

# SEP candidates in NSW election address public meetings

Our correspondents  
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) held a series of lively public meetings last week in the four electorates where the party is standing in the forthcoming March 28 New South Wales state elections.

SEP national secretary James Cogan spoke in Summer Hill, Noel Holt in Wyong, Oscar Grenfell in Bankstown and Carolyn Kennett in Penrith. Cogan also addressed the Wyong and Penrith meetings while *World Socialist Web Site* international editorial board member Nick Beams spoke at the Bankstown event.

The SEP candidates discussed the international context in which the state elections are being held—the deepening crisis of global capitalism, social austerity cuts and attacks on democratic rights, and the danger of imperialist war.

Speakers explained that irrespective of the state election outcome, the incoming government would intensify the attack on the living standards and social rights of the working class on behalf of the financial and corporate elite. The meetings provided an important forum for workers, students, youth and retirees to discuss these crucial questions and the necessity for a socialist and internationalist perspective.

Addressing the Wyong electorate meeting on the state's Central Coast on Wednesday, James Cogan reviewed the collapse of support for the old political parties in Greece, the election of the Syriza government and its abject capitulation to the dictates of European finance capital, and the lessons for workers and youth in Australia.

Cogan explained that just as in Greece, the assault on living standards would see a spectacular collapse in support for all the bourgeois political parties that previously prevailed in every country.

“The current situation of Labor and Liberal dominating politics is not a permanent state of affairs. It is very volatile. Processes are leading to the demise of these formations and there are pro-capitalist tendencies which are well aware of this,” he said. The speaker pointed to the discussion between the Greens and the pseudo-left Socialist Alliance on the establishment of a Syriza-type party in Australia.

“Such a party,” Cogan said, “would work, like Syriza, to promote delusions that workers can advance their interests by electing it into parliament and then betray them by imposing the dictates of the financial and corporate elite.”

He continued: “It is not inevitable that the break of the working class with Labor and the trade unions has to take the form of workers being deceived and diverted by whatever bourgeois organisation is established by tendencies such as the Greens, Socialist Alliance and Socialist Alternative. It can take the form of a conscious break with bourgeois politics and the adoption of an internationalist, revolutionary, socialist program. That is the axis of the political work of the SEP.”

Cogan told the audience: “What is the lesson that must be drawn by workers everywhere from the role of Syriza in Greece? It is that without a struggle to end the source of the global crisis, the capitalist profit system itself, there is no way forward.”

Noel Holt, the SEP candidate for Wyong, told the meeting that the answer of finance capital and its Liberal and Labor servants' to the global economic crisis was a social counter revolution to wipe out all the gains of the working class.

Holt explained that the retrogressive social measures already imposed by Labor and Liberal governments, state and federal alike, were devastating working class communities.

“Deceit and hypocrisy by both Labor and Liberal is running rife in this election, especially over electricity privatisation,” Holt said, and explained the record of the previous federal and state Labor governments.

“The entire privatisation agenda was set in train by the Hawke and Keating Labor federal governments, which sold off the Commonwealth Bank in 1991. Two years later, it privatised Qantas.

Facing deep public opposition, Labor did not sell the communications carrier Telstra, where I worked for many years, but it corporatised the business to lay the groundwork for its privatisation by the Howard Liberal government in 2006,” Holt said, and explained that thousands of jobs were

destroyed.

“I worked in maintenance and we went from being a service-provider to being ‘customer-based.’ It no longer mattered if people went without a phone for days ... My maintenance crew went from nine down to three—patching up services as best we could. It was the same in other areas. The trade unions were directly responsible for blocking any struggle to defend jobs and maintain services,” he said.

The election meeting in Bankstown was addressed by WSWs international editorial board member Nick Beams and Oscar Grenfell, the SEP candidate.

Beams explained that nothing had been resolved since the September 2008 financial crisis. The entire system could only keep going as long as new money was being pumped into the financial markets by the major central banks, but this has created the conditions for another financial crash, potentially on a scale far wider and deeper.

The capitalist class in every country, the speaker said, had unleashed a global social counter-revolution against the working class—attacks on jobs, wages, working conditions and the destruction of social services—and was “heading towards another world war, more devastating even than those of the 20th century.”

Beams said that the Business Council of Australia’s submission for the upcoming federal budget, which was a 10-year plan to slash government spending and deepen the austerity assault on the working class, had been endorsed by Labor’s shadow treasurer Chris Bowen.

Labor’s message to the financial elite, Beams explained, was that “the Liberals had been unable to carry out corporate business’s agenda and that Labor should be entrusted with the task.”

SEP candidate Oscar Grenfell reviewed the growth of mass unemployment amongst youth and the government attacks on the right to education. “Universities and TAFEs have been subjected to billions of dollars of funding cuts,” he said. “This is the significance of the attempts by the Abbott government to complete the deregulation of university funding. These measures follow those implemented by the Gillard Labor government which has led to course fees rising to tens of thousands of dollars a year ...

“In working-class neighbourhoods throughout Australia and in areas such as Bankstown, the official response to every social problem is to boost police numbers and powers, with working class youths subjected to daily police harassment, and searches,” Grenfell said.

Addressing the SEP meeting in the Penrith electorate, Carolyn Kennett said that the drive to war internationally was accompanied by an assault on the social position and democratic rights of the working class at home.

“Under the pretext of the fraudulent ‘war on terror,’

Kennett said, “the most fundamental democratic rights have been torn to shreds, with laws on the books giving police the power to conduct raids on the flimsiest of pretexts, to effectively abolish the right to association, and to spy on the daily lives and communications of ordinary people.

“The corporate media pumps out an endless stream of racist bile, directed at the Muslim population, to justify this agenda and to sow divisions within the working class.” The local expression of this, she said, was manifested in the attempts by right-wing and neo-fascist elements to whip up opposition to a proposed mosque and community centre at Kemp’s Creek.

“The media have led the assault widely quoting extreme xenophobic views on the issue and several candidates have made opposition to the Mosque central to their election platforms. Immigrants in general and Muslims in particular, are made the scapegoats for inadequacy of infrastructure, transport, housing and worsening working and social conditions.

“This is a diversion from the real problems confronting working people that have as their root cause, capitalism and is used in a bid to prevent a unified struggle by the working class.”

SEP speakers at all the meetings emphasised that the only way to confront the drive to war and the attacks on jobs, living standards and basic rights was in the struggle to build a socialist movement of the working class to put an end to the profit system. The first step in that process was to participate in the SEP’s election campaign and apply to join the SEP.

WSWS reporters interviewed workers and young people after the meetings.

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