

Students and workers consider SEP's analysis

Our reporters
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WSWS reporters interviewed a number of those attending the Socialist Equality Party public meetings on the Abbott government's social austerity budget and rising danger of imperialist war. The meetings were held in Sydney, Melbourne and Newcastle last week.

William, a Newcastle University student, attended the Sydney meeting. He said the most important aspect of the event was that “it is telling workers not only why these attacks are happening but who their enemies are. I've learnt a lot and want to educate others because my situation is not unique.

“My question about voting and parliament was answered very succinctly. Nick Beams explained about finance capital and how that's changing the economy and why. Before this, all I could say was that capitalists were trying to run the country for their profits but couldn't explain how they benefited. Nick's answer was very valuable to me because it pains me to see my friends not understanding what's going on around them.”

William said the SEP meeting had a powerful impact. “It's the first time I've come to Sydney in three years and the meeting has inspired me more than anything else I've encountered in my life. The speeches were outstanding and have shaken my world view. I already believed in socialism generally, a sort of Swedish democratic socialism, but I now have a deeper understanding. I'm really happy this it has happened because now I can explain this to others.”

David, a bus driver from Sydney said, “Social inequality is getting worse and the general population is feeling less and less empowered. One of the important issues that came up today was that of voting. With the unconstitutional ousting of Rudd in 2010 people are beginning to question what on earth they are voting for. Democracy is becoming more and more an empty shell and a sham.”

David said that developing concerns about the Abbott

government's budget “provide a golden opportunity to start a conversation with many people who in the past would have identified with either Labor or Liberal.”

The situation in Australia is really becoming critical, he added. “A political perspective is totally and utterly paramount to us ever moving forward. What is needed now is for the message to get out, to give people a political perspective. Go to the root causes of the problem, which is capitalism. People have to be educated. Otherwise you have anger, and lashing out, which goes nowhere...”

Ashley, a year-12 high school student in Sydney said: “The budget is a major issue but people need to be clarified about the real causes of it. I think many see the budget as an isolated issue and just related to Abbott. But as Nick Beams and the other speakers clarified, it's a systemic issue, and it started with Keating [former Labor prime minister] and all the others, and it can't be solved through parliament. It needs to be solved through a genuine struggle of the working class.”

“The government says it's ‘ending the age of entitlement’ and that youth are just sitting around and collecting unemployment payments. This is ridiculous. The reason many people don't have jobs is because there aren't any jobs and now some young people are going to have to wait six months to receive unemployment benefits. It's hard to believe that they'd actually do something like that.”

Commenting on developments in Ukraine, Ashley said: “It's really enraging to hear the US stand up and say that they're protecting Ukraine's territorial integrity. The US has been violating territorial integrity for the past two decades and now they're openly supporting fascists in Ukraine. As the speakers explained, it's linked to the US ‘pivot to Asia’.”

William, a meat worker from Sudan who attended the Melbourne meeting, said: “I'm concerned about the social conditions affected by the budget, opposed to the

actions of the American government all over the world and interested in socialist ideas. I came to the meeting because I wanted to hear your views,” he said.

“Capitalism concentrates the resources of the community to the few, at the expense of the majority, who generate the wealth. Capitalist politicians seem to cover up everything and not tell the truth, because they have some hidden interests. Socialists—you at this meeting—give a clear explanation. I believe that all the wealth should be shared equally.”

William voiced his concerns about the danger of war between the US and China: “Lives are lost in any war but a nuclear war may wipe out mankind. The US is trying to set up bases everywhere and if a country doesn’t toe the line or set up a base where the US wants, that country is going to be in trouble. That’s what’s happened in South Sudan where the US wants to erase the interests of China in that country.”

Morris, an engineering student who attended the Newcastle University meeting, said:

“I found the conception that the budget is not just Tony Abbott’s fault and part of a trend that goes back to the history of the Labor and Liberal Party and World War II really clarifying. The budget is a triple whammy on all sides. They’re going to take away your health and your ability to learn and be educated, and take away any options for learning at university.

“I’m looking at something like a \$120,000 debt with 6 percent compounding interest. The government is turning education into a giant trap that you will never pay back and through your working life will be desperately trying to get rid of the debt that is hanging over your head. Couple this with the cuts in youth unemployment benefits, young people are not going to be able to survive. When I was on benefits I had, after food, rent and electricity, less than \$20 spending money a fortnight.

“You even have to pay for TAFE courses. This means young people will have to pay thousands of dollars just for Certificate IIIs and IVs, which are required for the most basic entry level jobs. It is just a circle of misery for young people.”



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