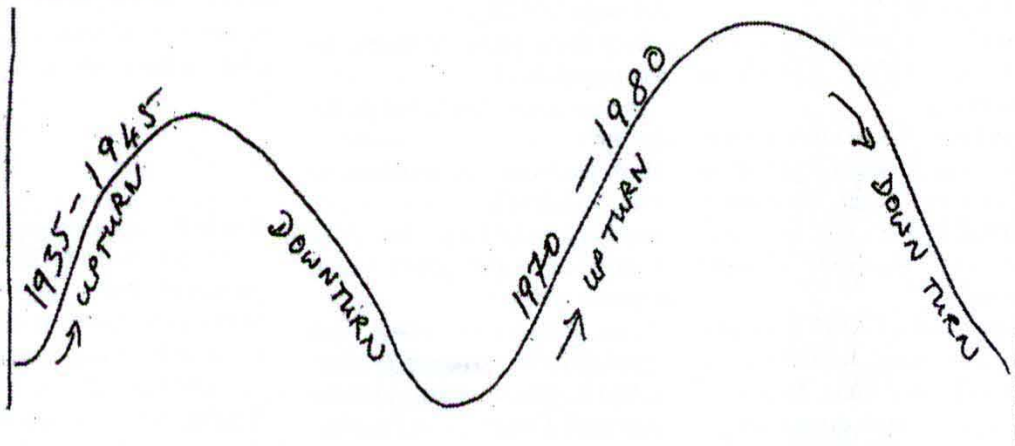
Organizes (& decides timing & content)

- Members Assemblies
- Party Congresses
- Party newspaper/magazine
- Congresses on themes
- Meetings
- Residential Seminars
- Nation-wide leaflets
- Demonstrations
- Lalit web site
- Campaigns, Forums
- Books/publications
- Recruit members – send to branches
- Relations with other organizations, Relations with parties abroad
- Common Fronts
- Collection of auto-tax
- Write press articles, do radio programs,
- Hold press conferences

Note: "Up-turns" & "down-turns"

From when the working class in Mauritius first organised 1930s

2010



Up-turns

Increasingly coherent mass action

Mobilization and thinking

Dynamic leadership emerges, and is under the control of the vanguard of workers.

The workers' vanguard + workers' party + the broad mass tend to converge

Working class ideology becomes stronger

It is easy for a revolutionary party to recruit, on the basis of a good transitional program that takes working people from where their consciousness is at right now through the demands of now on to the will to build socialism

Down-turns

There is relative passivity in the working class, a tendency to leave things in the hands of a few leaders.

The working class is relatively weak, and since we represent this class and its aspirations, we can expect relative weakness.

Demobilization and feeling "down" in the working class.

Not easy to attack communalism (racism and religious bigotry)

Relative depoliticization, thus it is difficult to recruit without making concessions to ruling class ideology, and risking liquidation as a revolutionary party.

LALIT's Report & Program

The Labour Party, having been in Government in Mauritius, will soon be using its “accomplishments” over the past five years as its platform in the General Elections. The two opposition parties in the National Assembly will not have any real “accomplishments” to announce. Instead they will base their electoral campaign, assuming they are not in an alliance by then with the Labour Party, on criticizing the Labour Government for corruption, communalism, not moving fast enough on x, y, z infrastructure project and so on, things the Labour Party criticizes them for when they were in Government for the previous five years. Their program will be a list of various “valeurs”, values of a vague nature like “social justice”, “national unity”, and “equal opportunities”. Both sides will, of course as usual, employ all the socialist rhetoric they can drum up.

LALIT, by way of contrast, is preparing a report of its *political work* over the past five years. Here is a preview of a draft, based on a talk by LALIT member, Lindsey Collen, at a members' assembly in January, 2010. (She called on members to note the proportion of our *political work* that is *not electoral*.)

This “report” will be part of our program during the coming electoral campaign for General Elections, which could be called any time from March 2010 to January 2011, depending on what the Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam decides to be a propitious moment to dissolve the present Parliament, or whether he prefers to let Parliament dissolve automatically in July. At present he has 42 of the 70 seats, so presumably he wants, as he is always saying he wants to do, to increase his majority so that he has a three-quarter majority. This means he wants a bigger alliance than the one he is in at present. It is not clear what he plans to do with such a majority, should he get it. But with the working class in a serious down-turn, what he intends to do with the 3/4 majority is most likely something retrograde.

Our 5-year report is a report on the fruit of the work of the LALIT branches. These are the very lungs of our Party, *forming new ideas*, sending them to the Central Committee. The report is also the fruit of the work of our Central Committee, elected by the Members Assembly every year so as to continually bring together our *political program*. In short our program is based on three things: first, an analysis of the political and economic situation we find ourselves in, where it comes from and where it tends to be going to; second, a series of demands that are transitional in the sense that, once mobilized behind and won, the gains made are not a signal to go home, but become part of a conscious progress made in terms of the balance of class forces, in favour of the working class, a class which has every interest in overthrowing the present capitalist economic system and the State upholding it; and third, a shared plan – one always developing – as to how we intend to popularize these demands and generalize the popular will to mobilize against capitalism and also for socialism.

Before the last general elections in 2005, everyone was certain that the outgoing MMM-MSM (*Mouvement Militant Mauricien - Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien*) Government would, since they were “two parties against just *Labour*”, win hands-down against Labour. (For readers who are not Mauritian, we have a note to add here: Note that these three main political parties are all bourgeois parties, neither militant, nor socialist, nor labour, despite their names. Two once were. However, working class consciousness is high enough, and the working class is such a large class in Mauritius, there being no peasantry, that it is impossible for any party to go into elections without using full left-wing rhetoric. They all refer to the public as “comrades” in public meetings, they all claim to represent the interests of “the working class” and they are all “anti-capitalist” in all their speeches. They would never defend Israel in a public meeting. They would never say they intend to privatize a brass bean. They would never say capitalism is a good thing. They no longer attack the mother tongues. And they would never, ever say they intend to introduce new laws in order to make work more “flexible”. Yet, they all do most of these things once elected, if not as parties, then as the State.)

Anyway. Labour, despite it being two-against-one, did win 2/3 of the seats at the last elections. This was for two main reasons (other than that the outgoing parties had made themselves fairly unpopular while in Government). First, though this does not concern us directly at the moment, Labour pulled 5 smaller parties into an alliance, parties each scoring less in opinion polls than LALIT. They made a political difference. And second, Labour glued together a program of sorts before the elections, a program forced upon them by the Labour party's grassroots "chief agents", a program based on isolated bits of the LALIT program for which we had built up support through our actions over the previous 5 years. In particular, Labour announced it would re-introduce village-level elections for Village Councils that had been dismantled by the MMM-MSM, and for the re-establishment of which LALIT and only LALIT had fought against tooth and nail at grassroots village level over the course of the whole dismantling process. Labour announced that it would restore old-age pensions on a universal basis, and do away with the means-testing that LALIT had challenged since the MMM-MSM introduced it. Labour announced that it would bring in free transport for all students and everyone over 60 years of age, following on from LALIT's campaign for free transport for everyone, using the "travelling money" that businesses and the State pay employees, for a fund with which to develop public transport. Labour promised to break diplomatic links with Israel, which is in LALIT's program. (For readers from abroad, the Labour Party did bring back Village Elections, it did re-introduce pensions as a right, it did introduce free transport for students and old-age pensioners and disabled people, it did formally and publicly suspend diplomatic relations with Israel at the time of the Gaza bombardment of 2008-9.)

These measures, taken piecemeal do not, of course, in any way add up to our program for socialism, but when implemented like this they are both a witness to the political strength of LALIT, specially when we mobilize the working class behind the demands, and they also change the balance of class forces in favour of the working class. This means LALIT has a political power way beyond our capacity to get votes for ourselves in a General Election. (This merits another much longer paper in order to try to understand *why*.)

Today, as the "traktasyon" begin, with the MMM and Labour trying to patch together a pre-electoral alliance, they are putting together bits of the LALIT program that may help them get and keep grassroots "agents" for the electoral campaign. This time it is, in particular, concessions towards introducing the mother tongues (Kreol and Bhojpuri) in schools, and taking up the Diego Garcia issue (though not being so bold as to threaten to get the US military base closed, of course.) So once again, they have to concede the new reality that is before them, after LALIT's program and action have developed a new reality over the past five years. Once again, taking items one by one is certainly not LALIT's program, and this brings no dynamic towards overthrowing capitalism or building socialism, taken alone. But they are both vindication of our pertinence, and also a sign of a change in the balance of class forces, which helps towards overthrowing capitalism. Liberating ones mother tongue also liberates a certain force in the oppressed classes. And having been proven by history to have been correct to have maintained pressure on the Diego Garcia base strengthens LALIT's program in the eyes of the working class.

In summary, once again the past five years shows that LALIT, though electorally weak (1%-2% in the first-past-the-post system), is a political force to reckon with. This relative political strength surprises us coming at a time when the class we represent, the working class, is as weak as it is today. No-one denies this weakness. We guess that the total discrediting of the capitalist system over the past 5 years, and the exposure of the fraudulent imperialist wars detonated by Bush and Blair, have meant that capitalism is ideologically even weaker than it was before, in Mauritius. This, in turn, makes the working class relatively "stronger" than it would otherwise be.

This means that "upturn" or "downturn", LALIT has a certain potency. It represents a class that is potentially very strong, even though at present weak. Our adversary, our class enemy, is in ideological free fall. So, our role is not only to be observant for the moments when we can, during defensive

actions, also get to pose the questions of ownership and control, but also to prepare to leave defensive mode altogether and move into counter-attack. There is a constant role for us in developing our program, in all its three aspects mentioned earlier. Acting on present issues, we link them to a socialist future, in ways that are conscious and open and honest.

Today, in this “*downturn*”, we are simultaneously, as we mentioned, going through a series of grave crises of capital. They are each different, and yet they each reflect the general crisis of capitalism. First there was the Mauritian systemic crisis, on which we ran our last electoral campaign (the end of the EU Sugar Protocol and the end of the textiles protective regime) and which has been LALIT’s main political work for some 6 or 7 years. Then the oil prices crisis. Then the food crisis. Then the financial crisis, then the economic crisis, and now the deepening of an unpredictable ecological crisis. Crises have over the past five years hit us, world wide, with vertiginous force.

LALIT has been in the vanguard in Mauritius in analyzing and confronting these crises as they have unfurled. The international financial institutions running capitalism have collapsed and are still in “intensive care”, an expression used by George Soros, who should know. The capitalist economies in many countries are slow, and where they speed up (as in China), they threaten a repeat of the same crises of the past five years, only more violent this time round. Unemployment is still high world-wide. Sources of oil will soon be reaching the beginning of their end. For civilization that relies so utterly on these sources of energy, this is a serious crisis. At the same time, at any moment we can expect the acceleration of exponential factors of disorder in the climate, and this partly because of the over-reliance on polluting forms of energy. The social effects of these combined crises are sometimes beyond even the most fertile imagination. They may well be on the scale of the “natural” disaster in Haiti, which though natural in its cause, is not at all “natural” in its devastating social effect on a country so poor after generations of punitive measures imposed by capitalism.

In these last few decades, many left parties and “left” parties have folded – in Mauritius, as elsewhere – finding the going hard in the long “*downturn*”. In Mauritius the last upturn was, say 1970-1980, with a bit of overdrive until 1982. Since then we have seen Serge Rayapoulle and Dev Ramano’s *Lalit Travayer* disappear. The Jack Bizlall “*aile gauche*” of the MMM folded. Dev Virahsawmy’s MMMSP died. Dev Ramanos’s OMT-FNAS and Jack Bizlall’s FMP dissolved to form the PMT, which didn’t last too long before evaporating without anyone getting any explanation, and without anyone noticing. Jocelyne Minerve’s *Nuvo Lizur* ditto. And this is only mentioning the organizations that actually existed for a while, not the phantoms that are born and disappear without leaving a trace, like GMR, GRA, FPLLM, and a host whose initials are not even in anyone’s memory anymore.

Why has LALIT survived, when so many groups didn’t?

1. Because LALIT (at the time called *Lalit de Klas*) was the leadership of the biggest strike in Mauritian history. And it was not just a strike but a strike movement, starting before the August 1979 general strike movement and going on until the end of the September, 1980 mass uprising around the two-week hunger strike of the leaders of the movement. The working class was in the strike movement in an autonomous mode, but under the leadership of *Lalit de Klas*. That is a major factor in our survival. We were born of the mass student strike in 1975, the free zone women’s wild-cat strikes of 1976, and the build up of the workers’ struggles that led to the general strike movement.

2. Because LALIT has a clear Political Program. We do not just have a list of “values”. We don’t just have a string of prayer-beads like Labour and the MMM’s “social justice”, “equity”, “anti-corruption”, “law and order”, “patriotism”, etc. Nor do we have a shopping list of disconnected demands leading nowhere, like the trade union movement often has. We have worked on transitional demands, forming a kind of bridge from where the consciousness of working people is today over towards the socialism we intend to build tomorrow. And it is a socialism that will be international, or it won’t last. And we develop a strategy that links the demands of today with the program for tomorrow, in ways that

working people grasp for themselves. This program work makes us survive, keeps us relatively strong politically, even in the long downturn.

3. Because, and this perhaps what concerns us in this paper, we have a minimum necessary number of party cadres. It is the cadres in our party who have made this report possible. Individual human beings. Through the party structures obviously, especially the branches. And developing ourselves and new members as cadres is something that is in our power, just as the development of a program is. We can, to some extent at least, determine it. So that this Report is also a kind of homage to our party cadres, as individual activists – people who are caring, brilliant, visionary, active, creative beings, generous, courageous, and who, even in a downturn like this, nurture these characteristics in themselves and in us all – characteristics that become widespread during a pre-revolutionary and revolutionary period (we saw it in August 79 and September 80): love of humanity, bravery to the point of daring, intellectual independence, honesty that looks at everything as it is that yearns for the truth, and revolutionary patience to go with it all. And with all this, there is a kind of down-to-earthness necessary in a cadre. A toughness. As we say in Kreol: “Being good is good, but being good to the point of being stupid is not good”. The saying praises being street-wise – if we aren’t we would not survive the campaigns against us, the traps set for us by adversaries, the endless court cases against our members, and the petty arrogance meted out to us, as socialists, by many of the defenders of the status quo. We care for the great things in life, we cherish the elation of seeking a better world, and we, at the same time, find no small detail in human life too insignificant to observe, and, if necessary, to deal with.

What is a party cadre?

It’s someone who perhaps:

- Grasps the party program at a deep level (the broad significance of its class analysis, something of the spirit of transitional demands that articulate towards socialism) and who has the will and capacity to popularize the programme – each one in his or her different way.
- Can recruit new members to the party, on the specific basis of this program
- Knows the history of our political current (the LALIT current in Mauritius, and the current/s we are part of internationally) and what differentiates us from Stalinists, populists, opportunists of all ilk, Bonapartists, reformists, various kinds of ultra-leftists and adventurers. This knowledge is, of course, not equal in us all, but we all aspire to deeper understanding of our political current, and all the other different political currents and their manifestations. (In LALIT, we refer to this in short-hand as knowing the difference between our reasons for being against police brutality and the Red Cross’s.)
- Is loyal to the party, meaning stands by the party when up against adversaries, and when in trouble defending his or her ideas, knows how to seek help from friends and comrades for future arguments.
- Knows how to work with the masses of ordinary people at the grassroots level (is not arrogant or a bluffer). This implies knowing first-hand what the level of consciousness of workers is right now, so that *that* is where we start from.
- Pays his or her monthly auto-tax (a scaled self-tax based on income), so that the party has funds.

Most of these are things which involve a certain flair, as well as being acquired on the job, so to speak, and from those with experience.

To be able to be a party cadre also involves some “luck of the draw” from life: a fairly stable family or home life, fairly good health, a place to live peacefully, and to be able to draw new internal resources from, and maybe being blessed with a sense of humour and *joie de vivre* thrown in, too.

We put this all to paper, so that we know how to interpret the 5-year report, as general elections loom. That it is the work of real live human beings, and that it continues, as part of a long tradition of human struggle.

What should we do in the coming General Elections?

LALIT provoked the veritable flowering of debate about elections that there is at the moment. We had uploaded a report on our December end-of-the-year Members' Assembly on our web site (www.lalitmauriti.us.org) and it was then taken up in the local Press. In it we had begun, for what it was worth, to predict the most likely alliance possibilities amongst the existing bourgeois parties:

- A 3-way confrontation: Social Alliance (led by Labour) v/s. MMM-UN-Guimbeau v/s. MSM.
- Social Alliance (led by Labour) + MSM v/s. MMM-UN-Guimbeau.
- Labour + MMM v. MSM + and those left out of Labour's previous "Social Alliance".

And an outside chance that the whole lot get together in a "national unity" binge.

Whatever the configuration of parties and alliances, LALIT will definitely participate in the electoral campaign. But the question is will we put up candidates? Or will we not? As each election approaches, we take stock, in a case-by-case way (bearing in mind that we believe elections are nearly always a tactical issue, not strategic). It will depend ultimately upon the exact configuration of other parties and the *en jeu* of the election. The past elections were as follows, since our founding in 1976:

1976: We were still a "tendency" within the MMM (as well as being a group around an independent publication, a "tribune libre de gauche") so we worked for the MMM election but with warnings to the leadership.

1982: Did not put up our own candidates, but said to vote for the MMM-PSM alliance, despite their calling for a "new social consensus" with the bosses, and despite having opposed the MMM's alliance with the PSM, (i.e. having left the MMM because of its abandoning of class struggle and its simultaneous abandoning of the anti-communal struggle). We put up a list of 10 points in the MMM-PSM program on which we called for electors to vote for them, but without any socialist illusion.

1983: We stood against the two blocks, the Red-White-Blue Alliance, as it was called, and against the MMM, by now representing bourgeois interests whole-heartedly, as we had predicted it would.

1987: Stood against the same Red-White-Blue alliance and against the MMM.

1991: Did not put up candidates. Called for a vote on a single point for the MMM-MSM on the basis that their program was to complete an aspect of decolonization, that is to say, to establish Mauritius as a Republic. Labour and the PMSD (Red and Blue) were against.

1995: We called for a deliberate spoiling of ballots, in the context of hideously communalized campaign and election: the Government having pushed people into two opposing communal-religious camps: one for Catholic education and the other for Oriental Languages.

2000: Stood against the MMM-MSM (after their surprise Medpoint pre-electoral agreement) and against the Labour-PMSD.

2005: Stood against the Labour Social Alliance and against the MMM-MSM alliance.

2010: ??

The recent by-election in Constituency number 8 (Moka and Quartier Militaire) nearly a year ago now, exposed the degeneration and rot that has set into the Mauritian electoral system. Neither of the two biggest parties (Labour and MMM) put up their own candidates, each feeling they had more to lose than to win. And we had the rather disgusting spectacle of the MMM supporting the candidate who had been struck out by the Courts for electoral fraud in 2005 elections, and Labour supporting the candidate's nephew who was leader of the party involved in the fraud at the time of the fraud. So we had a family feud for an election. The Press and the private radios managed to make these two rather minor characters into the only two candidates: uncle v/s nephew. This remains fresh in our memories as a kind of symbol of the bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy.

-Capitalist lobbies have totally corrupted the electorate as electorate.

-The so-called Best Loser system of institutionalized communal-religious classification, has corrupted the entire electoral system, from top to bottom, giving unspeakable lobbies enormous power.

-We have repeatedly seen musical chair type alliances of different parties, ever-changing, making the first-past-the-post system hegemonic, but for multiple-parties in a pasted together electoral pact. In 2005, in the Social Alliance, Labour allied with the Xavier Duval PMXD, Madun Dulloo's MMSM, Anil Baichoo's party, FTS-Les Verts and the Mouvement Republicain: 6 parties in all won against three others, two big and a small: MMM, the MSM and PMSD.

-The Press, and now the commercial radio stations are even worse at it, acting as they do like the conductors of the election, especially during a down-turn when workers are not mobilized enough to insist thoroughly on their own agenda.

-Since the Gaetan Duval of the extreme right-wing PMSD in 1983 used the phantom POP-FMI party as 60 fraudulent candidates in order (by sheer numbers) to increase their compulsory legally-defined air-time on TV and radio, and since the MMM in 1987 used the "left" group the OMT-FNAS and the duped leadership of two trade union federations in the same way, getting the airtime of 30 candidates who then came and said "Don't vote for me, vote for the MMM!", there have been an endless stream of the same corrupt bands of candidates that are not candidates, in the pay often of god-knows-who, ridiculing the air-time rules and more importantly ridiculing electoral TV programmes altogether.

So, this gives an idea of where the electoral system is at the moment. It is important background when we weigh up all the pros and cons of putting up candidates.

Now to the nitty-gritty: What political work has LALIT done in the past 5 years?

1. LALIT's Political Campaign for an Alternative Economy

In the past five years, the central theme has been LALIT's campaign for an alternative economy. We began this by putting forward what to plant and what to produce, as the systemic crisis began in Mauritius, some 8 years ago: The sugar industry, which was the *raison-d'etre* of the country, would be moving from employing 50,000 workers to employing 5,000. Textiles would move from employing 100,000 workers to employing 13,000 or so. This was the theme of our campaign in the last general elections, and since then we have put it on the agenda, throughout the five years, articulating this campaign with new campaigns on the new crises as they hit the world. The campaign has obviously had some effect: the Government and the sugar estates have begun at least to talk a lot about agricultural diversification and to actually get some going, and the Ministry has had its name changed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Industry. Sugar estates have even begun, under the threat from LALIT during our campaign on food security to diversify (and not just into grass for golf-courses and flowers for export), but into food crops. The time was right for the campaign.

LALIT has during the past 5-6 years organized its political work around analyses and actions against each of the "Crises" that have started to become endemic in this stage of capitalism. We are proposing both alternative crops and products, and also job creation within these, and one step further, posing the question of who exactly it is that decides on food security and job creation. So, when the Labour Government talks about its "democratization of the economy", we in LALIT say what we mean, and compare what we mean with what Labour Party means: Labour Party means opening up possibilities for quite big capitalists to join the ranks of the very big ones. This is quite unashamedly its meaning. Behind the rhetoric. Although they do also do a bit of political work to increase the share of cane by-products for small planters relative to mill owners, and offer workers the odd possibility of shares, or a "Voluntary Retirement Scheme" involving a lump-sum and a bit of land to build a house on, in exchange for closing down a job, and not counting you in the figures as unemployed. We mean something else: we mean workers getting to decide what to plant, what to produce, and how much of what to plant and what to produce. And we mean to get there by political means, by political action.

Here is an outline of our 5 years political work on the crises, as they unfurled:

i *The Structural or System Crisis in Mauritius*, the closing down of jobs in both the sugar industry and the free zone: Our actions included: neighbourhood meetings, public meetings, producing a 30-minute DVD film (it outlines the position of the bosses, government, academics, trade unionists and

worker) then organizing film showings and discussions; we brought out an 80-page book on the subject of what we mean by an alternative economy, we distributed leaflets in bus stations and at work sites, we participated in the 2005 electoral campaign and put up a candidate, Rada Kistnasamy in the by-election in 2009, we ran two nation-wide poster campaigns on the subject, we held an action at the Ministry of Finance before his 2008 budget when we presented him with our *Program for an Alternative Economy*, three or four members were on the radio for some 12 or 13 radio programs on the subject (not government radio, obviously), we wrote articles for the mainstream press and for our website, and held a number of neighbourhood forums. The areas we held such meetings or films or forums included: La Brasserie, Surinam, Rosehill, St. Pierre, Richelieu, Riviere Noire, Port Louis, Cite Attlee, Grande Riviere Nord Ouest, Grande Riviere Sud Est, Malherbes, Camp Cavale, Forest-Side, Cassis, Rose-Belle, Suyak, Mon Dezer Mon Trezor, Bambous. They were in clubs, village halls, peoples' houses, under trees. We held public meetings with posters and loudspeakers from Bambous to Cite Attlee, from Stanley in Rose-Hill to St. Hubert, from Port Louis to Dagotiere.

ii *Oil Crisis*: As oil stocks are used up, and with the over-heating of some economies like India and China, oil prices rocketed, and will again tend to suffer sharp rises. LALIT's program for an alternative economy already had a large section integrated into it on alternative production of renewable energy. This meant that during this crisis, our point of entry could change, thus introducing people to the idea of a political struggle for an alternative economy through the energy issue that was a hot one then.

iii *Food Crisis*: We could similarly change the starting point for our campaign when the food crisis hit. We convinced a women's organization to take the issue up, too, and it had meetings, in turn, with women's organizations at neighbourhood level. The aim was to think big about the food crisis, and to imagine a different land use, to prevent food insecurity. LALIT took the initiative of calling the *Food Security Common Front* ("Fron Komen Sekirite Alimanter") which brought together 10 or so organizations (unions, consumer organization, women's organization, planters' organization) and a couple of expert agronomists/food economists. Together we produced a fantastic *Charter on Food Security*, a veritable transitional program on food security, starting where people's consciousness was at the time, taking the agenda right into land reform. This Charter is now a tool for future struggles.

iv *Financial Crisis*: When the world-wide financial crisis hit the headlines, people were interested in the world financial system, the world capitalist system, in an immediate way. We could use this in order to put emphasis on the internationalist aspect of our program. We linked the world crisis to our ongoing program, using examples of the local *Integrated Resorts Scheme* slowdown, tourism cancellations, off-shore being exposed and attacked. (Mauritius is curiously the "biggest investor in India." This is because US investment transits in Mauritius in order to get out of tax because India and Mauritius have a Non-Double Taxation agreement, and Mauritius does not tax offshore companies. Indian capital also leaves India, transits through the Mauritius offshore and invests back into India, having got out of tax.) We also had 3 or 4 of our political education sessions on some of the more technical issues involved in international finance under capitalism.

v *World Economic Crisis* – During the slowdown in the world market due to the recession, this then became the entry point to our campaign. So LALIT was flexible, and up-to-date as the different crises unfolded, but remained concentrated on the politics of an alternative economy.

vi *Ecological crisis*: Our campaign for an economic alternative was also flexible so that during the build-up to Copenhagen, or before that, in turn, as films like Al Gore's and *Home* became talking points, we were able to home in through this window.

Over the five years, this articulation of an existing campaign with the separate (but interlinked) crises has been the highlight of our political work.

As well as the work in women's organizations, we had a session on Rodrigues Island's economy and agriculture, in the context of the food crisis. Rodrigues produces a lot of food, and has no sugar cane, so the economy is very different. On three or four occasions, trade union federations invited one of our members, most often Ram Seegobin to speak to their members on the economic crisis. Unfortunately, the degree of bureaucratization of the unions has meant they have not really joined into the campaign as they might have.

We produced a number of documents, some of which were titled as follows: "12 Measures for the People", "Prejudice and Sugar" (2006), "Rupee Depreciation: Who is responsible? What should be done?" (2006). Our annual comments on the budget, always linked the budget with the crises of the moment, and with our campaign for an alternative economy.

We confronted the bosses organizations in polemics in the Press and live on radio over the question of the economy.

Rajni Lallah and Cindy Clelie participated in a Conference on "Alternative Economies" in South Africa, and presented our campaign there. The other associations there and the SACP members present only considered co-operatives, and did not imagine that an "alternative economy" could be a conscious political struggle to change the whole of production. This is not possible in all times. But when there is a systemic crisis as there is in Mauritius, it is not difficult at all. Workers understand, though the downturn means they are not yet ready to act.

LALIT during these past five years has also been able to expose the link between the economic crises and the very serious social dislocation in Mauritius. Instead of joining the moral brigade, or lamenting, we were able to show how direct the effect on the whole of social life is when there is a systemic crisis. The separations between the "compartments" in our lives, all collapse before our eyes. Sackings change everything in your life. Bankrupt small enterprises do the same. The fact that there is not yet a political vision for a future socialist alternative converging in the broad masses means that the economic dislocation leads to a sharp increase in suicides, in gambling, in family debt, in intra-familial conflict, including the most hideous murders, the most amazingly complicated emotional and sex scandals exposed by the murders, panic emigration, infanticide, all these symptoms further interact to produce a profound social crisis. It shows how the decay of capitalist economy brings a decay in the morality propounded by the ruling class, while the morals that will come from a strong, rising working class, are not yet born. People seek individual solutions in ever-increasingly desperate forms, as until now they remain blind to collective possibilities. The bourgeois ideologues and State, unable to think of anything else to do, call for and impose more and more repression.

So, to conclude this first point in our 5-year report, LALIT has, to some extent, succeeded in producing the intellectual framework to link all these crises, as working people come up against them, to the bankruptcy of capitalism and to the socialist possibility.

-We have also developed some interesting transitional demands, and a better understanding in practice of what transitional demands are. These demands took hours of analyzing "where people were at", and of creative thinking, in branches and in LALIT Program meetings. Our two different poster campaigns are a good way of showing this.

On the first of the two posters, we distilled four demands as follows (in translation some of the punch is lost): "The EU Compensation Money must be used to create jobs, not destroy jobs!" All workers, even those who are least informed, agree with this, and know what it means. Yet, it poses the question of who decides what to do with capital. It also puts workers into the picture. Next there was "Training plus Unemployment Benefit!", another demand easily supported, and yet posing the question of the right to work, and the right to a living wage. Third: "foreign exchange must return to the Central Bank, so as to decrease rupee devaluation!" This demand includes the concept of "price control", because when we call just for price control, the bourgeois ideologues say "but the rupee is weakening", it's

outside our control. The slogan thus points to the *provoked* depreciation of the rupee. Fourth: “For every cane labourer given Voluntary Retirement, agricultural land on lease! Regroup in co-operatives!” Thus posing the question of land reform. (There have been direct results from the mobilization behind these demands: Training has been set up, the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius responsible for the depreciation was sacked and replaced by one in favour of opposing provoked depreciation. The Government has commandeered 2,000 arpents of land from the sugar bosses, around the EU compensation deal.)

-The *Charter on Food Security* is an important tool for future demands, and for future common fronts.

-Our campaign has visibly affected government and bosses’ policies.

-And as for the slogan of our second poster campaign, during the food crisis:

“*Plant food crops
on sugar estate land!*”

thus bringing on to the agenda very firmly who decides what to plant.

(Unfortunately this campaign was so successful that the Ministry of Tourism started to employ thugs to pull down all posters, and posters have been banned across the country.)

2. LALIT’s progress on Internationalism

After a party decision taken at a Seminar a few years ago, we decided to work at integrating our internationalism into our everyday political work, so that it was not an “add on”, but part of our program in general. (Of course it always was in theory, but we wanted to work at this in practice, given that it has been a time of international crises.) We wanted *political* contacts, not NGO-type work. We developed closer links with the Australian *Democratic Socialist Party* (recently closed down into the Socialist Alliance), and then also with the *Revolutionary Socialist Party* after the split. We have developed closer links with the Fourth International, Leon Cremieux being one of our speakers at our 2009 International Congress, although we have had publication exchanges since the 1970s. We have delegated two members to attend the 16th Conference of the FI. We have simultaneously integrated our work to get the US military base on Diego Garcia closed down, with more general political work to set up the NO BASES movement, and to get base closure on to the agenda of the world-wide anti-war movement. The NO BASES started as an electronic network we were in until in 2004 when there was a face-to-face meeting of the No Bases around the WSF in Mumbai, where we had four members present for this meeting, and to get a Peace Flotilla to go to Diego Garcia, the American base on Mauritian territory. LALIT was one of the five or six organizations that worked hard at setting up the network, along with Focus on the Global South of Walden Bello, the American Friends Peace Service, the TNI at the Hague, and the common front against bases in Ecuador. Then we would later withdraw from the IOC once it was launched. Meanwhile we had delegated a member to attend the first congress of NO BASES in Quito, Ecuador, and the march in Manta, where the base has subsequently been closed down. Before going, LALIT united a common front of organizations supporting the LALIT stand against bases and against war. Another LALIT member who attended the *Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference*, while there, during a public meeting, convinced the *Bring the Troops Home* leader of the necessity of including bringing troops home not just from the front, but from the foreign bases. They subsequently included this in their main statement. Another LALIT member went to Okinawa and Tokyo to participate in anti-base demonstrations, and to speak at the demonstrations. Two of our members have also been to Palestine a total of three times, in order to express solidarity and to link up these struggles. More recently, another member went on the Gaza Freedom March. Another participated in the *War Resisters International* meeting in Ahmedabad in India, taking the No Bases focus as part of our strategic, permanent opposition to war. We have worked at convincing existing anti-war groups of also putting emphasis on opposing the permanent features of militarism, bases for example.

At the same time we have welcomed visiting socialists to our party, as speakers:

-Neville Alexander, from WOSA in South Africa (who spoke on socialism in times of crisis)

-Nadja Rakowitz from Germany (who told us about the Frankfurt school of Marxism)

- Oupa Lehulere from South Africa (spoke on the role of the party)
- Sam Wainwright from the Australian DSP spoke on the history of the Australian labour movement.
- Mike Cole, a Marxist pedagogue from the UK, spoke on work teachers can do in education, while militating for revolution.
- Ellora Devononcourt, a student from Harvard came to work with and also study women and Diego Garcia, with LALIT.
- Grace Goldfarb and Asher Woodward, both US students, helped us make the film on the economic alternative after the collapse of sugar as the main employer, and the leading section of the bourgeoisie.

Other internationalist links, woven into our political work, include:

- Ally Hosenbokus at the MARON Congress in Reunion, 2006.
- Rajni Lallah participated in the Radical Left Network in South Africa's seminar on Rosa Luxembourg in Cape Town.
- Lindsey Collen spoke at an international Seminar against the War in Johannesburg, in particular on the Diego Garcia base closure, and how the base is in contradiction with the new Pelindaba Treaty for a Nuclear Arms Free Africa.
- Two members, Cindy Clelie and Lindsey Collen attended the RSP first Congress, and though the fares were expensive, we wanted to give the support and also learn from their very rich experience. Then there was, as for all our political work abroad, a report back to Party Members.
- Rajni Lallah in 2008, participated in a Conference on the economic crisis in London organized by Dialectical Materialism.
- Rajni Lallah had a formal meeting with Alex Callinicos, SWP, UK 2008.
- Ragini Kistnasamy, was involved in Check-Point actions in Palestine 2007, her second visit, and then in the Gaza Freedom March, 2009-2010, where she was in some 6 demonstrations in Cairo.
- Jewai Yves met colleagues in the NPAR, in Reunion, the French colony, in 2009
- Alain Ah-Vee, in January 2010 participated in the War Resisters International, Ahmedabad, 2010, where an organization started in 1921 joined with people from No Bases and from the Gandhian peace movement in India and the Institute for Total Revolution in Ahmedabad.

Other actions with an international aspect include LALIT, when appropriate, has jointly with the former President of the Republic, called for actions against Israeli aggression in Palestine.

LALIT has launched a boycott on Israeli goods, aiming particularly at Jaffa, thus reminding people of the successful boycott against apartheid.

LALIT organized a Palestine Evening, 2005: Around the film: Caged Bird Sings, Port Louis

LALIT organized another Palestine Evening, Rose-Hill, 2006: "The Second Uprising",

LALIT organized another Palestine Evening, 2009: Film + talk on the Norman Finkelstein book on Israel and Palestine.

LALIT and Cassam Uteem jointly organized a vigil at the Municipality of Port Louis against the Israeli bombardment of the Lebanon in 2006.

LALIT participated in a demonstration against the Gaza bombing, Jan 2009. Our sustained work against Israeli aggression on Palestine contributed to causing the Mauritian Government to suspend its diplomatic links with Israel.

LALIT launched a successful international petition to get the Diego Garcia base closed, and the country re-united.

LALIT has recently launched a new international move calling on the Mauritian Foreign Affairs Minister to get the UN Atomic Energy Agency to come and do inspections on Diego Garcia, now that the Pelindaba Treaty has finally come into force in late 2009.

Some of the Articles by LALIT members in international publications:

- o LINKS, in Australia, Ram Seegobin's article on our work for an economic alternative, during an election campaign.
- o *Red Pepper*, UK 2008, article on Diego Garcia by Lindsey Collen.

- Bertrand Russell Foundation's monthly booklet, *The Spokesman*, article by Lindsey Collen and Ragini Kistnasamy, on Diego Garcia, 2007
- Electronic Magazine, *Pambazuka* in South Africa on Economic Alternative 2006, by Alain Ah- Vee, Ram and Lindsey on "LALIT's campaign for an economic alternative".
- Article by Lindsey Collen on August 79 Strike Movement, for *Direct Action*, Australian Newspaper of RSP, 2009
- Many of our website visitors, are from abroad. This is a new form of link.
- During the past year, we have started a process of re-preparing our international bilateral links with other parties similar to ours.

3. LALIT work on the issue of Diego Garcia, base closure, re-unification of the country, the right of return, and reparations

In its collective wisdom, LALIT made the Diego Garcia struggle central to its concerns from as long ago as **34 years ago** – on the triple struggle for base closure, retrocession and reparations for those forcibly removed. And today, right now, it is a central struggle, 34 years later. We were able to deal politically with the fact that the British State, faced with LALIT's threat of a "Peace Flotilla", arranged to take the Chagossians to Diego Garcia and the other Islands, themselves. We have had the British Executive giving testimony against LALIT in the Chagossian Court Case, saying we intended to get the base closed (true) and were planning a flotilla that was a threat to the US base there. LALIT was, we should mention it, again and again referred to in the House of Lords judgment in the UK, simply because the Executive in the UK used our closeness to the Chagossians in order to attack them. And we have continued the struggle even as the British are carrying out "assimilation" tactics, allowing Chagossians into the UK, so that increasingly the Chagossians are living in the UK. LALIT has constantly updated its struggle, together with the people of Chagos and other progressive forces in Mauritius. In the last years we have taken a number of initiatives, including the demand for the Mauritian Government to ask the UN General Assembly for a Resolution to send a case to the ICJ at The Hague for an advisory opinion. We are at present re-iterating this demand. More recently we have called, and organized a successful international petition, for the Mauritian Government to call for UN inspections of Diego Garcia under the newly ratified Pelindaba Treaty. We had a meeting with the author of *The Islands of Shame*, David Vine, who has written a book on Diego Garcia.

2005, Petition for the closing down of the base launched by LALIT

LALIT members gave a hand to John Pilger in his now famous TV documentary, *Stealing a Nation*. LALIT members assisted Paedar King for his excellent documentary for Irish TV, *The Chagos Islands are Closed*.

And now we are calling for the UN nuclear inspectors to go to Diego Garcia, under the terms of the new Pelindaba Treaty.

We are also denouncing the UK Governments plan to cover up its evil by getting popular support for a "Marine Park" around Chagos. If ridicule could kill ... There is a nuclearized military base on Chagos. Get that closed first, LALIT says. And then, the rightful government is in charge of what kind of environmental care is necessary, not an illegal occupier like Britain with its farcicle colony, British Indian Ocean Territories.

4. Lalit political struggle for Decriminalization of Abortion, and for the women's struggle in general

LALIT is known in Mauritius as the party in favour of women's liberation. We are known for our high proportion of women members and women activists. Our aim, it is also known, is to free as many forces for change towards socialism as possible, one being women, oppressed as we are by patriarchy. 2005: 3-day women members Residential Seminar.

2006: LALIT supports the Muvman Liberasyon Fam demand for *Rape Crisis Units* in all hospitals, as the first and only port of call for victims of sexual aggression. You no longer need go to the Police Station! The demand has been won. It is known that this demand, popularized by the MLF, was in fact

invented by a LALIT member. The women members immediately recognized its importance, and took it into the women's movement, where mobilization won the day. It is part of our work of developing demands that are transitional. Many other organizations, faced with the same problem, tend to demand more women police officers, women officers in all police stations at all times. But we know that we want *less* police officers, not more. And we know that women who are victims of sexual aggression need first and foremost to be cared for in a hospital environment. The police doctors, and any police investigators can be called in now, and see the woman victim in the caring atmosphere of a hospital, rather than the woman having to go to the Police Station and then to the forensic medicine department of the Police.

2007, LALIT was the only political party to give evidence before the Select Committee of Parliament on the *Sexual Offenses Act* – we took position against repression as the only thing the State can do in response to sexual aggression. We also called for the decriminalization of homosexuality and abortion. 2009 was the year of a high point in the ongoing struggle for the decriminalization of abortion. More and more forces came in, and relied on the LALIT political work and political guidance, after the death of the photographer-journalist, Marie Noelle Derby in 2009, and the criminal charges against the young woman, Shabeela Calla, subsequently dropped after women's mobilization in a Common Front on Abortion.

2009, Ram Seegobin, for LALIT, was speaker in favour of legal abortion alongside Attorney General, Rama Valaydon, former Attorney General, Jean Claude Bibi, MMM Central Committee member, Kishore Pertaub, at the Forum organized by the Common Front.

Today, when more and more people take a stand alongside women for decriminalization, it is a political victory for LALIT.

5. The Kreol Language and Equal High-standard Education for All

LALIT has been closely associated for 30 years with the struggle for the use of the mother tongue/s in school, the National Assembly, Parliament and all official business. In the past year this struggle has come centre stage, and change is getting very near. LALIT has given political punch to the long-term work in literacy and language promotion, in which the workers' education organization *Ledikasyon pu Travayer* has been involved for 3 decades. And it was LALIT's program on language which, when it came out 6 years ago made the great leap forward in putting emphasis on the harm done to all children by the suppression of the mother tongue, whereas before it had been assumed that children with some difficulty at school would be helped, that the failure rate would be less, that the rate of illiteracy would be decreased. Though all this is true, there is something more general, and even more important: that the suppression in schools of the mother tongue harms not only emotional development but also cognitive-academic development. LPT took this idea up, and last year in October held an International hearing into the Harm done to Children by the Suppression in Schools of the Mother Tongue. LALIT gave evidence, and has been doing the political work afterwards, to turn the gains of the findings into a political gain. The transitional importance of the use to a high level of the mother-tongue is obvious: the working class needs its own language to be able to develop to the highest level, in order that its thinking can develop alongside.

One LALIT article in the commercial press was: "*What LALIT in fact says about Language*", 2006, criticizing our adversaries for, being short on arguments, criticizing what is *not* our position and has never been.

Today, as everyone concedes on the mother-tongue in education (although political victory is not yet achieved), this is a victory for LALIT.

LALIT also brought out its *Program on Education*, LALIT, 2006, after a series of open meetings with supporters, developing our program for a dynamic that goes towards equalizing the level of education in all schools to the highest level. Taking the problem of inequality between government primary schools (despite equal-ish expense by the State on them in terms of infrastructure and teachers' pay) and inequality in secondary schools left over from the Government in 1976, following the student

mass strike of subsidising existing paying poor students' school fees, as our starting point, LALIT is mobilizing behind a program of quotas for admission into secondary school by primary school, and quotas for overseas and Mauritian university scholarships by secondary school, as a way of causing a dynamic progression towards equalizing standards upwards. The idea being that parents who can, for class reasons, make the PTA and the school function well, will then stop tending to cluster in a few "elite" schools, but will make nearly all schools elite, in their bid to continue getting the best of education for their children. No doubt their children will still do "best", but in the meantime, all children will get a better education.

LALIT article in commercial press 2006, "*Equal Education without Unbridled Competition.*" And so unsectarian is LALIT that, when appropriate, and it was appropriate this year, we accepted to attend a formal bilateral meeting with the Bishop. We could discuss, as the Catholic Church was re-orienting its emphasis away from education for an elite, both the mother-tongue issue and also education for the broad masses of students.

LALIT took a stand against the Minister Gokhool's division of schools into "star" and other colleges, and also against the first draft of the new Minister Bunwaree's Plan, 2009.

6. In the Working Class

LALIT's Trade Union Commission and Inter-Shop floor-Unionism

LALIT's political strategy in the working class rests upon uniting the whole of the working class, at the grassroots of all unions in all federations, and on avoiding being tied to any one union or federation over time. We work with all the unions on an organization-to-organization basis. In the past five years, we have continued to link shop-floor union struggles through the "Inter Labaz Sindikal" strategy. That needs a separate paper.

Opposing the Changes in Labour Laws

LALIT has also throughout this 5-year period succeeding in giving an ideological framework to the trade union movement. The document submitted by the totality of the union movement against the *Employment Relations Bill* and the *Employment Rights Bill* (that later became Acts) was based largely on a document prepared by LALIT member, Ram Seegobin, against the Industrial Relations Act. LALIT produced key documents, held meetings with workers and trade unions and federations in the struggle against these two laws. LALIT also participated in the series of demonstrations organized by the *Confederation of Private Sector Workers* (CTSP). It was a sign of the times that the slogan for this demonstration that we supported was rather weak: "*No to Labour Laws that Do Not Protect Workers!*" This slogan implies two things that are not exactly true: First, the bourgeois state does not ever pass laws to protect workers, but only to exploit workers. It passes laws that protect workers not in order to protect workers but *because* this facilitates wage labour exploitation. If it is necessary, because of workers' mobilization being strong enough to disrupt production otherwise, the bourgeois State will and does pass laws that protect workers, if reluctantly. And that is not its role: its role is to pass laws to permit the continued exploitation of workers. First there was the Code Noir, the slavery framework for labour exploitation, then the Indenture Labour Laws of the 19th Century for a new framework for labour laws post-slavery, and today there is the modern wage slavery framework. Second, the two new laws are themselves positively harmful to workers as human beings, and allow new forms of exploitation of workers, as well as being harmful to unions – directly causing their further bureaucratization and criminalizing them during strikes.

LALIT has also exposed (by means of talks, meetings, gatherings, leaflets and articles), the leadership of some unions when they were busy allying with the two bourgeois parties, the MMM and MSM when they were in Opposition, on issues on which these two parties were in fact enemies of the workers. The two issues were "means testing for examination fees subsidies" which the MSM-MMM government had itself announced a couple of years before, and now pretended to join the mobilization against. How can you then ally with them to oppose this? Only by losing your own credibility. And as for allying with them over the size of lay-off packages and the nature of redeployment for 100

Development Works Corporation staff when the MMM and MSM were responsible for actually sacking 800 manual workers illegally after a strike. It was grotesque, and at mass meetings of workers, we said it, and were applauded, and the union leaders veered away from these temporary “allies” – but without making it clear that they had been mistaken. The Courts had even found the MMM and MSM had acted illegally in sacking the 800 workers, and the Government had had to pay compensation. Union bureaucracies, in order to ally with the likes of these, must surely think that workers have very short memories, which the best of the class do not have.

Work-Site Bulletins

For the first time, LALIT has in 2009 begun to work on work-site bulletins that come out regularly, with general political articles on one side, and articles pertaining to the particular site on the other. The way we believe the Lutte Ouvriere run their worksite bulletins. These are prepared and distributed by the branches.

The sites covered by regular leaflets include Princes Tuna, Rosehill Transport, Vacoas Transport, Cernol, Gaz Industriel, United Basalt, Lekol Lotelye, Plastinax.

With the Unions

Ram Seegobin has spoken at large meetings of the Federation of Civil Service and Other Unions some four or five times over the five year period up to the end of 2009, and at the Federation des Travailleurs Unis twice, Rada Kistnasamy at the National Trade Union Council assembly at Octave Wiehe in 2006, Ram Seegobin at the NTUC Assembly in 2007 and at the Organization de L’Unite des Artisans, at a seminar organized jointly by the Federation of Para-Statal Bodies and Other Unions, the State Employees Federation and the Local Government Unions, 2008, and the GTUF and mineral water factory workers, 2010. LALIT also participated in the Confederation des Travailleurs du Secteur Prive demonstrations in front of Parliament, as well as the big demonstration in Rose-Hill in 2009 and the smaller one in Port Louis the same year, as well as the 2008 Telecom Workers demonstration in Edith Cavell Street. LALIT members were also in the “Bread Demonstration” in 2007.

Web Series

Working people in times of Crisis: The Curepipe Branch has started a series for the LALIT web-site under this name. The first two are on construction workers and agricultural workers, respectively.

7. Themes for Political Education for Party members and other interested individuals

Following a decision taken in a Members Assembly to open our political education to individuals who are not party members, we have held the following sessions (amongst others):

Marxist Economics – Lindsey Collen

The Crisis in the Sugar Industry – Ram Seegobin

LALIT’s Program on Agriculture – Alain Ah-Vee

LALIT’s Change-of-Seasons University for young people, 2007

LALIT’s Spring University for young people, 2008

Work and Capital – a talk and discussion given in five different places by Lindsey Collen

Ecology and the economy – Ally Hosenbokus

The mother tongue in School – Cindy Clelie

The Role of Ideology since Independence in Mauritian Politics – an article for a mainstream magazine by Ram Seegobin

The State – Alain Ah-Vee

Classes – Rajni Lallah

Marx’s Ecology – Lindsey Collen

Latin America – a series (we felt we were not knowledgeable enough at a time when there is a great deal of dynamism already in countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia)

- On Simon Bolivar: Ram Seegobin

- Cuba’s revolution: Ally Hosenbokus

- Peru: Shining Path, what is it?: Ram Seegobin

- Pancho Villa & Zapata and the Mexican Revolution - Alain Ah-Vee
- Jose Marti: Rajni Lallah
- Chili and the Allende regime: Yann Jean
- Chavez's Venezuela: Rada Kistnasamy
- Peronism in Argentina: Lindsey Collen
- The nature of FARC in Colombia
- The Sandinistas in Nicaragua: Cindy Clelie

Media and Advertising (based on Raymond Williams' seminal essay): Rada Kistnasamy
 Ideology: Cindy Clelie
 Spanish Civil War: Rajni Lallah
 Rosa Luxembourg's development of Marx's Economics: Lindsey Collen
 The Paris Commune: Ally Hosenbokus (2008)
 The Paris Commune (2009), a session prior to a Sunday session viewing the 6-hour Peter Watkins film La Commune (1871)
 The Russian Revolution: Ragini Kistnasamy
 What is a Political Party? (Comparing with associations, trade unions): Alain Ah-Vee
 What is a trade union? (Importance, limitations, and tendency towards bureaucratization): Ram Seegobin
 New Employment Relations Act: Ram Seegobin, 2008, 2009 (many sessions)
 LALIT challenges the subject of "bourgeois economics" and the economics of the capitalist system itself: Lindsey Collen
 Session on Mauritian outer island of Agalega after return of a member from there, 2008
 Session on Norman Finkelstein's book on Israel & Palestine, 2008
 Session on the film on Palestine: "Tragedy in the Holy Land: The Second Uprising," 2008
 Session on film on Palestine: "Caged Bird Sings", 2009
 Two sessions on the August 79 strike movement in preparation for LALIT Congress: Rajni Lallah and Ally Hosenbokus
 September, 1980 Mass uprising: Alain Ah-Vee and Rada Kistnasamy
 The Working Class in Crisis Times: Ram Seegobin
 Internationalism in Crisis Times: Lindsey Collen
 The Rise of Fascism in 3 countries in Europe (comparing the different forms taken): Italy, Germany, Spain: Ram Seegobin
 The Rise of Fascist Ideology: Alain Ah-Vee
 China: Its Rise within Capitalist Economic Production: Ragini Kistnasamy
 China: The Class Situation: Rada Kistnasamy
 Lessons of the August 79 Strike Movement: Ram Seegobin
 Telling about the August 79 strike movement: Ragini Kistnasamy
 Telling about the August 79 strike movement

8. Elections and Electoral Campaigns in the Bourgeois State Apparatus

In the electoral campaign for General Elections of 2005, we aligned 32 LALIT candidates and had candidates in all constituencies; we prepared and popularized our program whose main thrust was "Confronting the systemic crisis that is accompanying the fall of the sugar and textiles as main employers" and the need for an alternative economy, in terms of what is produced and who decides. Ally Hosenbokus, LALIT candidate for the by-election just before general elections, prepared our program, then election cancelled as National Assembly was dissolved, 2005. LALIT prepared a party program for Village Elections, 2005. LALIT prepared a party program for Municipal Elections, 2005. Rada Kistnasamy, LALIT candidate in by-election in Constituency No 8 Moka – Quartier Militaire. Prepared program, popularized it during campaign.

9. Electoral Reform

-LALIT continued its campaign to replace the communalist Best Loser by some form of proportional representation – a struggle in which we have been in the vanguard for years. LALIT made it clear that we are not just struggling for a “5th community of conscientious objectors to auto-classification”, but want the entire system dismantled. Our position is in our 230 page book on the subject, published in 2005.

-ISPD Rajni Lallah and Ram Seegobin were speakers on their panel on Electoral Reform organized at the University of Mauritius, 2006.

-Numerous newspaper and web articles clarifying our position.

10 Drugs, drug addiction and AIDS

Following our meeting with the association PILS, LALIT drafted and then launched a *Charter on Aids and Rational Policy on Drug Addiction*. Many organizations signed up. This is the culmination of years of struggle since our very first program for a rational drugs policy. To give an idea of the shift that our actions have brought about, we were alone at the time of the 1984 Select Committee on Drugs. One of the Ministers on the Committee, when we went to give evidence, said that “all” the social workers in the country, and everyone else who had given evidence, supported more repression as the only solution. That our ideas were supported by no-one. So, it is something of a LALIT victory that now the idea of syringe-exchanges is already in practice, the use of drugs like methadone for weaning addicts off opiates is being sponsored by the State, while the decriminalization of some drugs, and treatment for addicts who want it, are fairly well supported ideas today.

This part of LALIT’s program is linked to the idea of a socialist society one day, because it attacks the kind of repression that present day society uses as the response to all social problems. It also potentially frees people from police control; people who use substances that are illicit while they are illicit, are sitting ducks to become police informers, while drug dealers almost invariably are. This weakens any struggle. Any small or big mafia depends for its power over neighbourhoods on the continued illegality of substances used by people, and the mafia is always an enemy of socialist revolution.

11 Police Violence

This has been an important theme in LALIT’s program and actions since 1979 when Serge Victorine was killed by police officers after being re-arrested after the prison mutiny and the mass break-out. We see police violence as the most crude expression in the country of the violence of the bourgeois State. It is important to be able to confront officers who use violence, and to halt it.

LALIT was amongst the organizations, and perhaps it was the leading one, in the process of setting up the organization “JUSTICE: ASSOCIATION AGAINST VIOLENCE BY OFFICERS OF THE STATE”, which has, in turn, exposed police violence, and theoretized, as LALIT has too, the meaning of this institutionalized State violence. We wrote articles like “10 Steps against Police Brutality”, 2006, in the daily Press, and commentaries on the first-ever judgment under the new anti-torture laws. LALIT and JUSTICE’s positions made the political space necessary for the Director of Public Prosecutions to be able to have to appeal against the not-guilty verdict, 2009

LALIT criticized the National Human Rights Commission formally, and called on its members to resign. Judge Seetulsing replied to LALIT through the Press, 2007.

12 Slavery and Reparations

LALIT’s campaign for reparations for slavery, a campaign launched with a big petition-signing movement, from 1994-1996, situates slavery in the history of the working class in Mauritius, and in the history of the capitalist system world-wide. This is important for class consciousness, which is in turn important for a socialist revolution. This issue is now centre-stage in Mauritius, and 1st February has become a Public Holiday. We have constantly at the same time opposed the racial interpretations of slavery, and campaign against racism and race classification (in ordinary life as well as in politics) as being one of the worst sequels of slavery.

Throughout these 5 years, we have had articles on the issue. And we prepared and submitted a 50-page written statement to the Truth and Justice Commission on Slavery and Indenture, 2009, a Commission which is still sitting. We exposed the problem within the Commission which was not functioning at all, by means of a walk-out that received press coverage. We also showed its two elements: a genuine investigation into historical crimes of a class nature, on the one hand, and on the other, a pre-electoral stunt based on race and community.

13. Books Written/Published by LALIT in these 5 Years

These and our other publications can be ordered from us:

LALIT Program for an Alternative Economy – Bilingual booklet, 2005 (84 pages) (sold out)

Against Communalism: The Best Loser System, 2005 (230 pages) (sold out)

The Manifesto by Marx & Engels in Kreol: 2005 (with audio cassette in Kreol)

Program on Education, 2006

What Needs to be Done? Speeches by Ram Seegobin, Jean Claude Bibi, Oupa Le hulere, with Intro by Lindsey Collen, 2007 (212 pages)

The State ("Leta") edited by Rajni Lallah, 2008 (200 pages)

Palestine Diaries by Ragini Kistnasamy, "Dayeri Palestinn", 2008

Kreol version of Rosa Luxembourg's "The Accumulation of Capital", 2008

Class ("Klas"), edited by Alain Ah-Vee, 2009 (266 pages)

Palestine Newsletter on Gaza Freedom March, 2010.

What other party has produced this volume of written political analysis in the past 5 years? The MMM has nothing but a very wishy-washy weekly, Labour has nothing to show for itself, and nor does the MSM.

For a party with socialism as our aim, we need continually to educate ourselves, to relate the past to the present and the future, and to broaden the influence of our ideas. New members need to be able to "catch up" at a rhythm and rate of their own. For all this, printed material is important.

14 Actions not so easy to classify

Court cases on trumped up charges from when Paul Berenger was in Government, against Ram Seegobin and Lindsey Collen. Both members were finally found not guilty of "molesting police officer" when the police were trying to spy on a common front meeting that was preparing a demonstration against George Bush due to visit Mauritius (visit cancelled because he invaded Iraq at the time). The charges were so trumped up that in Lindsey Collen's case the police had misread their own hand-writing. An officer had thought he had noted down that Lindsey had said a police officer was a "mutuk", which means a "grub", when he had in fact written "mustas", meaning "moustache". (She was asking whether someone was referring to a "moustached" police officer.

Another Court case: Criminal charges against Roland Fauzoo and an ex-member ended in a not-guilty charge for being "Rogue and Vagabond" when they were visiting a victim of police brutality at his house. (The police turned the victim into an accuser.) Our member put in civil charges, won damages, and made a donation to LALIT.

The Court Case Against our Member, Alain Ah-Vee and unionist Atma Shunto, for defamation, brought by the bosses of Happy World, following a poster campaign in which the bosses were accused of taking too much profit, was finally withdrawn unconditionally by the bosses.

Lindsey Collen, speaker at Media Watch event, "Women in Politics" 2005

Ally Hosenbokus, speaker at Amnesty Forum on Youth, 2008

Two LALIT members spoke at an Amnesty night vigil on Gaza, Ragini Kistnasamy and Alain Ah-Vee, who have both been to Palestine, 2009

Meetings in Flacq and Rose-Hill on the Financial Crisis, Lindsey Collen, 2007

15. LALIT Congresses

January 2005: LALIT Congress on an Alternative Economy.

Congress on the Role of a Revolutionary Party in times of Crisis (2006), Oupa Lehulere amongst those who spoke.

Congress on Socialism Today, where Neville Alexander was amongst those who spoke. (2007)

Congress on Internationalism Today in Times of Crisis (2009), Leon Cremieux of the Nouveau Parti Anti-Capitaliste in France, and of the Fourth International spoke.

Congress on Remember August 79 Strike Movement, (2009) – with workers who were in the strike speaking, too.

16 Positions taken Publicly by LALIT, and polemics

On the mosquito-transmitted disease Chikungunya, 2006, “In Praise of Truth”, an article in the daily press.

“Hunger Strike as Means of Struggle,” 2007, an article in the daily press

Aquatic Business Act, 2007, an article in the daily press.

New Labour Laws, constant taking of position, 2006-9

Remission must be re-installed in Prisons, 2005, an article in the daily press.

Call for the DPP to be made more accountable, 2005, an article in the daily press

What is politics, when it is not electoral? 2008

Reply from Espitalier Noel, sugar boss leader of MSPA to LALIT’s campaign, 2008

Reply by Gilbert Ahnee to LALIT’s criticism of the Press, 2007

LALIT decided to publish the abusive attack by Jack Bizlall on LALIT, specially against two women members, 2008

Reply by Judge Seetulsing, NHRC to LALIT’s criticism of the National Human Rights Commission, 2007

Reply from and meeting with Bishop Piat, 2007

Correspondence between La Croix Rouge and LALIT over the possibility of inspections for “rendering” on Diego Garcia, 2008

LALIT features in House of Lords judgment on Diego Garcia, 2008

Many members speak in public in favour of decriminalization of abortion, during 2009, when the subject was being discussed everywhere.

A number of members spoke in public against police violence, and many articles in LALIT’s name were published.

(Many of these positions can be found in our “news archives” on our website.

17 Ideology and debates

- The occasional column on the LALIT website “Mauritius media at a glance” that Ram Seegobin writes, is a constant counter-weight to the bourgeois ideology of the commercial press. The series exposes the press for what it actually is. And it does this with humour.

-During these 5 years, we have cleared up two or three important matters in recent history:

- The role of major personalities in the local media in the plot the MMM hatched against LALIT, by means of corrupting our then ally, the OMT-FNAS and the leaders of 2 trade union federations, getting them to take the role of phantom candidates who say vote MMM, as Gaetan Duval had previously done with lining up POP-FMI candidates to say vote for their alliance.

- The role of the press in the 2005 elections and then later in the by-election in 2009.

We have also shared very precisely our ideas with our supporters and with the public (more precisely than before) on:

- What is a revolutionary party?

- What is a party militant, or party cadre in a revolutionary party?

- What, if any, is the content of the programs of other left groups in Mauritius? Is it “left”?

- What is “the State”?

- Why would it be a defeat if the Government introduces a 5th “community” so as to stabilize the best loser, that is to say a community of those who object to classifying themselves, when they stand for election, while the whole corrupt system of classification continues as usual?

- What is “Class”?

- What is the content of trade union bureaucratization? The phenomenon that trade union leaders strengthen themselves on the backs of the weakness of the very class they represent?

- We have come up with analyses that are totally new to us, though the content of them was always there:

- Marx's philosophy is clearly based on "ecology", and he is a joint founder of the concept. The John Bellamy Foster book proves this beautifully. He also shows how Stalinism banned this current in Marxism, needing to industrialize at any price, while other important Marxist thinkers were not knowledgeable about the physical and biological sciences, while others still refused the use of dialectical materialism for anything else except "ideology", partly fearing the right-wing "social Darwinist" currents, based more on Malthus than on Darwin. All this to say that from 1923-24 onwards the ecological current in Marxism was suppressed, and it survived only as Marxism amongst scientists, not so much in the political sphere.

18 Art

Many LALIT posters were chosen for the national exhibition of political graphics held in Castel in 2005, and published in the British Council book *Upfront and Personal*, 2005.

Politics and Comics for Change, is a series of youth workshops in LALIT run by Alain Ah-Vee, 2007.

LALIT member Rajni Lallah has continued to play in the best of concerts, like the LPT organized "A4" program together with the play-reading of Le Morne, for Slavery Abolition Day, 2009.

LALIT member Lindsey Collen has continued over the past five years to receive praise and awards for her literary novels.

We have analyzed the way in which the Ministry of Tourism has put thugs in charge of tearing down posters, painting big black crosses on them, and generally closing down a form of artistic expression, reserving it for commercial advertisements. Since then laws have been passed outlawing posters. With this important means of struggle banned, we have decided to find new ways of transforming visual space available into a place for struggle.

19 Electronic Developments in LALIT

Our web-site, despite 4 hackings in 2009, has continued to get more and more visits. 260,000 hits in 2009. Our replacement web-site after the hackings is still not completely up and running, but will hopefully be soon. Through our web site we have had some recruitment. And our site is like a window through which people can see into our party, and get an idea of it. We found this year that it has been essential to continue to make copies of every web article, for distribution in LALIT branches, otherwise a division is created in the Party between those with (easy) internet connection and those with not-so-easy (or no) internet connection.

Our archives of press cuttings and documents is being put into electronic form, a vast enterprise. We are fortunate to have members who are world experts in this domain.

Some party work is also now helped by the advent of SMS.

20 Themes that LALIT has long agitated around that have become central recently:

-The economy: what with the end of the EU preferences, the economy is page one and first item on all media; we have been putting the economy (and the fact that this is the main content of politics, or should be) since 1983, if not since 1976.

- Free zone fragility: a campaign begun in 1976

- Need for exchange control – everyone talks about it now.

- To prevent provoked depreciation of the rupee.

- Against the destruction of jobs – in favour of converting units threatened with closure into other forms of production.

- The need for price controls – now in the news, since the oil and then the food crisis.

- The debate on free transport, now taken up by university students.

- LALIT launched a petition, signed by many organizations, to make Mauritius a GMO free area. This is now spoken about a great deal.
- We were against the war on Iraq, and we said it was illegal. Today the Chilcot Commission is hearing all the legal advice that called the war illegal. There were no “weapons of mass destruction”.
- Diego Garcia: This is one of LALIT’s longest standing campaigns, and for the past year, it has been main headlines almost every week. The three issues: reparations, re-unification of the country, and base closure are all on the agenda.
- We exposed the nature of the WTO before it existed. What we said about it is gradually becoming common knowledge. The same about GATS, under the WTO.
- The Palestinian struggle has been important in LALIT for 30 years; now it has become everyone’s concern.
- The need to decriminalize abortion is now centre stage; all the parties are now in favour, although they still do not have the courage to bring in the law that is needed.
- Violence against women is discussed openly now by almost everyone; it has been on LALIT’s agenda for years, while other parties shied away from the subject.
- Or struggle against the Industrial Relations Act over 30 years helped to delay the new worse industrial laws, the EReA and EriA.
- Against police brutality: a subject that only LALIT used to take up, and we bore the stupid criticisms that we were “protecting criminals”, etc.
- Village elections have been re-introduced after LALIT’s campaign.
- The Best loser is still being contested, a LALIT campaign.
- Those against the Kreol language are finally giving up – LALIT is the only party that has kept up the pressure for over 30 years; while the MMMSP was alive, it did.
- Housing is still a major problem; but instead political parties and editorialists blaming the poor, since LALIT set up and organized the homeless people in “Muvman Lakaz” to raise their voices, to do sit-ins and demonstrations, the debate has changed.
- Drugs: LALIT has held with this subject until it is now centre stage.
- Health as a right: this concept too is a LALIT one, from our Program Document “People’s Health” which the MMM turned down, through members’ massive contribution to the Bambous Health Project co-operative, LALIT has shown the way to preventive health. Today AIDS is forcing the issue of prevention on to the agenda.
- Universal Human Rights: the LALIT campaign on rights as the very minimum, and the need to take power, is making headway now.

Conclusion

So, if ever LALIT decides not to put up candidates for the next General Elections, we need not be worried that our only political work in 5 years won’t take place! There are probably many things left out of this Report.

After preparing this Draft Report my conclusion is I’m not sure there is any other political party in Mauritius with such rich political production and mobilization in five years. So, this brings me to ask myself, “And what exactly is ‘a big party’, then?” If not us.

Prepared from a Paper delivered in Kreol
on 31 January at a LALIT Members’ Assembly,
by LCC.

(This paper was part of a series of discussion papers presented at a LALIT 3-day Assembly on 30 and 31 January, and 1 February, 2010)

- o Rada Kistnasamy on a Report on 5-years of political work by the Labour Party’s Socialist Alliance, the MMM and the MSM;
- o Internationalism in LALIT, including an outline of the content of our internationalism, plus report-backs from the Gaza Freedom March and the War Resisters International conference in India;
- o Rajni Lallah on the economic, political and social forces pushing towards a Labour-MMM coalition, and what makes it nevertheless difficult;

- Ram Seegobin on the proposal for a left common platform, in a “facts only” account of 32 years of convergence and divergence with others on the left and often on the “left”, elucidating their trajectory.)