

Socialist Equality Party holds election campaign meetings in three states

Our correspondents

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The Socialist Equality Party convened a series of successful public meetings over the past two weekends, in working-class areas of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, as part of its campaign for the upcoming federal election.

The meetings have provided a forum for workers and young people to discuss the primary political axis of the SEP's campaign: the development of an international anti-war movement based on a socialist and revolutionary perspective, and a unified struggle by the international working class against the assault taking place on its living standards and fundamental democratic rights. Campaigning for the meetings, SEP members and supporters widely distributed the party's four-page election announcement, "A socialist program against the drive to war."

In Sydney's south-western and western suburbs of Liverpool and Mt Druitt, meetings were addressed by Nick Beams, the SEP's national secretary and lead candidate for the Senate in New South Wales (NSW). The party's candidates in Victoria, Patrick O'Connor and Tania Baptist, spoke at a meeting in the northern Melbourne suburb of Craigieburn, while Mike Head, the lead Senate candidate in Queensland, spoke in the Brisbane suburb of Inala. James Cogan, who is standing for the SEP in South Australia, addressed a meeting in the NSW regional centre of Newcastle.

The meetings began with reports delivered by representatives of the SEP's youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). The IYSSE speakers exposed the devastating social conditions and mass unemployment being inflicted globally and in Australia on the younger generation, along with the attempt by the ruling elite to promote nationalism and militarism. They called on students and young people to take up the fight for a socialist perspective.

The SEP Senate candidates explained the historic character of the economic breakdown wracking the global capitalist system since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008 and the ruthlessness with which governments were imposing budget

austerity and increasing state repression. Using projected slides featuring charts, maps and quotations, they explained that the protracted decline in the global economic position of American capitalism had driven the eruption of military violence by US imperialism over the past two decades. The candidates analysed the Obama administration's preparations for war against China and indicted the Gillard Labor government's support for it, through military agreements and basing arrangements made behind the backs of the Australian population since 2011.

The SEP candidates stressed that the most critical issue was for workers and young people to study and take up the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world party of socialist revolution, of which the SEP is the Australian section. The speakers explained that the nationalist and pro-capitalist programs of organisations such as the Labor Party and the trade unions in Australia, and their betrayal of the interests of the working class, were responsible for the drive to war and the assault on social and democratic rights. At the centre of the SEP's campaign was the fight to politically educate workers and youth in the strategic lessons of the past century, to develop genuine socialist and internationalist consciousness, and to build the ICFI as the new leadership of the international working class.

Speaking in Mt Druitt on Sunday, Nick Beams concluded: "Millions of workers are being driven into struggle... The intervention of the revolutionary party, its members educated and prepared in advance, is the decisive and indispensable factor in transforming the elemental struggles that are emerging into a conscious political force for the establishment of world socialism and the development of the next stage in mankind's historical development."

Wide-ranging discussions emerged at the public meetings. A common question was how the danger of war in the region had arisen, given the close economic relations between the US and China, and China and Australia.

In Liverpool on May 19, Nick Beams explained that it was the "rise of the economic power of China versus the relative

decline of the US that is the source of fundamental tensions.” He continued: “China is not an imperialist power, as the United States is. Nevertheless, its expansion comes into conflict with the economic interests of the United States.” He pointed to Libya as an example, where one of the motives of the 2011 US-led war to overthrow the Gaddafi regime had been to end China’s influence within the Libyan oil industry.

In Melbourne, where Ford announced last week that it would shut down its Australian manufacturing operations in 2016, Patrick O’Connor answered a question on how car workers could combat the destruction of jobs.

“There is no national solution to the issues confronting Ford workers, or those in Toyota, General Motors Holden, or the auto components industry,” he replied. “We are raising, in collaboration with the SEPs in Germany, the United States and internationally, the need for a global strategy for auto workers. This can only go forward to the extent that new forms of organisation are built—rank and file committees—-independent of, and opposed to, the trade unions, linking up with other sections of workers throughout Australia and internationally. This requires a new political perspective and the fight for a workers’ government and socialist policies.”

Key industries such as car production, O’Connor said, “need to be taken out of private ownership and brought into public ownership under the democratic control of the working class, and utilised in a conscious and planned manner internationally.” The SEP, he stressed, “is going to be campaigning very strongly among Ford and auto industry workers, fighting for this socialist alternative.”

Some of those who attended the public meetings spoke with *World Socialist Web Site* reporters.

Mohammad, a young migrant from the Middle East, explained that he had attended the Mt Druitt meeting in Sydney because his “friends had been talking about the SEP, and I was interested to know more and see what the party said about the drive to war. I wanted to see what could prevent us going to war. People are not conscious about what is going on.”

Daminda, a student who applied to join the SEP after the Craigieburn meeting in Melbourne, said: “Both major parties [Labor and Liberal] have minor differences on areas that don’t really matter that much. In the end, the overall effects for working people will be the same whoever wins the election—either way we are going to be attacked.

“It is clear that the struggle against war can’t take place through a parliamentary system that has its interests mixed up in the interests of the ultra-rich class. There needs to be a party that actually carries forward a program that represents the interests of the majority of people—not the overarching

goals of a small group who have managed to accumulate enormous amounts of wealth through a system that no longer serves humanity’s best interests.”

Manan, a University of Newcastle student, said the “build-up toward war is in conflict with the general population’s interests, the working class.” He continued: “A small percentage of rich corporate people influence politics around the world and control the wealth. When somebody commits a crime they are punished, however, the ruling criminals can go to war on false pretexts. There was not one person that I knew who actually believed that weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq. Everybody knew that the war in Iraq was for control of the oil.

“I think the SEP’s election campaign is a brilliant cause. People from all sorts of backgrounds, from the most developed countries to the developing ones, all share the same concerns and primarily the same priorities. The common workers around the world should unite. It’s a lot different when you read the SEP’s material and listen to the reports. You get to understand the truth behind issues.”

During the campaign for the meeting in Brisbane, Deed, a bus driver with 32 years’ experience, said: “We see a dwindling of our rights and our standard of living due to this present Labor government. We have become reduced to individuals. We have to unite, and that’s what your campaign is doing.”

Deed spoke about the danger of war: “The so-called superpowers are heading in that direction, like with this fuss over North Korean nuclear testing. The North Koreans are just trying to counteract against the Americans, and we’re not told what the US is doing.”

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