

Support the Socialist Equality Party in the NSW election

Against war, austerity and repression. For a socialist solution to the capitalist crisis

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
27 March 2015

The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers and young people to vote for our four candidates in the March 28 New South Wales state election: James Cogan in Summer Hill, Carolyn Kennett in Penrith, Oscar Grenfell in Bankstown and Noel Holt in Wyong. The working class can only overcome the crisis produced by the failure of the capitalist profit system by taking up the fight for the socialist and internationalist perspective advanced by the SEP. Every other party and candidate, including the Greens and the myriad single-issue parties and independents, articulate, in one way or another, the interests of the corporate and financial elite.

Developments in the lead up to the election underscore the gravity of the situation confronting workers in Australia and around the world.

* During the past weeks, the United States has been seeking to provoke conflict with China over its construction of alleged military facilities on islands and reefs in the South China Sea. The *Wall Street Journal* bluntly stated on Wednesday that “these new fortresses... raise the risk of war.” Behind these geopolitical tensions lies the drive by the Obama administration to subordinate China, the centre of global manufacturing and world’s second largest economy, to the Wall Street banks and US-based transnationals.

The Abbott Liberal-National Coalition government, and the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments that preceded it, have thoroughly integrated the Australian military, and the many US-controlled bases in the country, into US preparations for war against China. The entire Australian political and media establishment, including the Greens and the various pseudo-left groupings, are participating in a conspiracy of silence over the growing dangers of nuclear war, in order to stave off the development of organised political opposition in the working class to the reckless militarism of the US and Australian ruling elites.

* This week, following international reports highlighting the prospects of an even more devastating global financial crisis than that of 2007–2008, the Reserve Bank of Australia warned that a crash of the country’s real estate bubble would cause a “significant” fall in house prices and hinted at the possibility of

bank failures. Driven by relentless investor speculation, property values, especially in Sydney, have risen to astronomical levels. The Lazard investment group noted that the impact of a crash could be “even worse” than the drastic devaluations, recession and mass unemployment that developed in the United States after 2007–2008.

* Underscoring the determination of the corporate and financial elites, and their hired hacks in the Labor Party and the trade unions, to place the burden of the economic crisis onto the backs of the working class, the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA), the union supposedly representing shop assistants, initiated negotiations with the leading state business association in South Australia to abolish penalty rates. On Tuesday, big business around the country celebrated the fact that the union has done what the Abbott government had decided it was not in a position to do—namely strip low-paid retail workers of their century-old entitlements for working on week-day evenings and Saturdays. The deal also cuts in half penalty rates for Sunday work, and by one third on public holidays.

This unprecedented betrayal of workers’ conditions by the SDA has already been publicly hailed by federal Labor opposition leader Bill Shorten and by the Australian Council of Trade Unions. It has set a benchmark for every employer, in every industry, to eliminate penalty rates in collaboration with the trade unions, creating a desperate situation for the millions of workers who depend on these entitlements to pay their mortgages and maintain their families.

Behind this union-organised assault is the demand of the corporate world for wages in Australia to be lowered to the levels of those in the US and Europe, which have been slashed under the austerity measures unleashed in those countries since 2008, as well as throughout Asia. The Labor Party and the unions are no less committed to the drive for “international competitiveness” and higher profits, at the direct expense of the jobs, wages and living standards of ordinary working people, than their big business colleagues.

Growing numbers of workers and youth are being politicised by the increasing tempo of wars, international crises and attacks

on their living standards. Alienation from the two-party parliamentary establishment has reached unprecedented dimensions following more than three decades of free-market “restructuring,” participation in criminal US-led wars, and the escalating assault on democratic rights and civil liberties, under the pretext of the fraudulent “war on terror.” For years, a large majority of voters has been going to the ballot box with no other intent than to register a protest.

Dominating the NSW election campaign has been seething popular anger towards the federal coalition government of Prime Minister Tony Abbott. Elected in September 2013 due to mass hostility against the former Rudd and Gillard Labor governments, the Coalition brought down an austerity budget last year that attempted to introduce public spending cuts in health, education and welfare, directly impacting on the most vulnerable layers of the working class, students and welfare recipients. It now faces the prospect of defeat at the next election and becoming the first single-term federal government since 1931.

The backlash against Abbott has already contributed to the ousting of single-term state Liberal governments and the return of Labor in recent elections in Victoria and Queensland. Many voters in NSW will likely follow suit and vote against the single-term incumbent state Liberal-National government headed by Premier Mike Baird, although strong memories persist throughout the working class of the attacks waged by the last state Labor government, which became renowned after 16 years in office for its sleaze, corruption and assaults on the job, wages and conditions. In the last state election, Labor was reduced to a tiny rump, suffering the largest-ever swing against a sitting government in Australian history.

This electoral volatility points to a profound crisis of bourgeois rule in the face of intractable economic contradictions, rising class antagonisms and the build-up towards war. The ability of the ruling elite to defend its interests behind the façade of “democracy” and parliamentary politics is unravelling. Ever-greater resources are being poured into the military, the intelligence and spy agencies and the police apparatus to suppress the inevitable eruption of social unrest.

Throughout this election campaign, the trade unions and pseudo-left organisations have yet again promoted the worn-out lies that Labor is a “lesser evil” to the Coalition parties and that the Greens represent a “progressive” alternative. The sole aim of these fraudulent assertions is to confine the working class within the framework of parliamentary and nationalist politics and render it unprepared for the ruthless onslaught being organised for the period directly ahead.

Only the SEP has insisted that anger and frustration, while justified, do not constitute an alternative perspective. It is long past time for workers to draw essential lessons from past experience. The transfer of power from one capitalist party to another, will not advance their interests one iota. The current

crisis is the product of the breakdown of capitalism, itself the outcome of the fundamental contradiction between the world economy and its division into competing nation-states, in which the private ownership of production is rooted. What is required is the development of an independent political movement of the working class, based on a socialist and internationalist perspective, to fight for a workers’ government—a government of, for, and by the working class—which will expropriate the banks and major corporations and rationally reorganise social and economic life to fulfil the social needs and interests of the vast majority, not the private wealth of a tiny few.

The most essential task before all those class conscious workers and youth who agree with the need to fight against war and social inequality is to assimilate the lessons of the key strategic experiences of the 20th century. They must understand, through the study of this history, which parties and leaderships betrayed the working class, and what party and program did not.

This has been at the very heart of the SEP’s election campaign. We have developed far-reaching discussions with serious workers, students, professionals and retirees on the lessons of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the emergence of Stalinism and its betrayal of the revolution and ultimate dissolution of the Soviet Union. We have discussed the fight by the Trotskyist movement, represented today by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), against Stalinism and to defend and develop the perspective of world socialist revolution.

The SEP, the Australian section of the ICFI, is the only party that, on the basis of this history and program, represents the interests of the working class. We call on you to vote “1” for James Cogan in Summer Hill, Carolyn Kennett in Penrith, Oscar Grenfell in Bankstown and Noel Holt in Wyong.

Due to the reactionary electoral laws in NSW, the SEP is not a registered party at the state level, so its name will not appear beside the names of these candidates on the ballot paper.

Most importantly, we urge all workers and young people who agree with this revolutionary socialist perspective to read the *World Socialist Web Site*, the daily internet site of the ICFI, apply to join the Socialist Equality Party, and commit to the fight to build it as the mass party of the working class.

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