

Youth and workers comment on the SEP election campaign

Our correspondents
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WSWS correspondents spoke to members of the audiences after last Sunday's Socialist Equality Party (SEP) federal election campaign launch meetings in Sydney and Melbourne.

At the Sydney meeting, **Kirby**, a part-time casual bike shop worker, had been to several recent SEP meetings, including on the 15th anniversary of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

"Whenever I come to these meetings, it forces me to think more and more, and read the web site," he explained. "The thing that stuck out for me at this meeting was the Asian pivot. Nick Beams really went into depth, about what the bases in Australia mean and how Burma, India and Mongolia are being used to encircle China. That consolidated my understanding of the US turn to Asia against China."

Kirby commented on the question asked during the meeting about whether the SEP and WSWS defend China. "It was good that someone asked about our attitude to China," he said. "We don't support any particular regime. We want the working class to become dominant. It's important to unite with the Chinese workers and fight against nationalism and racism."

Asked about the WSWS, Kirby said: "I read the web site pretty regularly now. I really like the history section, reporting what happened 25, 50, 75 and 100 years ago. I try to read what's happening in Australia, and I read the arts section, because I was studying fine arts. I'm still working through the 15th anniversary articles for each year. The web site challenges my ideas every day."

Tom said the meeting was "exciting and encouraging." He explained: "I agree with the SEP in placing the struggle against war at the centre of the election campaign as it is the most important issue

today. It is paramount."

Tom said the working class could only defend its interests through a worldwide struggle to overthrow capitalism. "I knew some of the background for the US preparations for a war against China from the *World Socialist Web Site*. I knew the war was a possibility, but I didn't know the situation was so sharp."

Tom spoke about the role of the mass media in covering up the war preparations. "I'm very sceptical about the media. To get an alternative view from the WSWS—the truth—is great."

Sandy said: "I wasn't aware that so many other countries are involved in the US war plans. I knew nothing about President Obama coming to Australia and announcing US bases in Darwin. The consequences of another war would be devastation... Prime Minister Gillard has no right to be making these plans behind people's backs. She should be telling people what is going on, but if she did, people would demand changes."

Sandy spoke about the deteriorating social conditions. "I think the situation in which we live is horrible. We are living in a sort of Depression now, with not enough money being spent on what people need... Education, health and employment have been under attack for a long time."

Sandy added: "I've been working in aged care. There are a lot of fragile, elderly people whose needs are not being met. We're constantly being told not to use too many resources, to re-use bandages, only to change really wet nappies on elderly patients, not to change them all the time."

Sandy had a family connection to the horrors of war. "The reason I got into aged care was my close relationship with my grandparents. Most of my grandparents experienced war. My mother's father was

in the navy. My other grandfather was in the trenches in World War One. He became deaf from the trenches and almost lost his mind. My grandmother was an army nurse. She told me about the gangrene the soldiers got and how they had to amputate legs. They had no pain killers. They just gave them whisky to try to numb the pain.”

James, 64, a certified builder, valued the historical analysis presented at the meeting. “I found the point that Nick [Beams] made, historically linking the crises occurring today with the crises of capitalist society before the outbreak of the First World War, very clarifying. It illustrated to me how the ruling elite will use imperialist wars to solve crises within their own system.”

“One of the most important positions of the SEP, which was raised in this meeting, is the freedom of workers to work and live wherever they want. This flies in the face of the vilification of refugees and the xenophobic practices of the ruling elite. The SEP really won me over with this statement.

“The answer for the international working class is to unite and realise that there is no benefit to them fighting a capitalist war for the ruling elite. We have more in common with workers in Indonesia and the Philippines than we do with any Australian from the ruling class. Our common cause is with the working class throughout the world.”

Some members of the audience had migrated from Asia and Africa, and spoke on the common interests of workers throughout the region and the world. **Karikal**, a welding tester from Tamil Nadu in India, said: “Today I learned that war is going to happen under capitalism, and the role of the Socialist Equality Party is to prevent war by explaining to the working class what is happening between the United States and China. There can’t be a peaceful solution under capitalism, only through socialism.”

Karikal said the caste system in India was an obstacle but “the younger generation doesn’t look to the caste system. They will respond to a common cause.” Karikal added that the workers of India needed a better relationship with the working class of China.

Heng, a university student from China, was asked if he thought the SEP campaign would reach a wide audience, including in China. “Yes,” he answered. “I think that people will want to defend their living

standards and oppose war. I think the workers have a mutual viewpoint for defending against corruption and war.”

Heng said the meeting had given him “a clearer vision of the connection between the collapse of the economic system in Europe and also in the United States. As well as how this is responsible for problems facing the working class internationally.”

At the Melbourne meeting, **Maciek**, another university student, said: “Young people and working people don’t know why we go to war and this meeting made it really clear. I am from South Sudan, and Peter [Symonds] explained that the recent wars in Africa are about the major powers trying to get control of oil and other resources, and that the US government is preparing for war to prevent China threatening its economic interests.

“I think the SEP campaign is important because the politicians are not telling people what is really happening and I think working-class people need to be aware.”

Rhys, an applied science student, commented: “I was surprised how extensive the Australian role in the US campaign against China is. They’re basically acting as the butler of US policy. I didn’t realise and it’s spiked some outrage in me—so I want to do what I can to stop this.”

Rhys added: “I guess I’m not surprised that the media has not had any coverage of this. The fact that this burning issue has been suppressed makes clear what the role of the media is.”



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