

SEP public meeting

The political crisis in Sri Lanka: the way forward for the working class

16 December 2003

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is holding a public meeting in Colombo to examine the roots of the present crisis of bourgeois rule in Sri Lanka and to advance an alternative socialist perspective for the working class. The six-week political standoff between the president and the government is the product of an intractable and intense conflict within the ruling class. Neither the faction pursuing the so-called peace process in the hope of transforming the island into a cheap labour platform, nor its opponents who would plunge the country back into civil war have anything to do with the interests of the working class.

The lecture will outline the far-reaching economic and strategic shifts within the region and internationally that have compelled the Sri Lankan ruling elite to attempt an abrupt change in their basic orientation. It will review, in particular, the impact of the violent eruption of US militarism on the Indian subcontinent. The protracted conflicts in the region, which Washington has all but ignored for decades, have become obstacles to its geo-political and economic ambitions. The US and other major powers have been pressuring Colombo and the LTTE to reach a powersharing deal to end the war and allow the ruling elites—Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim—to intensify their exploitation of the working class.

This “peace process,” however, has come up against entrenched Sinhala chauvinism, which has formed the ideological basis for the Sri Lankan ruling class since independence in 1948. The lecture will review the key historical turning points, in particular the betrayal of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) in 1964, which created a political vacuum that was filled with the poison of communal politics, culminating in 1983 in the outbreak of a civil war that has cost the lives of at

least 60,000 people over the past 20 years. All of the major parties, including the so-called workers parties—the LSSP, NSSP and CP—are mired in reactionary communalism, which has been exploited time and time again to divide the working class and divert attention from the profound social and economic problems for which none of them have any solutions.

The SEP is the only political party that has opposed the war from the outset and championed an independent socialist solution for the working class. We have waged a consistent political struggle against all forms of nationalism—Sinhala chauvinism and Tamil exclusivism—in order to unify workers regardless of religion, race or language on the basis of their common class interests. The SEP calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Sri Lankan troops from the north and east of the island. We seek to mobilise the working class to establish a socialist republic of Sri Lanka and Eelam, as part of the fight for socialism throughout the Indian subcontinent and internationally.

We urge all *World Socialist Web Site* readers in Sri Lanka to attend the SEP meeting in Colombo and to participate in the discussion of these vital political issues.

Speaker: Wije Dias, SEP General Secretary

December 18, 4 p.m.

Venue: Boy Scouts Hall,
(Behind People’s Bank head office),
Colombo-2



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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