

SEP holds final election campaign meeting

Our reporters
16 July 2012

The Socialist Equality Party yesterday held the final public meeting of its campaign in the July 21 Melbourne by-election. The SEP's candidate, Patrick O'Connor, and its assistant national secretary, James Cogan, outlined the socialist and internationalist perspective underlying the party's election campaign to an audience of workers, students and young people.

O'Connor began his report by noting: "The official campaign has been marked by a series of diversions, with no discussion by my 15 rival candidates of the real issues confronting the working class. By contrast, the SEP has actively intervened into the situation to promote the widest possible discussion amongst workers and young people about the political tasks posed before them."

The SEP candidate briefly reviewed different aspects of the party's campaign, highlighting some of the articles, political statements and video reports published on the *World Socialist Web Site*. The candidate noted that the SEP had discussed a socialist program, and the need for a unified industrial and political struggle against both the state Liberal and the federal Labor governments, with different layers of the working class, including striking warehouse workers, construction workers and public school teachers.

"Underlying every aspect of our work in this election campaign has been the understanding that a historic breakdown of the global capitalist system is underway," O'Connor explained. "The 2008 financial crash will be marked by future historians in parallel with the years 1914, 1929 and 1939, as years that signalled the opening of a new period of economic disequilibrium, social upheavals and geostrategic shifts, triggering violent inter-imperialist conflicts."

O'Connor exposed the various claims made by the Labor Party and the Greens in the course of the campaign that they were opposed to public sector job sackings and cuts to spending on health and education. He also countered efforts by the media and the major parties to isolate "local" and "state" issues from their national and international context, noting that in the US and other countries, many of the most severe austerity cuts were being imposed at the state and city level. O'Connor referred to the growing number of city bankruptcies in California and other states, and also highlighted the situation in Colorado Springs, where a fiscal crisis had seen authorities shut off street lights, sack fire-fighters, cut back essential services, including rubbish removal and public transport, and close recreation centres, museums and swimming pools.

O'Connor concluded by reviewing the SEP's perspective of mobilising the working class to fight for a workers' government that will reorganise society from top to bottom. "Our campaign is centrally aimed at building the Socialist Equality Party and providing a socialist and internationalist political program for the immense social struggles, in Australia and internationally, that lie directly ahead," he stated.

James Cogan's report explained the historic character of the global economic breakdown that began with the 2008 financial crash. He said the SEP was standing in the Melbourne by-election "to explain as clearly as possible to the developing movement of the working class that the myriad of political problems that it faces, 1) do not stem from the failure of particular governments and politicians, but from the very nature and contradictions of the capitalist system itself, 2) that they are not local or national problems, but global problems in origin and scope, and 3) that they cannot be resolved within the framework of private ownership

of production and the nation state, or through the institutions and parties that accept and defend the continued existence of the capitalist system.”

Cogan also focussed on the counter-revolutionary role being played by pseudo-left organisations. “These organisations now function as the direct and open agents of the ruling class in country after country,” he stated. “Self-titled socialist or ‘anti-capitalist’ organisations such as the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt, SYRIZA in Greece and the NPA [New Anti-capitalist Party] in France have sought to block any challenge to the capitalist system, by promoting the delusion that the ruling class can be pressured through parliament or protests, at the precise time when dictatorial methods are being prepared behind the scenes. Internationally, such groupings have become open advocates of imperialist violence, endorsing the false claims that the US and NATO launched their air war on Libya to defend civilians and providing justifications for the regime change operation that was carried out.” None of the Australian pseudo-left parties, he continued, had intervened in the Melbourne by-election, or written anything about it, indicating their implicit support for Labor and the Greens.

During the ensuing discussion, several people spoke about the Greens party and their by-election campaign. One person suggested that most Greens’ voters were wealthy property investors. Cogan and O’Connor explained that the SEP’s sharp exposure of the Greens, as a pro-capitalist party that represented the interests of a privileged section of the middle class, went hand in hand with a political appeal to those people, especially students and youth, who vote for the Greens because they mistakenly regard them as some kind of left-wing alternative to Labor.

“We certainly do not write off people who vote for the Greens, including middle class people, as one reactionary mass,” O’Connor explained. “All sorts of people are attracted to the Greens for all sorts of reasons... We’re living through a period of enormous economic and social upheavals and that will inevitably result in enormous political shifts. How people think today isn’t how they will think tomorrow.” The task, he concluded, was to win the best layers of those who

currently support the Greens by “inculcating an understanding that their future is bound up with a turn to the working class, and with taking up the fight for a socialist perspective.”

After the meeting, Kayne, a high school student who attended the meeting, spoke with *World Socialist Web Site* reporters about two issues that especially concerned him—refugees and the vendetta against WikiLeaks’ Julian Assange.

“The mainstream debate about refugees isn’t about whether they should be locked up, but where,” he said. “The refugees are being treated like statistics and not actual people. I agree with the SEP that workers should have the right to settle anywhere in the world. The concepts of nations, citizenship and states are irrational in a completely internationalised world. I think the party’s perspective on this issue is absolutely correct.”

Kayne continued: “On Assange, I think it’s a real breach of democratic rights... The Labor government is operating as a tool of Washington. The SEP has been the only party to raise the issue of WikiLeaks during the election campaign. Every other party has sought to sweep the issue under the carpet, and leave Washington, Canberra and the Labor government to do as they wish. It’s an issue that really needs to be brought to the consciousness of the working class.”

See the SEP web site for further information on our election campaign.

Authorised by Nick Beams, 113/55 Flemington Rd, North Melbourne VIC 3051



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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