

Vote Socialist Equality Party in the New South Wales election

Against war and austerity! For social equality and democratic rights!
For a workers government and socialist policies!

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
2 March 2015

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is standing four candidates in the March 28 state election in New South Wales: **James Cogan** in Summer Hill, **Carolyn Kennett** in Penrith, **Oscar Grenfell** in Bankstown and **Noel Holt** in Wyong. Our campaign is aimed at building the SEP as the new revolutionary leadership of the working class and advancing a socialist and internationalist program against war, austerity, and the ever-escalating assault on democratic rights being implemented under the pretext of the fraudulent “war on terror.”

The SEP is campaigning against the sitting Liberal/National Party coalition government of Premier Mike Baird, the Labor Party, the Greens, and the assortment of single-issue candidates. All of them are seeking to trap the working class within the political straitjacket of parliamentary politics, as they work together to impose unprecedented attacks on the social rights of the working class.

The SEP campaign is above all directed at telling the working class the truth: that the fundamental issues it confronts stem from the breakdown of the world capitalist system. The contradictions between an integrated world economy and its division into competing national-states, in which the private ownership of production is rooted, have once again plunged the planet into economic chaos and explosive inter-imperialist antagonisms.

More than six years after the global financial crisis erupted in 2007–8, this is demonstrated by the policies of governments in every country. While the banks and financial speculators have been handed trillions of dollars in bail-outs, the working class has been made to pay through savage attacks on its living standards and social rights. From the United States to Greece, from China to South Africa and from Brazil to Russia, millions of workers have been hurled into poverty and unemployment. The myopic self-interest of rival national capitalist cliques is preventing any meaningful response to the scientific warnings on the danger of climate change, while geopolitical tensions are rising between competing states, creating numerous flashpoints around the world, any one of which could trigger a global nuclear war.

In every country, millions of workers and youth are deeply opposed to this toxic state of affairs. But anger and opposition alone cannot prevent the descent into poverty and war. The working class must be armed with an alternative political strategy and perspective, one that seeks to mobilise its massive social strength in a unified political struggle for world socialism and the reorganisation of economic life on the basis of social equality and the fulfilment of human needs—not the wealth, profits and privileges of a tiny minority.

The economic and social crisis in Australia

The fraudulent claims that the mining boom would insulate Australia

from the global crisis lie in tatters. As the economic slump worsens, investment into the mining industry has collapsed and iron ore and other commodity prices are falling. The first recession in over 24 years is gathering pace, with the vastly understated official unemployment rate already reaching 6.4 percent, the highest since 2002. Roy Morgan Research estimates that the real rate of unemployment and underemployment, centred in working class areas, is closer to 20 percent.

The policies of the next state government in NSW—regardless of whether the Liberals cling to power or Labor, under its new leader Luke Foley, scrapes back into office—will be to escalate its anti-working class austerity program.

The corporate establishment is demanding that governments, both federal and state, use the unemployment crisis to slash wages and social welfare. A business campaign is underway for the elimination of penalty rates and calls are being made to halve the minimum wage to the American rate of just \$15,000 per year or \$7.60 per hour. At the same time, the federal Abbott government is attempting to push through user pays for health care, deregulate university fees, lift the pension age to 70 and introduce measures that will throw tens of thousands off unemployment and disability support. If federal Labor were in power, it would be implementing virtually identical policies.

A tiny, parasitic social layer is benefiting at the expense of the working class—the vast majority of society. The 50 richest Australians have a combined wealth of over \$100 billion, while some 400,000 “high net worth individuals”—less than 2 percent of the population—hold over \$1.4 trillion in investable assets. At the other end of the scale, at least 3.5 million people live in poverty and millions more hover on the brink.

For a workers’ government and social equality!

For over 30 years, starting with the Labor governments of Hawke and Keating, successive state and federal governments have imposed free market restructuring in the interests of the corporate elite.

In NSW, the right to free, high quality public education has been tossed aside with the steady increase of “levy” payments, casualisation of teachers, principal autonomy over budgets and hiring, and the introduction of the reactionary NAPLAN performance-testing regime. More than 44,000 qualified teachers in NSW cannot get full-time work. The education department faces a funding shortfall of \$7 billion to construct 220 new schools in the next 20 years in order to prevent chronic overcrowding.

At the same time, both federal and state governments are responsible for decimating the public TAFE system through funding cuts of \$800 million. Some 1,200 teaching jobs have been axed since 2012, while fees have soared, making courses unaffordable for many young people.

Likewise, the public health system is in turmoil due to spending cuts, staff and bed shortages and the privatisation of entire areas of service provision. The average waiting period for elective surgery in NSW stands at 49 days, the longest in Australia, while emergency wards are regularly filled to overcapacity.

The road and public transport networks in Sydney have been starved of the funding they need to keep pace with the growth of the city. Hundreds of thousands of Sydney's workers endure daily traffic gridlock and overcrowded trains and buses with no relief in sight. Transport infrastructure in regional and rural areas has likewise been allowed to deteriorate, due to decades of official indifference.

The social crisis is sharpest in housing. The banks and speculators have driven up the median house price in Sydney to nearly \$1 million—or more than 15 times the annual earnings of most working class households, compared with 4 or 5 times in the 1960s and 1970s. The so-called “Australian dream” of owning one's own home has become a nightmare for workers and young people.

Decades of experience have proven that alternating between Liberal and Labor governments, or registering protest votes for the Greens or single-issue candidates, is a pointless and demoralising exercise. It is becoming clearer to many that parliament is nothing but a façade for the autocratic rule of the banks, investment houses, major corporations and the wealthy elite.

The working class can only secure its social rights through a political struggle for a workers' government—a government of the working class, by the working class and for the working class—that will implement a socialist program, including decent, well-paid jobs for all; free, high quality health, education and child-care and a dignified, well-funded old age. Special efforts must be made to end the grinding poverty and deprivation suffered by Aboriginal communities, which continues to worsen despite the rhetoric of “reconciliation” and “closing the gap.” Society's productive capacity and wealth must be taken out of private hands through the expropriation of the banks and major corporations, with full protection to small depositors and shareholders, and placed under social ownership and democratic control.

For an international anti-war movement!

The class-war agenda of the ruling elite is being pursued under international conditions that increasingly resemble those that preceded World Wars I and II. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States has embarked on a military rampage to control resources, markets and profits against its rivals in Europe, Asia and around the globe. The US-led war against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—itself a creation of earlier criminal US interventions—is a smokescreen for Washington's attempts to dominate the Middle East, while the installation of a US and European-backed regime in Ukraine is being used to threaten Russia with war. In Asia, every country is preparing for the possibility of conflict as a result of the US “pivot,” or military encirclement and diplomatic isolation of China.

Behind the backs of the population, and with the full complicity of the entire political and media establishment, Australia has been placed at the very forefront of a potential nuclear war between the US and China. The Australian armed forces have been fully integrated into the American war machine while new US military bases and operations are being developed around the country. The Australian government and military have become accomplices in every dirty intrigue and intervention being waged by the US administration, including the world-wide, all-pervasive spying operations exposed by whistle-blower Edward Snowden, the demonisation of Russia, and the deployment of Australian aircraft and troops to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

At the very centre of our election campaign, and all of the political work of the SEP, is the fight being waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International and all its sections to build, within the Australian and

international working class, an international anti-war movement to abolish the very source of war, the world capitalist system itself.

The SEP calls on all workers and young people opposed to militarism and war to take a resolute stand in this struggle. The US-Australia alliance, as well as military deals and agreements with all other powers, must be repudiated. All US bases in Australia, such as Pine Gap, North West Cape and the marine rotation in Darwin, must be shut down. Australian troops, as well as police and military personnel, must be immediately withdrawn from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Asia-Pacific countries. The entire Australian military-police-intelligence apparatus must be disbanded, and the resources utilised for socially useful purposes.

Defend democratic rights!

Democratic rights are under attack by the ruling elites of every country, in order to hone police-state mechanisms for the suppression of opposition to militarism, austerity and social inequality. It is this that lies behind the sinister hysteria over terrorism that has been whipped up by the Abbott and Baird governments, with the full backing of Labor, the Greens and virtually the entire official political and media establishment.

The Sydney siege last December, which involved not terrorism but the deranged actions of a mentally disturbed individual, who had been closely monitored by both ASIO and NSW police for years, was deliberately and immediately inflated into a national crisis. No credible answer has been given to the questions, raised by the hostages themselves, as to why no attempt was made to negotiate a peaceful end to the stand-off.

The Abbott government and the media have cynically used the tragic deaths of two of the hostages as a politically convenient justification for renewed Australian military operations in Iraq, along with new legislation giving the intelligence and police agencies sweeping new powers to spy on the population and carry out raids and arrests. Abbott, with Labor's support, has attacked the fundamental democratic right of every person to be treated as innocent until proven guilty, in a trial by one's peers. The police are being equipped with military-style hardware and empowered to detain “suspects” on the most threadbare grounds. The courts are being pressured to deny bail and hand down convictions with ever harsher sentences. Meanwhile, the “war on terror” is being accompanied by a deliberate attempt to promote xenophobic and racist attitudes toward Muslims.

The notions that Australia is at war and that democratic rights must be cast aside in the name of “national security” are being woven into the overblown commemorations of the centenary of World War I and the Anzac landing at Gallipoli. The ruling class is so determined to promote its agenda that even primary school children are being indoctrinated with pro-war propaganda about the alleged heroism of Australian soldiers and the need to “sacrifice for the nation.” This disgusting nationalist and chauvinist campaign is aimed at undermining and pre-empting the development of a powerful anti-war movement of workers and young people alike, and to conditioning the entire population to accept militarism and war as normal features of daily life.

What has become increasingly evident over the past decade is that there is no longer any section of the ruling establishment that retains a commitment to democratic rights. Refugees are illegally detained and subjected to the most inhumane treatment; criminal wars are fought, causing countless victims; police kill and maim with impunity, while the mass media, including the so-called “unbiased” and “liberal” ABC and SBS, shamelessly parrot the government lies and spin.

Only the working class, on the basis of the struggle for socialism, can defend democratic rights and liberties, which were, themselves, won over centuries of political struggle against the powers-that-be. The SEP upholds, as a fundamental principle, the unfettered right of every person, whatever their place of birth, to live and work in the country of their choosing, with full citizenship rights. All anti-democratic legislation must

be immediately revoked.

For the political independence of the working class

The working class can only establish its political independence and fight for its own class interests by carrying through a thorough political break with the Labor Party and the trade unions. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the advent of globalised production undermined the national reformist programs of all the old social democratic and Stalinist parties, such as the Australian Labor Party (ALP), in the major capitalist countries. From then on, they became transformed into the most ruthless instruments for the corporate drive to achieve “international competitiveness,” by slashing the conditions of the working class. From 1983 to 1996, under Hawke and Keating, the ALP deregulated the economy, carried out major privatisations, destroyed workers’ rights, cut wages, and was responsible for an unprecedented transfer of wealth from the working class to the rich.

As for the trade unions, they are no longer workers’ organisations in any sense of the term, but function as an industrial police-force, responsible for restructuring workplaces, slashing conditions and jobs and arranging “orderly closures” on behalf of the corporate bosses. The highly paid union bureaucracy is devoting millions of dollars to an utterly cynical campaign against the Liberal government’s plans for electricity privatisation, even though it was Hawke and Keating that initiated the process federally and NSW Labor that began the sell-off of state assets during its 16-year term in government from 1995 to 2011.

The unions are being assisted in their efforts to re-elect Labor by fake-left organisations such as Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance. These organisations, which represent affluent sections of the middle class, promote the lie that Labor is a “lesser evil” to the Liberals or that the Greens represent a progressive alternative. The sole aim of their activities is to keep the working class subordinated to parliament and the capitalist nation state.

The reality for workers and youth in every country is that there is no easy or parliamentary way out of the global crisis of the capitalist system. The working class must strike out on a new road, based on assimilating the lessons of the bitter strategic experiences of the twentieth century. The setbacks and defeats suffered by past revolutionary movements demonstrate that nothing less than the abolition of the capitalist profit system and the establishment of world socialism can provide a future for humanity, free of war, poverty and oppression. That is the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world party of socialist revolution founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938, of which the SEP is the Australian section.

Build the Socialist Equality Party and the ICFI

The SEP appeals to workers, students and youth, as well as to socialist-minded intellectuals and professional people: Give our campaign your maximum support, donate to it online and vote for our candidates on March 28.

To vote for the SEP, place 1 in the box beside **James Cogan** in Summer Hill, **Carolyn Kennett** in Penrith, **Oscar Grenfell** in Bankstown or **Noel Holt** in Wyong. The SEP will not issue preferences or make preference deals with any other party or candidate.

Due to anti-democratic NSW electoral laws, while the SEP is a registered political party at the federal level, at the state level it is not. Our party name will therefore not appear beside the names of our candidates on the ballot paper.

While we are striving for the largest possible vote, the primary aim of our campaign goes far beyond this election. It is part of the fight to build the SEP and the ICFI as the political leadership of the international working class.

The ICFI is the only party that bases its political work on the principles and program of revolutionary Marxism, embodied most powerfully in the struggle led by Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the Russian

Revolution, against Stalinism. Stalin headed a privileged nationalist bureaucracy, which suppressed the working class, murdered hundreds of thousands of socialists, and was responsible for the greatest international defeats of the working class. Its counter-revolution culminated in the liquidation of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the restoration of capitalism.

The ruling classes internationally have devoted vast resources to falsely identifying Marxism and socialism with the crimes of Stalinism and promoting the lie that there is no alternative to the capitalist system. This has vastly assisted them in imposing their assault on the working class and their turn to militarism without unleashing mass revolutionary struggles. The manifest failure of capitalism, however, is preparing the conditions for immense political upheavals and international revolutionary struggles by the working class. The best layers of workers and youth are looking for a way forward.

They will find it in the ICFI and the SEP. If you agree with this statement, then we urge you to contact us, participate in our campaign and apply to join our party.

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To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact