

SEP candidate calls for political struggle against Labor's anti-strike laws

Noel Holt
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Noel Holt, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for Newcastle in the August 21 Australian federal election, released the following copy of the remarks that he planned to make at yesterday's construction workers rally in Sydney (see: "Unions deflect anger over Labor's prosecution of South Australian construction worker"). Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) state secretary Andrew Ferguson and Unions NSW officials refused to allow Holt to address the rally.

My name is Noel Holt, and I am the Socialist Equality Party candidate for Newcastle. The SEP supports the important and principled stand taken by Ark Tribe, who faces jail for defending the basic democratic rights of workers.

And we call for the mobilisation of workers across the nation to oppose the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) and its draconian powers, and against the charging of Ark Tribe under the Labor government's laws.

The fight against the ABCC can only be successful if it opposes the Gillard government's anti-worker Fair Work Act. This has to be a political struggle by all workers. The Fair Work Act, which is soon to transfer the coercive powers of the ABCC to a special agency of the Fair Work Australia tribunal, continues all the anti-strike laws of the Howard government's "Work Choices" legislation.

Gillard, as the Rudd government's workplace minister, negotiated with big business and the Australian Council of Trade Union (ACTU) the laws contained in Labor's industrial relations package. The Fair Work Act has been accepted by business and the ACTU on the basis that it protects big business profits

by restricting workers' right to strike or take any form of industrial action.

Workers must break from the Labor Party and begin a mass struggle against Labor's anti-worker, anti-strike industrial relations laws.

The Socialist Equality Party will support a mass walkout of workers in the event that Ark Tribe is jailed or fined. But mass protests and walkouts are not enough.

The unions in the past have been too willing to pay the heavy fines heaped upon them by the ABCC laws, not to mention the fines against individuals, which the unions are politically responsible for. This indicates that they are not genuine about taking up a real struggle against the ABCC's draconian powers and Gillard's Fair Work Act.

We urge all workers to make a break with the old labour organisations, including the unions, and form independent committees, uniting workers in all industries in a political struggle against the ruling establishment and to build their own mass socialist party.

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