

SEP candidates speak on Sri Lankan TV

9 March 2004

Socialist Equality Party candidates in the Sri Lankan elections delivered a three-minute address in three languages—Sinhala, Tamil and English—on a privately-owned TV network on Sunday evening. The Sinhala channel is named SIRASA, the Tamil channel SHAKTHI and the English channel MTV. All three are very popular with viewers and have significant audiences. The network provides equivalent time for all officially recognised parties.

SEP General Secretary Wije Dias, who heads the party's slate in Colombo, gave the short speech in Sinhala and English. M. Devaraja, who is a member of the SEP's Political Committee, read the same address in Tamil. A number of viewers immediately phoned the party's office to convey their support for the SEP's policy and perspective, and asked to be provided with further details. Below is the text of the speech.

The Socialist Equality Party is standing a slate of candidates in the Colombo district to provide a socialist solution to the pressing issues confronting the working class: the threat of war, attacks on democratic rights and plummeting living standards.

The SEP is the only party that offers a progressive alternative to the crisis into which the entire political establishment has plunged the country. This election has nothing to do with the democratic rights of the Sri Lankan people but is the product of deep-going divisions in the country's ruling elite provoked by the so-called peace process.

Having ignored Sri Lanka's disastrous civil war for years, Washington, New Delhi and other powers having been pushing the "peace process" because the conflict has now become an obstacle to their economic and strategic ambitions in South Asia. Big business in Colombo supports the peace talks because it wants to transform the island into a cheap labour platform for global capital.

The ruling class, however, has relied for decades on Sinhala chauvinism to divide the working class and

prop up bourgeois rule. In arbitrarily dismissing the elected government, President Kumaratunga is resting directly on powerful entrenched interests, particularly in the military and state apparatus, whose careers and profits are bound up with continuing the civil war. Her new alliance with the Sinhala chauvinist JVP, which regards any peace deal with the LTTE as tantamount to treason, threatens to plunge the country back into a disastrous conflict that has already cost tens of thousands of lives. The old "workers" parties—the LSSP and CP—have joined the alliance and completely accommodated themselves to this agenda.

Prime Minister Wickremesinghe and his right-wing UNF offer no alternative. Aligned with the dominant corporate layers in Colombo, the UNF has sought a power-sharing arrangement with the LTTE for the mutual exploitation of the working class—Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim alike. The various "peace" proposals for the North and East, far from ending communal divisions, would institutionalise them, paving the way for future conflicts. Like Kumaratunga, Wickremesinghe has committed himself to imposing the IMF's economic restructuring agenda that has only deepened the social chasm between rich and poor.

The SEP, like its predecessor the RCL, has opposed the racist war against the Tamil people from the start and demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Sri Lankan military forces from the North and East. While rejecting the forcible maintenance of the unitary state, we give no political support to the LTTE or its anti-democratic, separatist and capitalist program.

The SEP calls for the abolition of the 1978 constitution and all of its anti-democratic and communal provisions. We demand the immediate repeal of the draconian security laws and all legislation that discriminates on the basis of religion, race, language or gender.

The SEP opposes all forms of chauvinism and racism.

We stand for the reconstruction of society to meet the economic, social and cultural needs of the majority, not the profit requirements of the wealthy few. This is an international, not a national, task and requires a unified struggle by workers in Sri Lanka with their class brothers and sisters around the world. We advocate the establishment of the Socialist United States of Sri Lanka and Eelam as an integral part of the socialist transformation of society throughout the Indian subcontinent and globally.

The SEP calls on workers, the unemployed, housewives, students, intellectuals and others who agree with these policies to support our campaign and vote for our candidates. Above all, we urge you to study our program, which is available on our web site, the *World Socialist Web Site*, the internet centre of the world Trotskyist movement, and to apply to join our party.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact