

“Act of political censorship is a damning indictment of Labor”

More letters opposing Australian council's attack on democratic rights

Our reporter
17 April 2015

Burwood City Council continues to receive letters from around the world condemning 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.

The council has provided no explanation for its actions. Burwood Mayor John Faker and six other city councillors have not replied to SEP national secretary James Cogan's April 13 letter. To date, the Australian media has not reported on the issue.

A selection of the most recent letters to the council from WSWs readers and SEP supporters in Pakistan, Thailand, Germany, the UK and Australia are published below.

Young Australian worker condemns Burwood council decision

With the many other people who have written to you, I also want to lodge a protest at your refusal to reverse the ban you have imposed on the meeting of the Socialist Equality Party booked at your library auditorium.

As a 25-year-old man I would, undoubtedly, be included in a conscripted army if a new war were to occur. It is therefore in my interests and others of my generation to have the right to hear the opinions of a party that opposes such a catastrophe.

I had every intention of attending this meeting and object to the fact that you have prevented me from doing so. Is this sort of censorship something you carry out regularly?

I urge you to reverse your decision.

BD – Sydney, NSW, Australia

“Australian and British Labor parties are in an advanced state of decay”

I protest Burwood City Council's decision to ban a meeting of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP). This action has already made the City Council notorious, continuing to uphold the decision will make it synonymous worldwide with the suppression of free speech.

That such a right-wing, dictatorial measure should be implemented by the Labor Party at the behest of far-right supporters of Anzac day is not a surprise. I write from the UK, where the British Labour Party has upheld every bloody crime of British imperialism, from the Gallipoli disaster to the current bloodbath in the Middle East.

Both the Australian and British parties are in an advanced state of decay. Both are right-wing, blood drenched, pro-business tools of the super-rich, broadly hated by working people and entirely alienated from the younger generation.

Two things are certain. The attempt to ban the SEP from Burwood will not save the Labor Party. Neither will it prevent the SEP from advancing a socialist solution to the dangers of militarism and war.

I demand this decision is reversed immediately.

SJ – Glasgow, UK

General Secretary of Pakistan Workers Movement denounces ban

On behalf of Pakistan Workers Movement [PWM], we strongly condemn the action and the decision of Burwood city council to cancel the SEP public meeting scheduled at the Burwood library auditorium April 26th 2015.

We demand that you immediately lift the ban and let the SEP public meeting go ahead according to plan. The PWM consider that it is a violation of democratic rights and discrimination. The capitulation of Burwood city council to the right wing and warmongers will be condemned by the workers of Pakistan.

General Secretary, Pakistan Workers Movement

“Your refusal to revoke this cancellation will not go unanswered”

As a photojournalist covering social/political issues in Asia and Europe I wish to register my disgust at Burwood City Council's cancelling the hall booking made by the SEP for a public meeting, “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III.”

In banning this meeting it would appear that your council endorses the views of the Great Australia Patriots, an extreme right-wing nationalist group who complained about the meeting taking place and which led to your councils immediate banning of the SEP's meeting.

You have publicly discredited yourselves in front of an audience of tens of thousands of daily readers of the *World Socialist Web Site*. It should be quite clear to all Burwood City council members that you have evoked a massive response to this outrageous decision on a global scale.

Your refusal to revoke this cancellation will not go unanswered. Such acts of anti-democratic censorship go some way to lifting the fog of confusion as to who is on the side of freedom of speech and who is on the side of pro-war propaganda.

JPH – Thailand

“Workers have the right to be informed about the struggles of the past”

I lend my support to the SEP and condemn the political censorship being conducted by the Burwood City Council.

In a cowardly collapse in the face of apparent pressures from higher levels of power, the Burwood City Council is aiding in and lending its full support to the propaganda for war and destruction.

Not only does this uncourageous shrinking reflect a complete lack of principles, but it clearly exposes the role the Labor Party and its representatives in the council in the continued attack on democratic rights and the working class as a whole. Most disturbing, however, is the alignment of this council with the ilk of the right-wing Reclaim Australia.

Workers have the right to be informed both about struggles of the past and the ongoing revision of history being conducted to glorify imperialist atrocities in preparation for the coming carnage. Don't be a willing tool in

this barbarity.

The only correct action is to reinstate the SEP meeting immediately.

DB – Germany

“No democratic justification for block ing this meeting”

The right of peaceful political gathering is an ancient one in the Anglo-Saxon tradition and, today, we consider it the necessary precondition of a free and a democratic society. Your cancellation of the Socialist Equality Party’s anti-war meeting scheduled for April 26th is a betrayal of that tradition, that freedom, and of the trust given by the people you represent through your offices. It is imperative that you have the courage and principle to support a plurality of democratic voices and allow the Socialist Equality Party to assemble in peace.

There can be no democratic justification for intervening to block this meeting, whose aim is to oppose militarism, and promote international unity. Even more insidious, in this case, is the possibility of the capitulation of your council to pressure or threats from Reclaim Australia. What business does a government have in opposing the peaceful assembly of its own people? Even less, in using force to block such an assembly on behalf of other, xenophobic movements?

I have the good fortune to work with young people and students every day who are interested in government and still remember that in a democracy, it is upheld by principles. Perhaps for those who work a long time in the business of government, those principles are forgotten or put aside as inconvenient. Nevertheless, whether upheld or betrayed, democracy and the principles behind it are maintained or destroyed by individuals. It is your duty to allow the Socialist Equality Party to assemble, and I hope for the sake of your integrity and for the benefit of your own people that you defend their rights, and others.

DG – USA

“Act of political censorship is a damning indictment of Labor”

I would like to register a protest against your decision to cancel the hall booking for an anti-war meeting held by the Socialist Equality Party, titled “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III.” The decision to cancel the meeting is a clear act of political censorship, in flagrant violation of basic democratic principles.

The stated rationale for your decision to cancel the meeting is complaints from the public. As you well know, these complaints come from people and groups associated with the far right, and openly racist “Reclaim Australia” movement. This act of political censorship, and the social elements it caters to, is a damning indictment of the Labor Party.

The SEP has a fundamental democratic right to hold an anti-war meeting. War is an issue that affects us all, in Australia, and in the US, where I live. I strongly urge you to immediately reverse your decision and allow the SEP to hold its meeting as planned. People all around the world are watching.

ES – PhD student, Pittsburgh, USA

Council ban “recalls the dark days of McCarthyism”

I want to add my voice to those protesting your decision to cancel the meeting by the Socialist Equality Party opposing militarism and war. This blatantly political decision is an affront to democratic principles and deserves the sharpest censure. Your blatant capitulation to ultra-right wing forces is an act of crass cowardice and will encourage further attacks on democratic rights.

Such political bans have a long and infamous history. Here in the United States it recalls the dark days of McCarthyism. It goes hand in hand with a growing assault on civil liberties of working people all around the world, including the revelations of mass government surveillance.

You have only one course of action, the ban on the SEP must be lifted and the meeting allowed to proceed.

SJ – Michigan, USA

“Anzac campaign is being used to whip up militarism and patriotism”

By bowing to the demands of the “Reclaim Australia Movement” and cancelling the public meeting of the Socialist Equality Party you are lining up with the most vicious right wing, anti-working class, anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-Muslim organisations. The only interpretation for this action is that you agree with these outfits and their glorification of nationalism and war.

The SEP is, on the other hand, seeking to expose the role of the government and opposition alike to use the bloodbath of the Anzac campaign and the 1st World War to whip up patriotic fervour. The deaths and maiming of these soldiers we are told was the ultimate sacrifice in nation building.

The Anzac campaign is being used as a propaganda toll to whip up militarism and patriotism to ready youth and workers as cannon fodder for future wars and acceptance of the unending necessity for war to defend the nation... Your action smacks of political cowardice. Please reverse your decision and allow the meeting to go ahead in the council hall.

CD – Newcastle, NSW, Australia

“What happened to freedom of speech?”

It is absurd to describe the meeting as a protest. I believe the council representative was grasping at straws to put forward any reasons for cancelling the booking. Please have the integrity and honesty (as stated in your Council values) to give the organisers of the event the real reasons for cancelling the booking.

I fully support the SEP in their principled stance against war and imperialism. I find their meetings informative and thoroughly thought provoking. The SEP is the only political party to have the courage to speak the truth about national and world events.

Is the topic “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to WWII” so controversial that the Council seeks to ban it? Surely the council is aware that its action is undemocratic. Why is it not possible to voice an alternate opinion to that of the mass media who nauseatingly promoting the ANZACs at Gallipoli as some sort of heroic sacrifice? And what happened to freedom of speech? Is that only reserved for the rich and those who serve the rich?

In the interest of presenting a socialist/pacifist perspective in contrast to the war drums being beaten by our politicians and media, I strongly urge Burwood Council to revoke its decision to ban the SEP from conducting a meeting in the Burwood Library Auditorium.

HP – Malabar, NSW, Australia

WSWS readers and supporters 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.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact