

SEP meetings in Perth and Sydney broaden discussion on war danger

Our correspondents
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The Socialist Equality Party's election campaign continued with public meetings on June 9 in Perth and on June 12 and 14 in working-class suburbs of Sydney. The meetings stimulated important discussion among workers and youth who were keen to understand more about the internationalist and socialist perspective that the SEP is advancing against the war dangers arising from the historic crisis wracking global capitalism.

The Perth meeting was chaired by Joe Lopez, one of the party's candidates for the Senate in Western Australia (WA). Following a report by a representative of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the main report was presented by Peter Symonds, the SEP's Senate candidate in WA. Symonds, a member of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site*, has written extensively on the US military build-up in Asia directed against China and its political consequences in countries across the region, including Australia.

Symonds stressed the links between the June 2010 ousting of Kevin Rudd as Australia's prime minister, the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" and the announcement of major new US bases in Australia. Perth, the capital of WA and the location of a major Indian Ocean naval port, HMAS Stirling, is viewed as a critical base of operations for the US preparations for military conflict with China. The Center for Strategic and International Studies, an American think tank, recommended that the US Navy shift an entire aircraft carrier battle group from the Atlantic to Port Stirling. The Labor government under Julia Gillard is involved in ongoing discussions with the Obama administration over that possibility.

In Sydney, SEP assistant national secretary James Cogan, who is standing for the Senate in South Australia, gave the main report at meetings in

Bankstown and Maroubra. He opened discussion by highlighting the significance of whistleblower Edward Snowden's exposure of the extent of US government spying on the American population and people around the world. Cogan said the scale of the monitoring of phone, internet, email and other electronic communications was a warning of the advanced preparations for both war and dictatorial forms of rule to suppress working-class opposition to militarism, austerity and mass unemployment.

The June 12 Bankstown meeting was held in the same venue where the SEP launched an investigation into the September 2012 fire in the nearby Euro Terraces apartment complex that caused the death of young Chinese student Connie Zhang. In opening the meeting, Mike Head, SEP Senate candidate for Queensland, explained that more nine months after the blaze there was still no indication that any official inquiry would be conducted, underscoring the importance of the independent work carried out by the SEP to reveal the relationship between the fire, housing safety and the broader deterioration of working-class living standards and social conditions.

Following the meetings, people who had attended spoke to WSWs reporters.

In Perth, Molly a 16-year-old student said: "I came to the meeting today because I have discussed politics with my brother for quite a while. This meeting is like my introduction to politics. I hear a lot of politics discussed on the news but nothing on what relates to my life. Today the speakers explained the problems for young people with youth unemployment. It is affecting my age group, as I am 16, and it is going to be hard to get a job."

Molly added: "I hear a lot of rumours about war against China but no actual facts about it. I was able to

hear some of those today. The idea of an AirSea war is really scary. At school we are told that all these problems are now in the past, but it appears that it is not the case.”

Jorge, an anthropologist said: “I come from Chile and I have always thought the left is the only way. I like its traditions, especially Trotsky’s ideas. They are very real and good ideas for the current situation.

“The meeting explained a lot about war and the US plans to attack China. It was high-level discussion. What I have heard before about politics is usually low-level but at this meeting the international discussion is very important. I think the way of Trotsky is the only way.”

Sanja, who works in the oil and gas sector, said the meeting was very educational because it dealt with the grave conditions facing youth and the working class. “The position of Australia and whose side it is going to take in the future struggle between the US and China was clearly presented. People are kept in the dark about this. If the working class does not raise its voice and start fighting, then the casualties will be enormous.”

Sanja added: “The question and discussion session was particularly interesting when the speaker was asked about the party’s stand on the environment and climate change. I agreed with the answer that as long as capitalism continues then the environmental situation will only get worse. The pursuit of profit, and the world separated into nation states that fight for dominance, does not allow for a genuine solution for the environment.”

At the Bankstown meeting, Laye, a worker from Liberia, said: “It is good to come and know and become prepared. To know what is going on in the international market I think is important.

“We need to get out of the outmoded capitalist system and if we come together and get organised than we can get rid of capitalism. I do think that some workers, with their limited education, will find it difficult to understand the critical issues. But if we have the determination to assist them, and use the time to educate them on the main issues of the party then they will understand. The best way to help is to empower them.

“For me the most important part of tonight was to understand that we need to put forward our own party—the Socialist Equality Party.”

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