Letters demand Australian council reverse censorship of SEP

14 April 2015

The Socialist Equality Party is continuing to receive copies of letters that have been sent by party supporters and WSWS readers to Burwood Council in Sydney, protesting over its cancellation of the SEP's booking of the Burwood Library Auditorium for a public meeting on April 26 entitled "Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III."

The letters condemn the decision and call on the Labor Party mayor, John Faker, and Burwood Council to overturn this blatantly anti-democratic and discriminatory act of political censorship. SEP National Secretary James Cogan formally demanded the reversal of the cancellation in a letter sent to the Council yesterday.

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"My father returned to civilian life with a hatred of militarism"

The cancellation is an attack on the SEP's democratic rights and amounts to political censorship—at the behest of individuals who can only be described as fascist.

On a personal note, I must add that my father married late in life and had witnessed the horrors of World War I, which he described to me in great detail. He was gassed in France, the effects of which he suffered all his life. Like so many others who went through similar experiences, he returned to civilian life with a hatred of militarism and utter contempt for those who had sent young working men of all countries to fight in what he correctly identified as a war between competing imperialist powers.

Were my father still alive, I have no doubt that he would be making every attempt to attend the SEP's meeting and would be demanding that Burwood Council reverse its decision, just as I have.

DN – Brisbane

From a history teacher in New York

There is a strong sense of affinity between the workers of the United States and Australia, perhaps arising out of similarities and unities in our history. As a teacher of history I am aware of that and also of the disastrous results that wars have had for the working class internationally. It is therefore outrageous to read news of how the Burwood City Council cancelled the booking for a public meeting that had been scheduled by the Socialist Equality Party for April 26, 2015 on "Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III."

It seems to me that if there were calls from racist and extreme-right elements for the cancellation of a discussion on that topic that it would be all the more urgent for those who believe in democracy, freedom of speech, and peace and justice to insist on the right of that meeting to be held, in fact, to support the meeting. I call on the officials of Burwood to do just that and restore the right of the Socialist Equality Party to their meeting place. I am sure there are many others requesting the same.

Sincerely,

HL

New York, New York

Millions spent on the glorification of war as austerity imposed

What does Burwood Council find so wrong with asking workers to unite against war and racism and to help build a united future, based on social need rather than corporate profits?

In an era when working people all over the world are constantly being assailed with austerity programs and budget cuts, the Australian government has seen fit to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on the celebration and glorification of a war that need not have happened, with the ANZACS, Gallipoli and WWI being unashamedly used as propaganda to whip the population into an acceptance of militarism as part of our national identity.

I am sure any of the troops that served in that (or any other) conflict would be appalled and disappointed by the glorification of war and the 'hero worship' that is being promoted in their names. In all of the funding that is being used for this 'celebration' of WWI, I am not aware that one cent of that money has been spent on any project that would help workers to understand (in any real way) why so many people were needlessly killed in the name of protecting 'Global Markets'—this is exactly the same situation that exists today—and this you will find (if you were to take the time to attend the meeting) is precisely what the SEP intended to patiently explain in your community hall on Sunday the 26th April 2015. The SEP is not staging protests, it is attempting to educate people in a different perspective to the popular propaganda and that is in no way a protest.

DB – Sydney

"It is not the council's role to control the expression of opinion"

To cancel their reservations is tantamount to an act of political censorship, a flagrant disregard for the right of freedom of assembly and association.

It is not the council's role to control the expression of opinion, to determine which doctrines or arguments the public are allowed to hear.

OA – Perth

"They hope to extinguish all critical thought"

The corporate elite, the mass media, and all the mainstream parties, along with these ultra-right-wing outfits, share a common aim which they hope to achieve through the promotion of the multi-million dollar Anzac day commemorations. They hope to extinguish all critical thought by drowning the youth in a jingoistic wave of patriotism. They hope to stifle and repress all opposition to war, in order to impose the war drive of Australian capitalism on to the Australian people. Above all else, they aim to prevent the working class from developing its own independent perspective. By your actions, you are

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proving your willingness to participate in this campaign to prevent the working class from hearing the truth, so as to condition it for the next imperialist slaughter.

Your surrender to these extreme right-wing forces only serves to embolden them and encourage them to make further demands.

KM – Melbourne

"The SEP is and always has been an anti-war party"

The SEP is and always has been an anti-war party. During this time when the international ruling elites are escalating their militarist agendas, all Australians deserve to be able to listen to an international political perspective that is in contrast to the relatively small-minded patriotic nationalist perspectives that have already led us into two world wars.

The Burwood City Council should not go down in history as a council that resorted to repression and censorship whipped up by reactionary right-wing forces attempting to intimidate and suppress an anti-war meeting.

RS – Sydney

From a law professor

Your council's decision is patently discriminatory. No such bans have been imposed on pro-war gatherings. The Socialist Equality Party's meetings on April 26 are the only ones opposing the official propaganda barrage to justify the 1915 invasion of Turkey, which was part of a war to defend Britain's colonial empire and acquire new colonies for Australia, such as Papua New Guinea. The SEP's meetings are the only events seeking to warn that behind the centenary extravaganza lies the drive to condition public opinion for another such war.

If your bid to block this political meeting is allowed to pass, it will set a reactionary precedent that will be used to try to suppress the mounting opposition to the lurch to a third world war as the United States government and its closest allies, notably those in Canberra, escalates its wars in the Middle East and its confrontations against Russia and China.

As a law professor, let me also make it clear that your politically discriminatory cancellation of the booking is a flagrant violation of the Australian Constitution's implied freedom of political communication from government interference. Your illegal ban must be reversed at once.

MH – Sydney

"Ordinary working people sacrificed in war"

I must remind you that it wasn't the elites' sons and daughters who died and suffered in those world wars and in fact all modern wars, but the ordinary working people who were sacrificed.

You must understand your actions in this matter have given solace and succor to those who are in support of pro-war, jingoism, racism and the silencing of debate and who hate ordinary people.

SB – Melbourne

"Many people repulsed by the relentless propaganda"

I am appalled and outraged by this attack on the rights of Australian citizens to freely choose if they would like to attend a meeting to hear the perspective of the only political party currently advancing any opposition to the grotesque glorification of the blood bath of WWI and advancing an anti-war perspective whilst seeking to highlight the current dangers of humanity being plunged again into world war.

Many people in the community, myself included, are repulsed by the relentless propaganda and "celebrations" organised by the Australian government which are more akin to the organisation of a major sporting event, with the waving of flags, chanting and wearing of "team" colours, than the solemn commemoration that the anniversary of WWI deserves.

MT – Melbourne

"I do not want my children and grandchildren to endure what my parents and grandparents lived through"

Millions of people worldwide marched and demonstrated against sending US and allied troops to invade Iraq in 2003. In Australia marches of over 100,000 people were held, to no avail. This demonstrates to me that there is immense opposition to war amongst the broad population of ordinary people. The Socialist Equality Party is the only party I have found which highlights the current danger of war by drawing attention to the causes of war in the past. Anzac and WWI, WWII and the Vietnam wars were horrific and barbaric acts by imperialist governments around the world. We don't want a repeat of these. The imminent use of nuclear weapons should be enough for any rational person to be opposed to preparations which might lead to war.

I am employed as a Transport Development Worker and I see the effects of the cuts to government programs aimed to support disadvantaged people, every day. I understand that governments in both State and Federal jurisdictions are carrying out the most extensive redistribution of wealth to the rich ever undertaken in human history and I also understand that this is linked to their preparations for war.

I do not want my children and grandchildren and their generations to have to endure what I and my parents and grandparents lived through.

MK – Sydney

WSWS readers should send emails to the Labor Party Mayor of Burwood, Councillor John Faker, at mayor@burwood.nsw.gov.au, and to Burwood Council management, at council@burwood.nsw.gov.au. The email addresses of all seven current Burwood councillors can be seen here.

Please specify "Complaint" in the subject field and CC all emails to the SEP at sep@sep.org.au.

See also:

Defenders of democratic rights condemn Australian council's anti-war meeting ban
[13 April 2015]

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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