

Vote 1 for Peter Byrne and the SEP in Broadmeadows, Victoria

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
26 November 2010

The Socialist Equality Party calls on all workers, youth, and students to vote for our candidate Peter Byrne in the electorate of Broadmeadows in Saturday's Victorian state election.

A vote for the SEP is a vote for the independent interests of the working class in direct opposition to the right-wing, pro-business austerity agenda of both major parties. The next state government, whether Labor or Liberal, will collaborate with the federal Gillard government in launching an assault on the living standards of workers, young people and students. The central aim of the SEP's campaign has been to prepare the working class for the coming class conflicts on the basis of an internationalist and socialist perspective. Because of the onerous requirements of anti-democratic electoral laws, drafted by the major parties to prop up the crisis-ridden two-party system, Peter Byrne will appear on the ballot in Broadmeadows without being identified as the candidate of the Socialist Equality Party.

The campaigns of all major parties—Labor, Liberal and Greens—and of the various middle class ex-left outfits, have been characterised by their mind-numbing narrowness, nationalism and parochialism.

None of the major issues confronting the working class—in Australia and internationally—has been mentioned in the course of the official election campaign. The entire three and a half week process has been aimed at suppressing any discussion of the global capitalist crisis and the tensions between the world's major powers—all of which have escalated dramatically since the campaign began. Yet it is precisely these international developments, and the response of the working class to them, that will determine the future of workers and young people in Victoria, around Australia, and throughout the world.

The rapid deepening of the global economic, political and social crisis, even since the election was officially called, underscores the need for the working class to make a conscious political break with the establishment parties and to strike out on a new and independent road.

On November 3, the second day of the election campaign, the US Federal Reserve announced a second round of “quantitative easing”—i.e., effectively printing more US dollars as a means of devaluing the national currency. This was correctly understood by Washington's rivals in Europe and Asia as a trade war measure, boosting export markets for US corporations at their expense. At the same time, the Obama administration ratcheted up its pressure on China, hypocritically denouncing the government in Beijing for

suppressing the value of its currency.

This set the stage for a series of acrimonious international summits. The G20 meeting of world leaders in South Korea, held November 11-12, and APEC in Japan, November 13-14, concluded without resolving any of the crises confronting the major powers or lessening the tensions between them. World forums are now dominated by conflict and mutual hostility between the participants, reflecting the fact that all the institutional mechanisms established in the post-World War II period to contain and mediate inter-imperialist antagonisms are breaking down under the weight of the historic decline of American capitalism.

Ruling circles have promoted the notion that Australia is somehow immune from the global crisis. This so-called Australian “exceptionalism” is both false and dangerous.

Washington is now engaged in a calculated and provocative campaign to contain Chinese power in East Asia, posing before the working class the very real threat of a devastating war involving the use of nuclear weapons. The exchange of artillery fire between North and South Korea in recent days points to the danger of a wider conflagration.

The federal Labor government has unconditionally embraced Washington's reckless course. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Prime Minister Julia Gillard in Melbourne for the AUSMIN talks on November 8 and received assurances that Australian imperialism could be counted as a key component of the American anti-China cordon. At the same time, Gillard has pledged to continue Australia's military involvement in Washington's criminal war in Afghanistan for at least another ten years. At the NATO summit held in Portugal November 19-20, the Labor government was among the most enthusiastic proponents of the commitment to indefinite occupation issued by the participants.

These developments point to the right-wing, pro-US alliance forces behind the coup that ousted former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd last June. Rudd's ousting at the hands of a cabal of Labor factional apparatchiks represented a serious warning to the working class about the kind of anti-democratic measures being readied by the ruling elite as it confronts increasing international and domestic opposition.

The parliamentary system functions as nothing but a fig leaf for the rule of the ultra-wealthy. Three years ago the former Howard

government was thrown out of office after a broad shift to the left among significant layers of the population against its militarist policies abroad and attacks on working conditions at home. Now the Greens-backed minority Labor government is no less brazenly defying majority public opinion by participating in the US-led neo-colonial war in Afghanistan, and preparing savage austerity measures on behalf of big business and finance capital, as dictated by the treasury and finance departments. In every area—from the treatment of refugees to climate change policy, to social inequality and the treatment of the poor—a seamless continuity has linked the former Howard government and its Labor successor.

The Victorian Labor government, in power since 1999, has been among the most ruthless, pro-business administrations in the country. It is regarded by the ruling elite as a tested and reliable instrument for its escalating assault on the social position of the working class. That is why decisive sections of business and virtually every section of the capitalist media has endorsed it for another term in office.

The Liberal opposition all but conceded defeat during the election campaign when it acceded to demands from within ruling circles, including from Rupert Murdoch himself, that it preference Labor ahead of the Greens in key inner Melbourne electorates. This has removed the threat of a hung parliament, which would have forced the formation of a minority government dependent on the Greens. The Greens have responded by doing their utmost to demonstrate their commitment to parliamentary “stability” and their willingness to join either Labor or Liberal in government. As far as the bourgeoisie is concerned, however, the Greens’ promotion of various social causes would prove an unwelcome distraction from the implementation of the austerity measures it requires.

Every day of the official campaign has been marked by reactionary “law and order” promises. While various spending pledges targeting particular constituencies and marginal electorates have also been made, they will soon be jettisoned by whichever party forms government.

The dictates of finance capital are already being aggressively pursued around the world. In Greece and Ireland, average workers’ wages have plummeted and tens of thousands of public sector jobs slashed. Portugal, Spain, Italy and other European economies are being targeted for similar treatment by the banks and international financial speculators. In the US, the Obama administration’s bipartisan “deficit panel” has recommended unprecedented cuts to bedrock social programs, including social security and Medicare, while savage cuts have already been announced by the Tory-Lib-Dem coalition government in Britain.

In South Australia, the Labor government is imposing thousands of public sector layoffs and other cuts not discussed during that state’s election campaign earlier this year, and in Tasmania, where the Labor-Greens coalition government is now drawing up cuts to health and education services to reduce the budget deficit. Workers must be warned: the agenda of the next Victorian government is already being forged behind closed doors.

There is no lack of willingness to fight these measures on the part of workers and young people. In recent weeks mass demonstrations of

students have erupted in Britain, Ireland and Italy, along with protests in France against the government’s attack on pension rights, and a one-day general strike in Portugal. In Australia, major class battles are also looming. Just as the Victorian election campaign began, more than 600 Woolworths warehouse workers conducted a week-long strike in defence of better wages and conditions, and in its final week, 1,300 building workers at the Wonthaggi desalination site struck in defiance of the trade unions over a corporate spying affair.

But the critical issue confronting the working class is to politically break from the old, bankrupt parties and leaderships that have sought to isolate, sabotage and betray every struggle and whose role is to subordinate it to the dictates of finance capital and the capitalist state.

The Socialist Equality Party’s program provides the only solution to militarism and war, social inequality, attacks on living standards and democratic rights, and destruction of the environment. We insist that none of the pressing problems workers confront can be resolved through elections or through parliament. They can only be addressed by turning to the building of a new mass socialist and internationalist movement of the working class that will fight to overthrow the profit system and establish a workers’ government.

We strongly urge workers and young people in Broadmeadows to vote for Peter Byrne, and the SEP. But the party’s campaign in Broadmeadows has been primarily about ideas, not votes. We aim to restore the great traditions of Marxism to the centre of the struggles of working people, and stress the necessity for the working class to assimilate all the critical lessons of its bitter strategic experiences throughout the past century. It is on this basis that we call on all those who agree with our platform to study our program and history and make the decision to join and build the Socialist Equality Party as the new mass revolutionary party of the working class.

[Click here for the coverage of the SEP Victorian election campaign.](#)

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