

Australian SEP candidate holds media conference in Colombo

Our correspondents
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Socialist Equality Party (Australia) assistant national secretary James Cogan addressed a press conference at the Hotel Nippon Conference Hall in Colombo yesterday. Three journalists—two from *Virakesari* and one from *Sudaroli* (Tamil daily newspapers)—attended the event.

Cogan, a SEP candidate for the Australian Senate in national elections on September 7, is visiting Sri Lanka to address public meetings organised by its sister organisation, the Sri Lankan SEP.

SEP assistant secretary Deepal Jayasekera introduced Cogan to journalists, explaining that the central theme of the Australian SEP's election intervention was to unite workers and youths throughout the Asia-Pacific and internationally against the growing danger of a US-led war against China. Cogan's visit, he said, was part of a coordinated campaign by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

Cogan said: "The program of my party—international socialism—is the program required by working people in every country." He explained: "The issues confronting workers in Australia are the same fundamental issues confronting the working class all over the world."

Cogan detailed how workers internationally face a never-ending onslaught on their wages, working conditions and social rights. He said the international working class confronts the growing danger of a US war against China.

"The Asian region, and every country in it," he continued, "is being drawn into what can be described as the maelstrom of US military aggression under the banner of the Obama administration's so-called 'pivot to Asia.'"

Cogan pointed out that the "pivot" was being discussed within the US political establishment and its strategic think tanks as part of Washington's war

preparations against China and that the Australian Labor government was completely integrated into the aggressive US measures.

The Australian SEP, Cogan said, opposed this war drive. "We demand repudiation of Australia's alliance with the US and the closure of all American bases." War, however, cannot be prevented in one country. "This requires the unity of the working class," he added.

"Along with our comrades in the SEP in Sri Lanka and our sister parties around the world, which are the sections of the ICFI, we are fighting collectively for the international unity of the working class and advancing a socialist perspective. This is the only way the working class can defend its interests on a world scale, by ending the capitalist profit system and reorganising society along socialist lines."

Asked by a journalist about US bases in Australia, Cogan pointed out that while Australian bases had already been heavily used by the US military, the Obama administration was increasing this activity. The Senate candidate outlined how the Pine Gap base in central Australia and other installations were being used for US spying operations.

In answer to another question, Cogan explained the criminal anti-asylum seeker policies carried out by successive Australian governments during the early 1990s, and particularly since 2001. These policies were denying refugees their basic democratic rights and forcing them into long-time detention in remote Pacific islands. He said Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's new deal with Papua New Guinea was incarcerating asylum seekers in that country.

These policies, Cogan said, were "an attempt to promote xenophobia, nationalism and racism among the Australian population and divert attention from the

real causes of the growing unemployment, poverty and social problems. It is a clear signal to the Australian ruling elite that there is no line that the government will not cross in imposing even deeper attacks on the working class.”

Replying to another question, Cogan said all the parliamentary opposition parties had lined up with the US and had done so “for very definite reasons—Australia is an imperialist power.” He explained: “The Australian ruling class, corporations and banks have dominated the South Pacific region for over one hundred years.” Cogan pointed out that Australia relied on US support to maintain its dominance in the region.

Cogan answered a question about the SEP’s activities by explaining that the party strove to politically educate workers and youth through the day-to-day analysis it published on the *World Socialist Web Site* on developments in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, as well as via its current election campaign, with public meetings throughout the country and mass circulation of its election statement.



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