

WSWS readers condemn Australian council ban on anti-war meeting

Our reporter
16 April 2015

Burwood City Council continues to receive letters protesting its refusal to reverse its decision to ban the Socialist Equality Party from holding its “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III” meeting at the Burwood Library Auditorium scheduled for April 26.

Scores of emails have been sent in the past 24 hours from the UK, France, the United States, Thailand and Australia passionately condemning the council’s blatant political censorship and discrimination. The council has contemptuously responded to the protests with a perfunctory pro forma letter refusing to reverse the cancellation or provide any explanation for its decision. Burwood Mayor John Faker and six other city councillors have not replied to SEP national secretary James Cogan’s April 13 letter.

A selection of the most recent letters to the council from WSWS readers and SEP supporters are published below.

“You have managed to turn your library into a byword for censorship”

I am lending my voice to the chorus of outrage over your cancellation of the scheduled SEP public meeting at the Burwood Library Auditorium April 26, 2015, and to the demand that you reverse the ban and let the meeting proceed as planned.

I live in the United States and was not planning to attend the meeting, and indeed I would never have even known of its existence had your action not drawn worldwide attention to it, provoking the ire due to any attack on free speech and exposing your hitherto anonymous selves as at least the servants of craven reaction and apparently the dedicated enemies of peace and international brotherhood as well.

It probably does not concern you that you have managed to turn your library into a byword for censorship, nor, to be honest, does it much concern me. But should your action prove the opening shot in an ongoing attack on my organization, you will find that you have volunteered yourselves for an ongoing notoriety the scale of which ought to give you pause.

Reinstate the SEP meeting.

MW – Seattle, USA

“Attack on right of Australian workers to oppose war has not gone unnoticed here in the UK”

I wish to protest in the strongest terms to the censorship being exercised by your council body on the public meeting organised by the Socialist Equality Party on April 26th.

This flagrant attack on the historically defended democratic right of Australian workers and youth to oppose war has not gone unnoticed here in the UK.

The noxious pro-war hysteria being pumped out by all official political and media channels (as in the WW1 centenary celebrations) in Australia, Britain and elsewhere is extremely unpopular amongst the working people as they instinctively know that it portends newer and wider wars.

This will meet up with a mass response.

You would do well to reverse your decision.

HT – England, UK

“Shocked at a deliberate action to stifle freedom of speech”

Hi there,

As an international journalist writing on social and political subjects in world media such as Rt (the second most popular news service in Britain after the BBC), I am shocked at what appears to be a deliberate action on your part to stifle freedom of speech and prevent a meeting devoted to discussing the dangers of a worldwide conflagration due to nuclear war.

As a journalist who cherishes these freedoms, I urge you to immediately rescind the decision to ban this meeting and allow the Socialist Equality Party of Australia, the sponsor of the meeting, to go forward with it.

ES – Thailand

“Censorship deserves strongest condemnation” — from a US associate professor

I was dismayed to read about the decision announced on April 10 to cancel the room booking for an April 26 meeting of the Socialist Equality Party. The statement by the council, that this was based on the “nature of the event” leaves no other conclusion but that this was an act of censorship directed against opposition to the Anzac celebrations and war. This censorship is an entirely undemocratic suppression of political opposition and deserves the strongest condemnation. I appeal to the Council leadership to reverse the decision and to provide the space for the meeting.

CT Associate Professor – California, USA

“Refusal to allow SEP meeting to warn against future slaughter is a betrayal of youth and humanity”

Thank you for your quick reply.

The socialist movement, best represented by the Socialist Equality Party, has consistently fought to spare young men and women the horrors of war. The worst example of betrayal of that trust was the support of WW1 by “socialists” who bowed to nationalism and supported their own countries in that slaughter.

I am afraid your refusal to allow the Australian SEP the use of a public building to warn against future slaughter is part of that betrayal of youth and humanity.

You should be ashamed.

WD – US Army

“Your actions seem to be determined by orders from higher up”

I wish to protest your Labour Council’s ban on the SEP’s public meeting at the Burwood City Council hall in Sydney, apparently at the behest of an extreme right wing, not to say fascist organisation.

From all I can read from my side of the globe, your actions seem to be determined not solely by your council but from orders higher up. Your decision to ban the SEP’s meeting is, without qualification, a blatant attack on what appears to be the only voice in Australia crying out against the vile celebrations of the First and Second World slaughter of the Labouring Classes.

Is this how you, the Labour members of the Burwood City Council are

content to be remembered by future generations or do you have the moral courage to defy the orders from above, live up to what the Australian Labour Party once stood for and reinstate the SEP's democratic right to hold its public meeting.

I wish you *bon courage*.

T – France

“Action of council is a matter of deepest principle not a Customer Service matter”

Your reply is not acceptable. The action of the Council to prevent the meeting of the Socialist Equality Party in a public forum on April 26 is a matter of the deepest principle, not a Customer Service matter as implied in the original reply. You do not even state the “facts of the matter” that you claim to have reviewed or give any reasons for your reversal of your original decision and cancellation.

It is not only an attack on the rights of speech and assembly of the SEP but an attack on all workers—not only in Burwood or even in Australia but on the working class internationally—because it is the working class that is divided by nationalist ideology to fight wars that serve the interests and profits of the financial elite. Their RIGHT to be informed of this history, especially in the face of the sickening glorifying celebrations of World Wars, is what you are assaulting and this places you on the side of militarism and imperialism.

The only just resolution is to reverse your decision and allow the SEP to hold its meeting as had originally been planned and approved.

HL – USA

“Militarist propaganda being brought into primary schools—for what purpose?”

I want to lodge my protest in regards to your decision to cancel the SEP's public meeting, “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III,” which was scheduled to be held at Burwood Library Auditorium.

Every day, we are bombarded with the militarist propaganda, pictures of war, glorification of the military by media, newspapers. They are even bringing it to the primary schools as part of the school program. For what purpose?

Wars and destruction for whose benefit? What was behind the First World War? Why did so many innocent people spill their blood? Why did young souls bleed white in the trenches?

Now, when the voices are raised against this glorification, and when the SEP wants to give another side of the story, when it wants to expose the media lies, when it wants quite correctly to warn the working class and young people about the real agenda behind the Anzac glorification, you decided to take this right away. You decided to cancel it without any explanation of the reasons for your action.

The Anzac Day or more accurately the Anzac Myth should never be glorified and celebrated. The world war was about the carve-up of the world between the major imperialist powers. It was a war for the dominance and subjugation, the war that brought destruction and misery for millions of people. The soldiers coming back home did not want to discuss the horrors that they went through. They did not want to be reminded of idiocy of attacking a country that never did any harm to them.

What we have today is the militarisation of the society through exploitation of human suffering for more suffering. We have wars run on lies—Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, then Iraq again. While at home we are cutting spending on healthcare, education and welfare. Just today I heard an announcement of another 330 Australian soldiers being sent to Iraq.

Your cancellation of the meeting will make you accomplices to this war fever and these war criminals. Tomorrow when young people of the world slaughter each other, you will have their blood on your hands.

DS – Perth, Western Australia

“Youth from other British colonial countries such as India were also

used as cannon fodder”

Hereby I condemn the act of political censorship, imposed over the Socialist Equality Party by the Burwood City Council in Sydney, cancelling its booking to use the Burwood Library Auditorium for its public meeting on April 26, entitled “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III.”

During World War I not only the Australian and NZ youth but the youth from other British colonial countries such as India were used as cannon fodder. I condemn the mean attempts to glorify an imperialist war spending millions of tax payer's money and covering up the crimes such as shooting the impoverished youth misled to be soldiers suffering ‘shell shock’ from colonial countries such as Australia, NZ and India.

As a supporter of the SEP, a senior citizen of Australia and a grandfather, I do not want any youth of the world get misled to face such a prospect by facing a nuclear war and getting disintegrated as the cannon fodder. Hence I demand that the Burwood council reverse its anti-democratic cancellation of the April 26 hall booking placed by the SEP to hold the above public meeting with immediate effect.

SW – Melbourne, Victoria

“My questions should be answered in the same serious historical tone that I have asked them”

In reference to my email of 14 April, 2015, I specifically addressed the email to yourself and would appreciate a reply from you. I also asked three questions which were not answered.

First, do you believe in freedom of speech? I asked this in a period where the public has been inundated by the view that war is noble, glorious and worthwhile generated by politicians and paid for by the taxpayer, one organisation, the Socialist Equality Party has dared to put an opposing view. I would like you to play your part in allowing that view to be heard. That is called a democratic right. It is called freedom of speech. Your name will go down on the historical record as having orchestrated a ban on an anti-war meeting if you persist in your cancellation. I'd advise you to check the SEP's worldwide readership on Alexa if you doubt this.

Second, apparently you have decided that the SEP's public meeting is in fact a protest and on that basis you have cancelled the meeting. On what do you base this decision? The SEP has held thousands of public meetings, all have been conducted on the highest intellectual level and in a principled manner. That is on the historical record. Where is your evidence to the contrary?

Third, by aligning yourself with Reclaim Australia, you are aligning yourself with racist, anti-Muslim elements: that will also be on your historical record.

My questions to an elected public official should not be fobbed off with apologies for “any inconvenience” but answered in the same serious historical tone that I have asked them.

I await your own prompt reply.

EZ – Sydney, New South Wales

WSWS readers and supporters should send emails to the Labor Party Mayor of Burwood, Councillor John Faker, at mayer@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.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact