

SEP election meeting in Beenleigh, Queensland

Wage-cutting in the meat and car industries—the socialist response

21 June 2013

The Teys/Cargill meat processing company in Beenleigh, Queensland and General Motors Holden in Melbourne and Adelaide are demanding their employees accept across-the-board pay cuts of up to 20 percent or face the closure of their plants.

These ultimatums mark a new stage in the assault underway on the jobs, working conditions and living standards of the entire working class. Major conglomerates in Australia are now turning to outright wage-cutting, following the precedents already set in the United States and across Europe.

Corporate giants like GM and Cargill, which is the largest private company in the US, have ruthlessly restructured their global operations to cut costs and boost profits, as the fallout from the 2008 financial crash worsens. In the American auto industry, the Obama administration and the trade unions assisted GM and other car producers to slash wages for new employees to below \$15. Now Beenleigh meat workers have been told that the going rate for highly-skilled boners in Cargill's US plants is just \$7 an hour.

In Australia, the Gillard Labor government has backed to the hilt the demand that workers pay the price to maintain corporate "international competitiveness" and protect the fortunes of a tiny wealthy elite. At the same time, the trade unions have directly assisted every mass sacking, from BlueScope Steel and Qantas in 2011, to the job destruction at GMH and Ford's plan to end all local car production by 2016.

Amid the most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s, the ruling class is intent on demolishing all the past gains of the working class, including jobs, wages and vital public services such as health care and education. As soon as the federal election is over this offence will only intensify,

regardless of whether Labor or Liberal takes office.

Workers can only advance a progressive alternative to this social counter-revolution by making a conscious political break from the unions and the Labor Party, and developing new forms of struggle, such as rank and file committees in every factory and workplace. These must be based on a new international strategy and perspective that will advance the interests of the working class. Such a strategy requires the building of an independent, political movement of the working class, dedicated to the establishment of a workers' government based on socialist policies, including placing the banks and basic industries, including food and auto production, under public ownership and democratic control, to meet social need, not private profit.

At the Beenleigh public meeting, Socialist Equality Party candidates for the 2013 election will review the nature of the economic, political and social crisis confronting the working class and outline the party's revolutionary socialist perspective. We urge WSWS readers, meat workers, residents and young people to attend and participate in the discussion on these vital issues.

Sunday, July 7, 2pm
Beenleigh Events Centre
Cnr Crete & Kent streets,
Beenleigh
(Free parking underneath)

Tickets \$3 or \$2 concession

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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