

The only genuine alternative for the working class

Vote 1 Socialist Equality Party on November 24

By Socialist Equality Party
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The Socialist Equality Party calls on all workers, students, and youth to vote for our candidates in the November 24 federal election. The SEP is standing candidates in the lower house electorates of Chifley, Parramatta, Kingsford Smith, Grayndler, Charlton and Newcastle in New South Wales, Melbourne and Calwell in Victoria, and Swan in Western Australia. We are also standing state-wide slates for the Senate in New South Wales and Victoria.

A vote for the Socialist Equality Party is a vote against militarism and war, and the illegal US-led occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is a vote for the immediate withdrawal of all US, Australian and other foreign troops from the Middle East and Central Asia. A vote for the SEP is a vote against the bogus “war on terror” and the tearing up of international law and basic democratic rights that has been carried out in its name. It is a vote against an irrational and anarchic economic system that is producing escalating social inequality in Australia and around the world and that is hurtling towards environmental disaster. A vote for the SEP is a vote for a genuinely democratic and humane society where the social needs of the vast majority take precedence over the profits of a wealthy few.

The Socialist Equality Party’s campaign has been centrally oriented towards the education and clarification of ordinary working people about the necessity of a fundamental transformation of society. Such a transformation can only take place through the building and development of the SEP as the mass party of the working class, grounded on a socialist and internationalist program, that will challenge not only the establishment parliamentary parties—including Liberal, Labor and Greens—but the capitalist profit system itself.

Throughout the campaign there has been a conspiracy of silence between all the major parties and the media over the most vital issue confronting ordinary working people—the eruption of US militarism and the threat of a new world war. Just as in the 1930s, relations between the major powers—the US, Europe, the Asian powers, Russia—have descended into bitter rivalries over resources and strategic influence. Every part of the globe has become the arena of conflict and mounting tensions—from the Middle East to the South Pacific; from the Balkans to Africa and Latin America. As his administration prepares for an assault on Iran, President Bush has already twice delivered a warning—directed especially at Russia and other US rivals in the region—that Iran may become the trigger for World War III.

No-one should be under any illusions about the stance of an incoming Rudd Labor government. Like Howard’s coalition, it will unconditionally back the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and

participate in further US-led attacks. Australian forces are already deeply involved in preparations for war against Iran, and opposition leader Kevin Rudd, if he wins, will immediately place his stamp of approval on their criminal activities. Likewise, with the support of the Greens, he will maintain and extend the Howard government’s neo-colonial interventions into East Timor, the Solomon Islands and other Pacific states, in order to advance Australian and US financial and strategic interests in the region.

The ongoing crisis of the Howard government has only deepened in the course of the six-week federal election campaign. Nothing Prime Minister Howard or any of his ministers have said or done over the past twelve months has in any way altered its downward slide in the opinion polls. According to a survey published today in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Liberal-National coalition is trailing Labor by 43 to 57 percent on a two-party preferred basis, which, if replicated on election day, will deliver a landslide to Labor. The polls reflect a vast shift in the popular mood and in the political consciousness of masses of ordinary people. There is a growing sense of hostility and disgust towards the government and the current state of political and social life. Working people regard the Howard government as dishonest and deceitful, beholden to interests entirely opposed to their own, and they want to throw it out.

Yet the more determined and broadly-based the desire for change, the more tightly the Labor party has embraced Howard’s right-wing agenda. The highlight of Rudd’s campaign, as far as business and the media are concerned, has been his pledge to launch the next wave of “free market” micro-economic reform and restructuring—that will go far further than Howard’s measures to date.

The campaign itself has witnessed the moulding and fashioning, before our very eyes, of a new right-wing government—one that will respond to the demands of the corporate elite for the removal of every impediment to the accumulation of profit and private wealth. Almost every day, the media—led by the Murdoch-owned *Australian*—have praised Rudd’s pro-business policies, and then offered advice as to what more he needs to do to secure corporate backing. The next day, the Labor leader announces new measures, adopting wholesale the recommendations of the previous day’s editorials.

Significant sections of the ruling elite have concluded that the Howard government has reached its use-by-date and have swung their support behind Labor. Several major newspapers, including the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Fairfax), Brisbane’s *Courier Mail* (Murdoch), Sydney’s *Sun-Herald* (Fairfax) and the Murdoch-owned *Sunday Telegraph*, *Daily Telegraph*, and national flag-ship *Australian*

have editorialised in favour of a Labor victory.

Any conception that a Rudd government will represent some form of “lesser evil” to the Liberals ought to be well and truly dispelled by the unanimous line-up of the Labor Party and trade unions behind Rudd. There has not been even a whimper of opposition as Rudd has repeatedly outflanked Howard from the right. To a man and woman, Labor politicians and trade union bureaucrats alike have flocked to sing Rudd’s praises as he embraces Howard’s right-wing rhetoric on refugees, democratic rights, the US alliance and jettisons any position deemed incompatible with the interests of Australian big business.

Greg Combet, former secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and present Labor candidate, told the *Australian Financial Review* on Tuesday that union rights were “a thing of the past”. He explained that Labor’s industrial relations policy—which retains all the essential elements of WorkChoices—was now based on “individual rights”. In other words, a Labor government will ruthlessly suppress collective struggle by the working class in defence of jobs, pay and conditions. Likewise, deputy Labor leader, and former “left”, Julia Gillard stated categorically on the ABC’s “Lateline” that a Labor government would act as a strikebreaker. Outside the limited window allowed during bargaining for a collective agreement, she declared, “any other form of industrial action, for whatever cause it is taken, is not protected and people should expect to feel the full force of the law.”

Coinciding with the Australian election campaign has been a series of major struggles around the world indicating that a new period of class conflict and social upheavals has already opened up.

In the United States, in a sell-out deal negotiated between the auto union and the “Big Three” car manufacturers—Ford, General Motors and Chrysler—new workers will be paid half the wage of the existing workforce—\$14.20 per hour instead of \$28.75—and receive substandard benefits, allowing the companies to reduce total hourly labor costs by 68 percent. The deal, which was bitterly opposed by many thousands of workers, has international significance.

In an earlier period “Fordism” was associated with the most advanced productive techniques and scientific management, and US car industry workers were the highest paid in the world. Under the deal, nearly a century of courageous struggles has been overturned, paving the way for the replacement of tens of thousands of veteran workers with a smaller, more brutally exploited cheap labour workforce. The auto industry’s goal has been to drive down wages, with the full collaboration of the union, to a level “competitive” with those offered in Mexico, China, Eastern Europe, and other impoverished and economically backward regions.

In both Germany and France, railway workers have gone on strike to oppose government attempts to undermine their conditions. The French Sarkozy administration is confronting public sector workers, including railway workers, teachers, hospital staff, postal, and municipal workers with demands for the dismantling of their pension schemes. This is just the first step in a broader restructuring program aimed at unleashing the full force of the “free market” throughout the economy.

These experiences should sound a warning for the working class in every country. They presage coming developments in Australia, and directly pose the necessity for the working class to make a thorough political break from the Labor Party and establish its political independence from all the mechanisms of bourgeois rule. Just as workers in the US, Europe, and other parts of the world are being forced to realise, all the old organisations that once claimed to uphold

the interests of the working class—including the unions and the labour and social democratic parties—are now the most ruthless enforcers of the dictates of international finance capital.

Millions of ordinary Australians want change. But at this stage, they can only conceive of political change within the framework of the two-party system and within the parliamentary setup. While there is a distinct absence of any enthusiasm for Labor or for Rudd, the majority of workers cannot yet see any alternative.

Herein lies the essential purpose of the Socialist Equality Party’s election campaign.

We have intervened into the 2007 elections precisely to clarify that alternative—that the working class itself must enter the political and historical arena. It is no longer a question of voting for this or that candidate, and then pressuring them to carry out better policies. No amount of pressure—whether through preferential voting, manoeuvres in the Senate, or demonstrations in the streets—will force Labor to change course and govern in the interests of ordinary people. The critical task is to develop a mass socialist movement of working people that will fight to transform society from top to bottom, overthrow the profit system, and establish a workers’ government. Such a government would represent the first genuine democracy, with all decisions affecting their daily lives made by working people themselves, in the interests of the majority rather than the profit requirements of an ultra-wealthy minority.

The SEP appeals to everyone who agrees with our socialist and internationalist perspective to not only vote for our candidates but, more importantly, to make a serious study of our program and perspective and apply to join the Socialist Equality Party and help build it as the new mass party of the working class.

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