

Vote 1 for Peter Byrne, Socialist Equality Party candidate for Broadmeadows

**The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
18 February 2011**

The Socialist Equality Party calls on all workers, youth and students to vote for our candidate Peter Byrne in the Broadmeadows by-election in Victoria on Saturday.

A vote for the SEP is a vote for the independent interests of the working class in direct opposition to the pro-business agenda of the Labor Party, Greens and other parties of the political establishment. The SEP is fighting for a socialist alternative to the program of militarism and war, attacks on democratic rights, environmental destruction, social inequality and mass unemployment and poverty. The Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the Socialist Equality Party seeks to unify the struggles of the working class throughout the world to overthrow the bankrupt profit system and establish a rationally planned society, in the interests of the majority of the world's population, not the ultra-wealthy minority. The uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia and the Middle East that have erupted in the course of the by-election campaign are the opening shots of a new period of revolutionary eruptions that will affect every country in the world, including Australia.

The election campaign itself has been an anti-democratic farce. The ballot was triggered by the resignation of former premier John Brumby after his Labor government was thrown out of office last November, amid enormous hostility among working people to its 11-year right-wing, pro-business record. Brumby had promised to remain in parliament, but changed his mind—no doubt due to lucrative prospects in the corporate world. A squalid faction fight ensued within the Labor Party, with its powerbrokers finally settling on wealthy businessman and property

developer Frank McGuire as their candidate. With nothing of political substance separating the two major parties, the Liberals have not even bothered to contest the seat.

The entire process reflects the breakdown of any commitment within the official political establishment to democratic procedure and parliamentary norms. The social chasm between the ruling elite and the majority of the population means that such procedures are increasingly untenable—not only in Australia but around the world. The Labor Party is a hollowed-out apparatus that serves the interests of finance capital and big business no less ruthlessly than does the Liberal-National coalition.

Labor's contempt for the working class was further underscored by McGuire during the campaign. At one point he declared that unemployment in Broadmeadows—the highest in the country—was caused by the “cost of labour”.

McGuire is following in the footsteps of the Hawke Labor government and the trade unions over the past 25 years. Ever since they established their “Accords” in 1983, workers have been continually told they must demonstrate wage “restraint” and make “sacrifices” to keep their jobs. This has led to ever greater levels of social dislocation and distress, as workers and their families are faced with intolerable financial pressures.

The cause of unemployment is not excessive wages, but the profit system itself. Under capitalism, labour power is nothing but a commodity, bought by the corporations only to the extent that they can extract sufficient profit from it. As the major corporations

throughout the world engage in a dog-eat-dog struggle for markets and raw materials, they use unemployment (the “reserve army of labour”) as a means of lowering wages and tearing up conditions to ensure their rate of return. At the same time, governments pit workers in each country against each other in a never ending competition to attract international investors with the promise of higher profits.

The situation entirely bears out the analysis made by Karl Marx more than 140 years ago: “Accumulation of wealth at one pole is therefore, at the same time, accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, moral degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its product in the form of capital.”

To resolve the unemployment crisis, the banks, giant financial institutions and major corporations must be expropriated, with full protection to small depositors and investors, and placed under public ownership, democratically controlled by the working class. An emergency public works program must be enacted to provide full-time employment for all, also pouring the necessary resources into social infrastructure, including transport networks, water and energy supplies, public housing, aged and child-care facilities, schools, universities and TAFEs, hospitals and other medical facilities.

In order to achieve this, it is first necessary for the working class to establish its political independence, breaking from the old, bankrupt parties and leaderships. This includes the Labor Party and trade unions, as well as the Greens—who support the capitalist system, and whose alliance with the Gillard government underscores the absence of any principled differences between the parliamentary parties.

The SEP fights for the formation of a workers’ government—a government of, by and for the working class. None of the issues confronting working people can be resolved through parliament. Unlike the other parties and candidates contesting the by-election, the central orientation of the SEP has not been votes—though we certainly call for the highest possible support among workers and youth for Peter Byrne at

the ballot box—but ideas. 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. This is an essential part of the struggle to raise workers’ political consciousness in accordance with the historical tasks they confront in this epoch of capitalist breakdown.

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.

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