

Oppose the witch-hunt against Socialist Alternative

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
2 July 2014

The Socialist Equality Party emphatically opposes and condemns the witch-hunt against Socialist Alternative initiated by the Murdoch media outlets Sky News and the *Australian*. It is aimed at intimidating opponents of the vicious assault on the working class contained in the Abbott government's recent budget, and constitutes a pre-emptive strike against the opposition that will emerge to its pro-war, militarist agenda.

The witch-hunt began on Monday night when right-wing Sky News TV host Paul Murray displayed the front-page of the latest edition of Socialist Alternative's newspaper *Red Flag*. On it was a depiction of Prime Minister Tony Abbott with a razor at his throat and a caption reading "One cut we'd like to see."

Murray declared that his program had contacted the Australian Federal Police and had been informed that the image was not illegal. He demanded that it should be and insisted that there was a "gaping chasm" in laws governing the protection of politicians. Regular Sky News panellist, former Labor Party minister and power broker Graham Richardson, chimed in, declaring he could not understand why the image was not illegal.

The image was a reprise of a similar poster depicting former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in 1977, with the caption, "Give Fraser the Razor." That poster now hangs in the National Gallery in Canberra.

The attack launched by Murray's program was followed on Tuesday with an article in the *Australian* headlined "Libs, Labor condemn cutthroat image." In response, Socialist Alternative issued a statement defending the image.

"The razor was and is clearly metaphorical. Just as cartoons that depict [Labor leader] Bill Shorten knifing [former Labor prime minister] Julia Gillard in the back

are not suggestive of an actual physical attack but merely are visual representations of perceived betrayal, so the razor in both our cover and the original poster suggest that the prime minister should be cast aside," the statement said.

However, Socialist Alternative went on to declare that "due to legal concerns" it was withdrawing the cover page of its newspaper.

In view of the serious implications of the witch-hunt against it, the Socialist Alternative has a responsibility to make public the nature of those legal concerns.

The SEP has irreconcilable and well-documented political differences with Socialist Alternative. But these differences do not lessen our implacable opposition to the witch-hunt, which represents a fundamental attack on the democratic right of free speech and freedom of the press.



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