

Australian meetings: Young people discuss SEP's socialist policies

Our reporters
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Students, workers, professional people and retirees attended the SEP's final election meetings this week in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide. For a number of people, it was their first SEP event. WSWs reporters spoke with some of the young people about the party's political analysis and other issues discussed at the meetings.

Milica, a 17-year-old secondary student from Dandenong, an outer eastern Melbourne suburb, said, "the SEP meeting was a very respectful, intelligent environment and I was very glad to be a part of it...."

"I am Serbian. My family came to Australia in 2000. We experienced the war, and crazy as it seems, I do remember something from then. I was only three years at the time and we lived in a very small apartment. It was during the 1999 bombings. Everyone in the apartment block went down into the basement and I remember my dad holding me and hearing the whoosh of the planes. All the wars since then have been said to be for humanitarian reasons, but in reality all they are going to do is murder the people.

"Obama and his politics are like Labor and Liberal here. There is not a lesser of two evils, there are just evils. Obama seems to be the same as George Bush was.

"I've tried to keep up with the election campaign here but it is so biased. You turn on the television and all you hear is, 'we will stop the [refugee] boats, we will stop the boats' and that is the entire campaign. It is the like the war on terror in America, where they use it to cover up the declining social situation—they're not addressing any of the real issues."

Milica said the SEP had "great ambition and I'm really happy that there is a party out there that is legitimately fighting to unite the working class ... Up until two months ago I had no idea that your party actually existed. I think that is a problem. People have to start questioning what is going on in the world. They have to look to the past to see

what has happened previously. I really want to be involved in changing the world."

Dina, a Year 11 high school student, said the meeting was "very informative. I learnt a lot—it has opened my eyes a bit more. It's a pretty negative picture and it makes me pretty angry—the war and what is happening in Detroit.

"My family is from former Yugoslavia and we came to Australia because of the war. It made me realise about war. When you go to Sarajevo all the buildings are covered in bullet holes and the war is still a touchy topic.

"I want to live in a just world—it is not that now—and I hope other young people will feel the same. There should have been more young people of our age at the meeting. I thought, why not go? I'll learn something. I'm glad I did."

In Brisbane, **Tom**, an 18-year-old TAFE student, said the most important aspect of the discussion was "differentiating between official politics and what is required globally. I mean official politics today, and for however long in the past, has an agenda behind it, and that is not to benefit the people per se, but the people that make up the 0.01 percent of the world."

Tom was impressed by Jerry White's presentation on the social crisis in America. "I recently learned that Detroit was in the [bankrupt] position. That was my first point of research when I started looking into your party and this meeting: the decline of the US. So not all of what Jerry White had to say was new to me, but it was more important for clarification.

"I have started reading the *World Socialist Web Site*. It has a lot of good stuff. I have no qualms with the content. It's set out structurally. Initially, it was the inconsistencies in our national government that attracted my political curiosity, then how much greater the inconsistencies were abroad, say in Britain and America. That got me looking at the corporate backed-entity that is government. It spawned from there: too many

inconsistencies for my liking.”

Georgina, 23, a PhD anthropology student from the University of Newcastle, said she came to the meeting to learn about the SEP’s opposition to a US-led war against Syria.

“The main difference between the SEP and other parties is that it tells the truth,” she said. “It’s not about presenting a façade to try to pull wool over people’s eyes. It’s actually saying, objectively, this is what’s happening and this is why; looking back in history and what it all means.”

“Nick Beams made it clear that it [the preparations for war against Syria] is not an arbitrary thing, as if the US was saying we just want to bomb Syria because of chemical warfare. The report given today actually showed its deeper significance and huge geopolitical implications. I think the attack will go ahead and, as Nick said, we don’t know what that will spark.

“Jerry White’s report on Detroit was amazing; that a city can go bankrupt in the first place—that whole concept astounds me—but also to outline what that means for Detroit ... This is a model for what will be used in other cities.”

Ben, 20, a TAFE business student from Campbelltown in Sydney, said the meeting was “basically common sense and I agree with everything presented. It seems to me that the SEP is the only answer, the only political avenue to go down.”

Ben said he had been “thinking about politics a lot. What has interested me is where the world is going. It seems to be going against the good of everybody and I came here because I want to do something.

“Jerry [White] from America made things a lot clearer. It’s obvious that the American government is breaking the rules and this is going to affect everywhere else, including here. They are still on top, so if they go down it will affect everyone. The US is going against what it was founded on.”

Michael, a Victoria University arts student in Melbourne, said the meeting “clearly brought out the role of US imperialism. I’m only scratching the surface of this engaging material. I came to get a sense of what this party is. When you learn the facts about capitalism and imperialism, you see that it’s something you wouldn’t want to stand up for.”

Commenting on US President Obama, Michael said: “In high school when he was elected, the first black president, I followed the crowd. But you can see that he’s just a puppet for the ruling class. That’s not how it’s presented

in the media. Learning about capitalism and how ‘democracy’ really works, makes it clear what he represents.”

Ahmed, another Victoria University student, originally from Pakistan, said it was “important” to speak with Jerry White and for young people “to discuss what is happening.”

“This is the first time I have voted in Australia. I just became an Australian citizen a few months ago and joined the Labor party. I joined because I hate Liberals, but I’m a university student and Labor is increasing my fees every year. Why should I vote for them?”

Ahmed said he had stopped returning phone calls from the Labor Party. “The Greens have made a mockery of themselves by joining with the Labor Party,” he added. “Everybody knows now they are only interested in power and to get power in the Senate.”

Ahmed commented: “I’ve learnt many things [from the meeting], especially about Detroit. This is something new to me. I’d mainly been thinking that America is exploiting poor countries, but finding out that Detroit is bankrupt makes me realise that it a broader issue; it’s global.”

In Perth, there was a lively discussion after the meeting. **Rohan** said: “I am glad I came and I want to take this further by reading the web site. That is how I will inform myself more. I agree with the goals discussed here. Capitalism has festered under greed, and those in power want to stay in power, but the working class is the majority. It’s amazing what I heard here today—you tell us the truth.”

Alam, originally from Bangladesh, commented: “Capitalism is an efficient monster and it will be hard to change things.” After discussing the global financial crisis and the collapse of the post-World War II Bretton Woods system with SEP candidate Peter Symonds, Alam said: “I agree it can’t go on forever and it can’t be bailed out again.”

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