

“We are putting forward a genuine alternative for the working class”

Socialist Equality Party candidate interviewed on Melbourne radio

Margaret Rees
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Socialist Equality Party candidate for the Senate in Victoria, Patrick O'Connor, was interviewed on Melbourne Talkback Radio (MTR) last Tuesday evening. Presenters Luke Grant and Peter Faris spoke with O'Connor alongside another senate candidate, Fiona Patten of the Australian Sex Party. A lively discussion ensued as the right wing presenters attempted to belittle the SEP and socialism and were solidly rebutted by O'Connor.

MTR began broadcasting earlier this year and is affiliated with 2GB in New South Wales, that state's highest rating radio network. Luke Grant presents the daily evening broadcast and with Peter Faris—a QC and former head of the National Crime Authority turned right-wing “shock jock”—has interviewed several politicians during the election campaign, including the Labor government's health minister Nicola Roxon, Labor's candidate for the electorate of Melbourne Cath Bowtell, and Greens' senate candidate Richard Di Natale.

Grant began the interview by asking why O'Connor and Patten would even consider standing against parties that were backed by “millions of people [and] hundreds of thousands of big teams”.

O'Connor immediately rejected the premise of the question, explaining that Labor and the Liberals did not enjoy the genuine support of any significant part of the population. “There is enormous anger towards the policies they are advancing,” he said. “The Socialist Equality Party is putting forward a genuine alternative for the working class and seeking to generate a

discussion on the issues which are not being widely raised in this election—for example, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the preparations for ongoing attacks on democratic rights, and above all, the implications of the political coup against Kevin Rudd.”

Peter Faris tossed in various anti-communist jibes throughout the discussion. He asserted: “You don't want a seat in parliament, you'd rather wait for the revolution.” O'Connor replied: “We're not waiting for anything. We try to utilise the opportunities an election provides and speak to a broader audience than is otherwise possible. We seek to appeal to the genuine outrage ordinary people feel over a whole series of issues which are being suppressed in what is a really farcical election campaign.”

Luke Grant asked a number of questions, including on the Socialist Equality Party's position on climate change and emission trading schemes and on the political coup which saw Julia Gillard installed as prime minister on June 24. O'Connor explained that Rudd's ousting “reveals where power lies in this country. It is not with the Australian people, it is with big business, with finance capital. They really call the shots, not only in government policy but government personnel, so this really raises the issue of who is it that determines public policy in this country?”

The presenters attempted to deny that the mining companies had anything to do with it. O'Connor, however, insisted: “What does the [Labor] party represent? It is not as if this party does not represent or have close connections to various sections of business.

To suggest that what happens in the Labor Party has no connection to what the major CEOs and the ultra-wealthy layers in this country actually think and what policies they want implemented—that is a fantasy.”

The interview concluded with O’Connor noting that the interview was a rare opportunity for the SEP and other minor parties to present their perspective in the course of the election campaign through the media. He rejected Faris’s claims that in a socialist society such a discussion would be prohibited and that he would be “put against the wall”. O’Connor rejected the latter claim as “nonsense” and made clear the SEP’s support for free speech and defence of democratic rights.

The full interview can be heard here.

Click here for full coverage of the SEP 2010 election campaign

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