

Socialist Equality Party (Australia) 2007 federal election statement

A socialist program to fight war, social inequality and the assault on democratic rights

16 October 2007

The Socialist Equality Party calls on all working people and youth throughout Australia to support our campaign for the November 24, 2007 federal election and our candidates in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.

The SEP is standing in order to build a socialist movement in opposition to the entire political establishment—Liberal, Labor and Greens. Our aim is to unite working people in Australia and throughout the world to put an end to the social and economic system responsible for militarism and war, repression, social inequality and environmental disaster.

The Howard government enters the election campaign in a deep crisis, amid bitter recriminations fuelled by opinion polls indicating it will be swept from office. Even Prime Minister John Howard faces the prospect of losing his seat. His predicament is the product of a significant political shift within broad sections of the population.

Growing numbers of people are repulsed by the government's politics of fear and lies. The vast majority opposes the war in Iraq, and wants Australian troops immediately withdrawn. Yet there is no means for this opposition to find any expression within the official political framework.

One year ago, the American people demonstrated their opposition to the Iraq war by repudiating the Republican Party and giving the Democrats a majority in both houses of Congress. Since then, the Democrat-controlled Congress has backed the war to the hilt, voting for Bush's murderous "surge", along with every funding bill. The Democrats have also committed to backing a military strike on Iran.

If the Labor Party wins office it will do precisely the same. It has never opposed the Iraq war; its "differences" have been purely tactical. While Labor leader Kevin Rudd is cynically trying to benefit from deepening antiwar sentiment, his commitment to withdraw "combat" troops is so fraudulent that even the Murdoch press has labelled it a "con".

Like the Australian Democrats and Greens, Labor will join the government and media campaign to suppress any discussion of the Iraq war, or the danger of further wars.

Labor's agreement with the Howard government extends to every area of policy. This has become so all-encompassing that the terms coined to describe it—"bear hug politics" and "me-tooism"—fail to capture the extent of bipartisanship dominating Australian political life. Millions of ordinary people have become effectively disenfranchised.

Labor's support for government policy is not simply an electoral ploy. It represents the party's real political outlook—the embrace of the "free market" and the scrapping of every last vestige of social reform. Rudd's campaign is directed at reassuring the corporate elite that, like the Hawke and Keating Labor governments in the 1980s and 1990s, Labor will fully implement their requirements, no matter what the social consequences.

Whichever party wins the election, none of the pressing problems

confronting ordinary working people will be resolved. The Socialist Equality Party insists that the most important issue is not the defeat of the Howard government. It is the development of a new mass political movement, based on a socialist program and perspective, to fight the eruption of militarism and war, to defend and expand democratic rights and to eradicate poverty.

A new period of militarism and war

Six years since the invasion of Afghanistan and nearly five since the occupation of Iraq all the lies told by Bush, Howard and Blair have been thoroughly exposed. The Bush administration launched the wars, not to fight terrorism or establish "democracy" but to establish US domination of the critical oil resources of Central Asia and the Middle East. More than one million Iraqis have died, and four million turned into refugees. Over 4,000 American and other foreign troops are dead, and Iraqi society has been effectively destroyed.

Now Washington is preparing to extend its predatory aggression to Iran—with potentially catastrophic consequences for the entire world. Every major power, including Russia, China, Japan and Germany is rearming. Australia has joined in—sending troops to Afghanistan and Iraq in order to win US backing for its own military operations. Canberra's deployments to East Timor and the Solomon Islands are not driven by humanitarian concerns but aimed at securing Australian corporate interests, and those of the United States, throughout the Pacific region against the growing influence of China and other rival powers.

This eruption of militarism is the expression of a systemic crisis in world politics and economy.

Six decades ago, the United States emerged from World War II as the undisputed leader of the global capitalist system. Today it has lost its overwhelming economic supremacy. Facing challenges on every front—from its old rivals in Europe and Asia as well as new ones, such as China and India—the US is using its military pre-eminence to maintain its domination. The rivalries and conflicts extend to every corner of the world, from the Middle East and Central Asia, to Africa, the South Pacific, and even the Arctic.

A striking resemblance exists between the early years of the twenty-first century and the beginning of the twentieth. Then, conflicts between the great powers—Germany, Britain, France and the US—driven by the search for profits, raw materials and spheres of influence—eventually erupted in World War I, and the even greater catastrophe of World War II.

The danger of war cannot be averted by protests—no matter how large or powerful—or by the replacement of one capitalist party with another. The working class itself must intervene through the struggle for a program aimed at tackling the problem at its source—the global capitalist system and its division of the world into competing nation states. Society must be reorganised rationally and on an international scale, to meet human need and not the dictates of profit. The only way to end the destructive conflicts created by the capitalist nation-state system is to forge the international unity of the working class in the fight for an internationally planned and democratically controlled socialist economy.

The SEP's candidates call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US, Australian and other foreign troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. Our campaign demands that all the architects of the war—in Washington, London and Canberra—be placed on trial for war crimes, and that the allied powers, including Australia, make reparations to the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan for the damage and suffering inflicted by the war, as well as compensation to the families of the killed and wounded coalition soldiers.

While the Howard government was finally forced, by the strength of public opposition, to obtain the repatriation of David Hicks—the young Australian illegally detained for five years in Guantánamo Bay—the SEP demands the release of the hundreds of other prisoners captured in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and still being held by the US in prisons and detention camps around the world, in defiance of international law.

The SEP calls for the immediate withdrawal of all Australian military and police personnel from East Timor and the countries of the South Pacific, and the allocation of the resources necessary to construct decent housing and social infrastructure—including schools and hospitals—for the local populations.

We fight for a socialist foreign policy, based on international working class solidarity. This includes the rescinding of the ANZUS Treaty, the closure of all US military facilities in Australia, including Pine Gap, and the ending of all Australian intelligence operations against the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region and at home. It also includes the disbanding of the entire Australian military apparatus, and the utilisation of the resources for socially useful purposes, including the building of badly needed infrastructure—in Australia and throughout the region.

The SEP condemns the current campaign to glorify the military and any plans to revive conscription. Unable to meet its recruitment targets, the government is preying upon young people, especially the unemployed and those in regional areas with no prospect of a permanent job—trying to dragoon them into the armed services as a means of securing a career.

An unprecedented assault on democratic rights

Like the Bush administration, the Howard government has utilised the fraudulent “war on terror” to launch an unprecedented assault on democratic rights. The cumulative effect of its more than 40 anti-terror laws has been to cede to government ministers wide-ranging arbitrary powers; to jettison fundamental civil liberties and democratic rights and to sanction the domestic use of military and paramilitary forces to suppress political dissent and social unrest.

* Life imprisonment can be imposed without any evidence of a specific

terrorist act or plot.

* The centuries-old principle of habeas corpus has been swept aside with the introduction of four different types of detention without trial, including “preventative detention”. The recent—in the end, unsuccessful—Australian Federal Police and government witch hunt of Dr Mohammed Haneef established a precedent for indefinite detention without criminal charge.

* Free speech has been directly attacked by criminalising “advocacy” of terrorism—which can mean calling for an understanding of its root causes—and by extending the law of sedition to outlaw “urging support” for resistance to Australian military interventions overseas.

* Political groups can now be proscribed by ministerial order.

* The right to an open public trial has been severely eroded. Those charged with terrorist offences can be convicted behind closed doors without any right to access secret evidence submitted to the court against them. Moreover, “terrorism” has been defined so widely that it can now cover many forms of political and industrial action.

The Socialist Equality Party demands the repeal of all federal and state “anti-terror” laws.

The SEP insists that the real target of the anti-terror measures is not terrorists but ordinary people—as revealed in the extraordinary police-military mobilisation against protestors during the recent APEC summit in Sydney. Less than three weeks later, dozens of riot police and dog squad officers attacked sacked truck drivers protesting against their employer in Seven Hills, Sydney and demanding their entitlements.

Behind the attack on democratic rights lies the growing disparity between the social conditions of the mass of ordinary people and a privileged and powerful layer at the top. The social tensions arising from deepening social inequality and unpopular military operations cannot be contained by democratic means. This is the impetus behind the establishment of authoritarian forms of rule and a police state.

Deepening social tensions and alienation from the major parties is also the impetus behind the government’s restrictive measures, supported by Labor and the Greens, aimed at preventing minor parties from standing candidates in elections under their party name, and thereby challenging the two-party system. New laws also strip many prisoners of the right to vote, and mandate the closing of the electoral rolls within 24 hours of the issuing of electoral writs. This measure alone will disenfranchise some hundreds of thousands of first-time, young voters.

The Socialist Equality Party demands the immediate repeal of every anti-democratic electoral measure, and insists on the unrestricted right of every party to stand candidates under the party name.

At the same time as fighting for the defence of every past gain, the SEP advocates a far-reaching expansion of democratic rights, starting with a fundamental restructure of the political system itself. The preferential voting system, which was established to shore up the major parties, must be abolished and replaced with a system of proportional representation, in which all parties that receive a significant share of the vote are represented in both houses of parliament. The SEP insists on the right of all candidates to have equal access to the electronic and print media, as well as the right to participate in all election debates.

The Socialist Equality Party demands equal rights for all, and insists that all discrimination based on nationality, ethnic background, religion, gender or sexual preference be outlawed. We defend the right of women to unrestricted abortion on demand, and uphold the right of homosexuals to marry and receive the same rights and benefits as other married couples. We oppose the death penalty everywhere. We demand that refugees held in detention centres be released immediately and all forms of immigration control and restriction lifted. Workers must have the right to live and work wherever they wish, with full citizenship rights and full access to social benefits.

The SEP condemns the government’s police-military intervention into

the Northern Territory (NT)—carried out through the suspension of the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act—as a monstrous assault on the democratic rights of the Aboriginal people. Its aim is not the well-being of Aboriginal children, but to force communities off potentially lucrative land, and to set a precedent for slashing welfare for the entire working class. We demand the immediate withdrawal of all military forces from the NT. Aboriginal people must have the democratic right to decide their own future, free from state harassment and coercion. **The essential issue is not “reconciliation”, or constitutional “recognition”, but the unification of the working class, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, in the struggle against the social and economic order responsible for the heinous crimes against the Aboriginal population—the global capitalist profit system.**

A deepening crisis in the global economy

The fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system that give rise to war—between world economy and the nation state, and between socialised production and private ownership—are expressed in the other scourge of the 1930s, a world economic crisis. The collapse of the American sub-prime mortgage market—in which more than 220,000 American families lost their homes in the month of September 2007 alone, and another 2 million are projected to follow—has revealed the extent to which the global financial system has become dependent on speculation and outright parasitism. The scenes of ordinary people queuing in Britain outside the offices of a failed bank likewise points to the precarious nature of the entire system. The creation of ever-greater amounts of credit and the use of increasingly complex financial instruments have created a system that central bankers openly acknowledge they do not fully understand, let alone know how to control.

These vast global processes make a mockery of the claims by Howard that his government has led Australia’s “ten-year economic boom” and “unprecedented prosperity”. The recent economic growth has rested on two highly unstable foundations: expanding sales of raw materials to China and increased domestic spending, financed by rapidly rising levels of debt. Even a minor downturn, let alone a significant recession, will result in social disaster.

Here, as in the rest of the world, the livelihood and social position of working people—the creators of all wealth—is at the mercy of anarchic global market forces, which can shift virtually overnight.

At the same time, enormous advances in technology and labour productivity have created the possibility for the entire world’s population to live in health and comfort. The globalisation of production has established the conditions for the planning and organisation of world economy on a rational basis. But this requires ending the subordination of the productive forces to the dictates of corporate profit and utilising them, instead, to meet the needs of all humanity.

Social polarisation

All over the world, the gulf between rich and poor is widening. Recent statistics in the US reveal that in 2005, the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans earned a staggering 21.2 percent of all income, the highest amount ever. At the other pole, the bottom 50 percent earned just 12.8 percent of all income. In other words, the income of the richest 3 million people was nearly twice as much as the income of the poorest 150 million.

Australia is rapidly becoming one of the most unequal of the advanced capitalist societies. A financial aristocracy, wallowing in obscene levels of wealth, dominates political and economic life, while millions of ordinary people, suffering the effects of a decades-long assault on working conditions and wages, have been effectively marginalised. A new and vast category has been created: the working poor.

According to a survey by *Business Review Weekly*, the richest 200 individuals have a combined wealth of \$128 billion, an extraordinary increase of 26.7 percent from last year—the biggest rise in the history of the survey. At the other end of the scale, more than 3.5 million people live in households earning a combined income of less than \$400 a week, and as many as 4.1 million—22.6 percent of the population—live below the poverty line.

The statistics explode the official myth of universal “economic prosperity” and Howard’s astonishing claim that “Australia’s working families have never been better off”: the richest 20 percent own nearly 67 percent of all wealth, while according to the Reserve Bank, the poorest 20 percent own just 0.2 percent.

During the past few years, the costs of everyday life have soared, particularly for hospital, medical and dental expenses, fuel, food, housing and child care. Many major urban centres, including Sydney and Melbourne, are suffering a “rental crisis”, with record low vacancy rates and escalating rents. A series of recent interest rate rises has had devastating consequences for large numbers of working people struggling to pay off their mortgages. Home repossessions have skyrocketed, inflicting misery on thousands of families. In Sydney’s working class western suburbs of Liverpool and Fairfield, for example, one in every 200 homes was subject to a court-ordered eviction in 2006. The figures for 2007 are expected to be far worse.

Economic and job insecurity, caused by high levels of personal debt and the casualisation of employment—now at 28 percent of the workforce, or 2.3 million casual workers—is creating unbearable strains and tensions in the daily lives of millions. These are leading, in turn, to the explosion of myriad social problems, including family breakdown, mental illness, alcoholism and drug addiction, all at record levels.

The SEP’s socialist program

The Socialist Equality Party advances a program for the reorganisation of the Australian and world economy in the interests of the majority. Instead of the present setup, where the major industries, banks and financial institutions are privately owned and controlled, we advocate the creation of a socialist system of public ownership and the fullest democratic control over the economic policies and priorities of society. Only when social need, not private profit, becomes the organising principle of production and all aspects of social life, will the extraordinary human and technical resources that are now available be utilised to provide a better living standard and safe environment for all.

*** The SEP advocates public ownership of all large privately-owned industrial, mining, service and pharmaceutical corporations, together with banking and financial institutions and privatised utilities, with full compensation to all small shareholders.** All Public-Private Partnership contracts must be cancelled. The SEP’s program does not entail the abolition of small or medium-sized businesses, or family farms, which have become victims of the giant corporations and banks. Under a planned economy, such enterprises will have ready access to cheap credit and more stable economic conditions, so long as they provide decent wages and working conditions.

*** The SEP calls for a massive program of public works to provide**

well-paid, safe and secure jobs for all. The current low official unemployment rate is a fraud. When the hidden unemployed, and grossly under-employed, are counted, the real rate is over 12 percent. Nearly 30 percent of the workforce is casual, with no set hours, security of employment or entitlement to leave and holiday pay. WorkChoices is destroying penalty rates and wages and allows employers to hire and fire at will. We advocate the cutting of the working week to 30 hours, with no loss of pay, guaranteed penalty rates and five weeks' annual leave for all employees. All workers must have the right to join a union and full legal protection from unfair dismissal. All laws against strikes and pickets must be repealed.

*** The SEP demands a fully-funded, high-class public school, university and TAFE education system.** Public education at every level is being transformed into a two-class system. By chronically under-funding, under-staffing and under-resourcing public schools at all levels, the government is carrying out a policy of creeping privatisation, forcing families to send their children to private schools—many of which enjoy lavish government subsidies. The university system is being corporatised and is increasingly reliant on business sponsorship and full-fee paying students. The SEP demands that billions of dollars be poured into education to ensure free, quality public education, including child care and kindergartens for all. Every student must have the capacity to fully develop his or her talents and capabilities. We oppose voluntary student unionism, and insist on the right of all students to access free tertiary education, along with the full range of cultural, intellectual, recreational and sporting activities that are critical to campus life.

*** The SEP advances a comprehensive program to meet the needs of young people.** Unemployment and under-employment among young people is more than double the official rate and over 30 percent in some areas. Nearly two thirds of university students receive their total income from paid employment, making it impossible to concentrate on their studies, let alone other activities. Young workers must be guaranteed well paid, full-time employment, with reduced hours on full pay for those under 21 to allow them full participation in recreational and cultural activities. We propose a vast expansion in apprenticeships and free higher education for all who wish to pursue it, including overseas students. HECS debts, totalling nearly \$18 billion, must be cancelled and tertiary students should automatically receive a living wage.

*** The SEP calls for billions to be provided to the public health system, to finance a huge expansion in staffing, training, technology and equipment.** Like public education, the government agenda in health is privatisation and “user pays”. Public health has been starved of funding and opened up to corporate interests. Public hospitals are a national disgrace, while \$3.2 billion in government funds is channelled each year into private health insurance subsidies. The SEP insists on the highest quality public health system, available freely to all, and funded to provide timely, first-class treatment for all medical conditions. We call for a massive injection of funds into public mental health facilities, including residential, and into public dental hospitals and clinics, which must also be free and available to all.

*** The SEP insists that every person, including Aborigines, immigrants and refugees, the unemployed, disabled and the aged, has the right to a living wage and decent living conditions.** The exploitation of the unemployed, sole parents and disabled as a pool of cheap labour, and the cutting or “quarantining” of welfare payments, must end. Decent, well-paid jobs and training must be provided to all. We demand the abolition of all work-for-the-dole schemes and the raising of social security and welfare benefits to a living wage. The cutting off of electricity, gas, water or telephone services to anyone must be outlawed. New, high quality public housing units must be constructed in every state and territory to provide decent and affordable housing for all. Mortgage repayments and rents must be capped at no more than 20 percent of

household income, and evictions and home repossessions outlawed. We advocate the pouring of billions of dollars into facilities for child care, as well as for the disabled, and the aged, who must have the social supports necessary, including transport, health facilities, accommodation and recreation, to lead a dignified life. Carers must receive a living wage, and first class, adequately staffed nursing homes and care centres must be made freely available to all who need them.

*** The SEP calls for a vast expansion in funding for the arts and scientific research.** Popular culture has been gutted and debased by corporate interests, and the promotion of the poisonous climate of nationalism, individualism and greed. Likewise, science is dominated by the profit motive, with patents slapped on new inventions, and the free exchange of ideas and research rendered impossible. The SEP demands a massive cultural and arts program to make music, dance, drama, art and literature available and affordable for every section of the population, along with the creation of new colleges of the arts. The resources must be made available for unrestricted and collaborative research into every area capable of enhancing the quality of life—including stem cell research.

*** The SEP advocates an internationally co-ordinated plan to combat global warming and environmental disaster.** The subordination of all human activity to the profit motive and the accumulation of personal wealth threaten to unleash an environmental catastrophe. None of the mounting environmental problems—including the water crisis, deforestation, and climate change—can be resolved within the framework of the capitalist system. The slashing of carbon emissions requires nothing less than the complete reorganisation of the world economy, taking production out of the hands of the major polluters and placing it under the democratic control of working people.

*** The SEP demands genuine freedom of speech and an end to political, intellectual and artistic censorship.** The “war on terror” has been used to intimidate and curtail freedom of speech. The mass media, increasingly monopolised by a handful of press barons and giant corporations, function as virtual propaganda outlets for the government and big business. The SEP advocates breaking up the media monopolies and placing them under public ownership and control, with access guaranteed for opposing viewpoints. Access to information and ideas is critical to genuine democracy. Free high-speed broadband must be made available to every household in the country.

The Socialist Equality Party's program cannot be realised without deep inroads being made into the vast reserves of private wealth accumulated in the hands of a few. As an initial measure, we advocate a genuinely progressive tax system to significantly lower taxes on working and middle class families while increasing taxation on the ultra-wealthy and large corporations, including closing the various tax loopholes and accounting gimmicks that allow them to avoid paying any tax.

Such measures only represent the necessary first steps. The machinery of parliamentary democracy obscures the fact that the levers of economic power are controlled by a corporate elite whose decisions are made behind the backs of the majority. Genuine democracy can be achieved only through the political mobilisation of an informed and articulate working population in the struggle for socialism. The SEP advocates the establishment of a workers' government, representing the social and economic interests of the vast majority of the population, and creating the conditions for ordinary working people to gain full democratic control over all the decisions that affect their lives.

For the political independence of the working class

Throughout the past 11 years, the Labor Party has played the pivotal

role in enabling the Howard government to carry out its criminal military deployments abroad and its assault on the economic and social position of the working class at home. The precondition for developing any genuine struggle against these attacks is the establishment of the political independence of the working class. This means the working class must make a conscious political break with the Labor Party, and with its handmaidens in the trade unions and the middle class protest organisations, who all claim that, in the final analysis, the only “realistic” alternative to the Liberals is Labor.

The history of the Labor Party demonstrates that it is organically tied to the profit system and the nation state. In every major period of crisis—World Wars I and II, the Depression, the radicalisation of the 1970s, the economic upheavals of the 1980s and 1990s—Labor has been summoned to office to subordinate the working class to the new requirements of Australian capitalism.

Major sections of big business now regard the Howard government as a squeezed lemon, incapable of prosecuting further savage attacks on jobs, wages and living standards. The main orientation of Rudd’s campaign is to prove Labor’s willingness and capacity to deliver the goods on every aspect of foreign and domestic policy.

Labor has thrown its full weight behind the “war on terror”, including the Bush administration’s aggressive wars, its detention of David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib, and Howard’s entire raft of anti-terror laws. It has backed every terror scare, the vilification and incarceration of asylum seekers and the monstrous frame-up of Dr Haneef.

Labor’s claim to offer an alternative to the Liberals on the Iraq war is totally bogus. Rudd backs the continued US occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq and will line up behind any assault on Iran. His “staged” withdrawal of combat forces would affect only a small proportion of Australia’s military contingent in the Middle East and would be done in close collaboration with the Bush administration. Under Labor, troop deployments to assist the puppet Iraqi and Afghan governments will increase, as will Australia’s military interventions in the Pacific. Rudd will not hesitate to further beef up the military and to introduce conscription as inter-imperialist conflicts in the Pacific, and elsewhere, intensify.

Over the past two decades the working class has passed through decisive experiences with the Labor Party. Under the impact of globalisation and the collapse of national regulation, the Hawke-Keating government completely abandoned the old Labor program of social reform and, under its notorious Accord with the trade unions, became the chief instrument of corporate Australia in effecting an unprecedented attack on wages, jobs, working conditions and social services. By the end of Labor’s 13 years in office, the gap between rich and poor had more than doubled. In the elections of 1996, Keating was thrown out by the biggest landslide against Labor in working class areas in history.

Lessons have to be learned from these experiences. A Rudd Labor government will not reverse the GST, or the privatisation of health and education, or the slashing of welfare or the casualisation of work. It will not reverse the disadvantage and poverty suffered by the Aboriginal people. Its opposition to Howard’s new industrial relations legislation is a fraud. Drawn up after closed door discussions with business representatives, Labor’s policy has been given the thumbs up because it retains all the essential aspects of WorkChoices. All “unauthorised” industrial action, including strikes, secondary boycotts and industry-wide wage contract bargaining, will remain illegal.

The parachuting of senior union officials—Greg Combet, Bill Shorten and Doug Cameron—into safe Labor seats should sound a sharp warning to every worker. These men, and the union apparatus of which they have been part, bear full responsibility for the crisis and insecurity confronting millions of ordinary working people. From Howard’s first budget in 1996,

the unions have worked to suppress any independent action on the part of the working class. Indeed, every struggle waged by workers to defend their rights and conditions over the past 25 years—from miners to wharfies, building and transport workers, from metal workers to teachers and nurses—has been met by the unions with sabotage, isolation and betrayal.

This is an international phenomenon. Throughout the world, the trade unions have been transformed from organisations that once pressured government and employers for minimal concessions and reforms within the framework of the profit system, to instruments for the outright disciplining and suppression of the working class.

From the outset, the unions were based on a national reformist, not socialist, perspective. But over the past quarter century this program has been shattered by the global integration of production and the demands of the major corporations for ever-greater levels of productivity. The unions have become the leading purveyors of national chauvinism, pitting workers in one country against their class brothers and sisters in others, in a downward spiral of wage and job slashing, in order to augment the international competitiveness of “their” national employers.

None of the parliamentary parties represents any genuine alternative for working people. While the Greens are hoping to boost their electoral performance by posturing as an antiwar party, their record shows otherwise. The Greens continue to support the illegal, US-led occupation of Afghanistan and to back the indefinite Australian military presence in East Timor. They are strident advocates of Australia’s deployments in the Solomon Islands, taking a leaf from the book of their German counterparts, who were part of the German coalition government that decided to participate in the 1999 bombing of Serbia, Germany’s first foreign military campaign since World War II.

For all their denunciations of the Howard government’s assault on democratic rights, and Labor’s collaboration with it, the Greens’ real position was exposed in November 2005, when they supported Howard’s anti-democratic “terror” legislation in an emergency recalled session of parliament.

The Greens promote the illusion that endemic environmental and social problems, including global warming, can be resolved within the very profit system that has created them. They are an integral part of the parliamentary two-party system, aspiring not to expose its real role, but to help lift its credibility.

When the Greens have held office—in the Tasmanian coalition government of 1989 and 1992—they collaborated in implementing austerity measures that cut thousands of public sector jobs. Greens’ leader Bob Brown has underscored the role his party will play in any future economic crises by repeatedly claiming credit for this show of “fiscal responsibility”.

The minor parties are likewise committed to the existing political set-up. This includes the Socialist Alliance (SA), which promotes Labor as the “lesser evil”. When boiled down to its essentials, the SA’s campaign is aimed at alliances with the Greens, and a Labor victory.

These manoeuvres are aimed at obscuring the central issue of this election. The two-party system cannot be pressured to meet the needs of the working class, nor will Labor be a “lesser evil”. That is why the Socialist Equality Party will not be advocating any preferences, or making “preference deals” with other parties.

The Socialist Equality Party speaks the truth: there are no easy or short-term solutions to difficult political and historical problems. There is no substitute for a patient and principled struggle, aimed at the construction of an independent mass socialist party.

The central task of the Socialist Equality Party’s campaign is to lay the political basis for the development of the SEP as that party. This will not take place through radical-sounding sloganising or other protest antics, like those of the Socialist Alliance and other middle class protest organisations. The struggle for socialism is an

international struggle, involving the political, intellectual and cultural re-awakening of working people and the development of a scientific perspective based on an assimilation of all the key political and strategic lessons of the twentieth century.

Join the fight for the socialist alternative!

The Socialist Equality Party bases itself on the great liberating traditions of the international socialist movement. Socialism means equality, human solidarity and freedom from oppression and want. We defend science, culture, and reason against all forms of censorship, obscurantism, and bigotry and seek to create a social order in which every individual can develop their talents and interests to the full. These goals are embodied in the program of the world Trotskyist party, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), and its internet centre, the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The October 1917 Russian Revolution saw a popular mass movement overthrow the capitalist order and establish the Soviet Union as the world's first workers' state. The revolution led by the Bolshevik party was bound up with, and inspired, a broader international working class struggle. In Australia, as in other countries, socialists were in the forefront of every major battle—for the eight-hour day, for the right to vote and against conscription.

However, the failure of socialist revolutions elsewhere left the first workers' state isolated in a poor and war-devastated economy, creating the conditions for the emergence, and eventual triumph, of a privileged bureaucracy, headed by Joseph Stalin. The Stalinists abandoned the internationalist program on which the Russian Revolution was based and adopted instead the anti-Marxist perspective of building "socialism in one country". This nationalist outlook provided the ideological basis for a repressive bureaucratic apparatus that destroyed Soviet democracy, suppressed the socialist opposition and sabotaged the revolutionary struggles of workers around the world.

The SEP bases itself on the legacy of the most courageous and farsighted representatives of the working class. This tradition encompasses the International Left Opposition, established by Leon Trotsky in the Soviet Union in 1923, and the Fourth International, the World Party of Socialist Revolution, founded by Trotsky in 1938. In 1972, the Socialist Labour League, the forerunner of the SEP, was founded to uphold and advance this international perspective as the Australian section of the ICFI. Our party has a long and proud record in the Australian working class. Since 1998 the SEP has collaborated with our sister parties in the ICFI in the daily development of the *World Socialist Web Site*, widely regarded as the authoritative voice of socialism and internationalism today.

The Socialist Equality Party's campaign in the November 24 elections is aimed at preparing the working class for the immense social and political struggles that lie immediately ahead, whichever party wins office. We urge everyone who agrees with our program to contact the SEP and volunteer to participate in our campaign. We encourage all supporters to become regular readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* and to help distribute our election statements as widely as possible. We especially appeal to all high school and university students to join the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE)—the world student movement of the ICFI—and to build branches on university campuses, in the TAFEs and schools.

Above all, we call on all those who oppose militarism and war, and who agree with the fight for social equality and democratic rights, to join the SEP.

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To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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