

Vote 1 for Patrick O'Connor and the SEP in Melbourne

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
20 July 2012

The Socialist Equality Party calls on all workers, youth and students in Melbourne to vote for our candidate Patrick O'Connor in Saturday's Victorian state by-election.

From the outset of our campaign, the SEP has emphasised that the urgent political task confronting workers is to develop their own independent class response to the accelerating crisis of the global capitalist system. Developments in the course of the six-week by-election campaign have underscored the fact that the profit system has failed.

Brutal austerity measures are being stepped up across Europe on the orders of the financial oligarchy, with blatant disregard for public opinion and electoral outcomes. The unemployment and social crisis in the US continues to escalate. The danger of new wars looms as the Obama administration steps up its regime-change operation in Syria and continues its military build-up against Iran.

Within Australia, Ford's latest round of layoffs, announced on Tuesday, is part of an accelerating restructuring drive across manufacturing and other industries, devastating the jobs, wages and conditions of the working class. Far from being immune from the global crisis, the Australian economy is highly vulnerable to international financial instability and the accelerating slowdown in China.

None of the issues confronting the working class can be resolved within the borders of Australia, let alone the state of Victoria. The SEP and its sister parties of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) seek to unify the struggles of the working class internationally to overthrow the bankrupt profit system

and establish a rationally planned society along socialist lines. This is the only alternative to a future of militarism and war, attacks on democratic rights, environmental destruction, social inequality and mass unemployment and poverty.

A vote for the SEP is a vote for a socialist alternative to the pro-business agenda of the Labor Party, Greens and other parties of the political establishment. The SEP fights for the independent mobilisation of the working class in the struggle for a workers' government committed to socialist policies to meet the pressing social needs of the majority, not the profits of the wealthy few.

The official by-election campaign has been a fraud from start to finish. With the Liberal Party declining to field a candidate, Labor and the Greens have vied with each other to present themselves as opponents of the Liberal state government and its public sector job cuts, underfunding of health and education, and gutting of the TAFE (Technical and Further Education) system. Both parties have proven records at the state and federal level in imposing similar austerity measures on behalf of the financial elite.

The Labor Party is the most ruthless representative of big business. In collaboration with the trade unions, the government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard has orchestrated sweeping restructuring measures that are decimating jobs and conditions. Labor's commitment to a budget surplus will mean an endless assault on essential social services such as public healthcare, education and welfare.

The Greens are directly responsible for every policy of the Gillard government. The minority administration only remains in office due to the unstinting loyalty of the

Greens and the parliamentary backing of its lower house MP from Melbourne, Adam Bandt. At the state and federal level, the Greens have demonstrated that they have no significant differences with the major parties. The Greens' candidate in the Melbourne by-election, Cathy Oke, has repeatedly refused to rule out backing the Liberals or Labor in the event of a hung Victorian parliament. The Greens are a capitalist party, which like their counterparts in Europe and internationally, represent the interests of a privileged section of the upper middle class.

None of the myriad single issue and so-called independent candidates standing in the by-election represents an alternative. All of them accept the framework of the profit system and the existing political setup, and have pitched their campaigns toward influencing the major parties.

Both the Labor Party and the Greens have insisted that the by-election is about "local issues" and that federal politics is not a factor. This flies in the face of reality. The deeply-felt hostility among workers to the Gillard government and its right-wing agenda is a key reason why the Labor Party could lose the seat of Melbourne, which it has held for more than a century. Labor and the Greens are equally determined to shield Gillard and her crisis-ridden government from any additional political damage following Saturday's vote.

More fundamentally, every "local issue"—whether it be public transport, urban planning, schools or TAFE institutions—is intimately bound up with the global crisis of capitalism. Across the US, Europe and other parts of the world, state and local governments are working hand in hand with their national counterparts to slash budgets, eliminate basic social programs and privatise healthcare, education and other public services. The exact same process is now accelerating across Australia.

The working class cannot resolve any of the problems it confronts within the existing parliamentary framework. It is necessary to strike out on a new road.

There is no lack of determination by workers to fight to defend their interests. During the by-election campaign, 600 Coles-Toll warehouse workers in Somerton stopped work and imposed a 24-hour picket to demand improved wages and conditions. But their determined fight has been

isolated by the trade unions, which are working behind their backs to impose a sell-out and prevent a confrontation with the Gillard government.

The critical issue for the working class is to politically break from the Labor Party and the unions, which function as the political agents of the corporate elite and are responsible for sabotaging every struggle waged by workers.

What is necessary is a revolutionary offensive by the working class aimed at breaking the stranglehold of the financial oligarchy over social and economic life, and establishing a democratically and rationally planned socialist economy. The mining companies, the banks, and the largest corporations must be taken into public ownership under the democratic control of the working class, and an emergency public works program instituted to end unemployment and provide decent paying jobs to all, along with affordable high quality housing and free universal health care, education and social services.

This perspective can be advanced only through the struggle of the working class to build its own political party, the Socialist Equality Party. We urge a vote for our candidate Patrick O'Connor—due to anti-democratic electoral laws, the SEP's name will not appear on the ballot—to register your support for a socialist alternative. At the same time, we call on all workers and young people to seriously study our program and history, and to apply to join the SEP, the Australian section of the ICFI, the world Trotskyist movement.

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

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