

Australian SEP meetings discuss political issues posed by Syriza's betrayal in Greece

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party held public meetings last Sunday afternoon in Sydney and Melbourne on the political lessons of Syriza's betrayal of the Greek working class.

Called at short notice, the well-attended meetings were the only public events held in Australia to discuss the Syriza government's rejection of the overwhelming "no" vote in the July 5 Greek referendum and its imposition of new austerity measures that will reduce Greece to the status of a semi-colony of the European banks.

SEP speakers explained the historical roots and class nature of Syriza and its pseudo-left counterparts internationally, and why the world Trotskyist movement—the International Committee of the Fourth International—was able to predict Syriza's betrayal, and the political implications of these developments for the international working class.

SEP national committee member Nick Beams and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) convenor and national committee member Oscar Grenfell addressed the Sydney event. SEP national secretary James Cogan and IYSSE convenor and national committee member Will Morrow spoke at the Melbourne meeting.

PowerPoint presentations were used at both meetings to detail key economic, social and political developments in Greece since the global financial crisis in 2008–09 and subsequent imposition over the past six years of unprecedented levels of unemployment, wage cuts and poverty on the Greek population. The presentations highlighted the devastating human impact and also charted the emergence of Syriza, its election to power on an anti-austerity program and its rapid capitulation to the demands of finance capital.

"Syriza's betrayal of the working class in Greece and its endorsement by the pseudo-left internationally were a warning of what the pseudo-left will do in power

everywhere," Oscar Grenfell told the Sydney meeting.

Grenfell reviewed the response of the pseudo-left in Australia and around the world to the Syriza government. These formations, he said, hailed Syriza as the way forward for workers. He contrasted these false claims with the analysis and warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the SEP.

SEP national committee member Nick Beams began his address by asking the audience to consider why the WSWS analysis had been so "astonishingly accurate" and why the International Committee of the Fourth International was "the only tendency in the world to warn of the role Syriza would play."

This was not because we had a crystal ball or made a series of inspired guesses, he said, but because the party's analysis was based on the scientific method of Marxism and the constant study for more than a century of the historical experiences of the international working class.

Marxism is a science of perspective, he explained, and is based on an objective analysis of processes rooted in the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production and of the class character of every political tendency. "It is therefore able to reveal the driving forces of events as they unfold and arm the working class with a perspective in which to intervene in those events and change their course."

Beams said that the roots of crisis in Greece and its transformation into "an economic protectorate of international finance capital" lay in the breakdown of the global capitalist system. The same ruthless austerity measures would be unleashed against workers in every country.

The demands on Greece by the German banks were driven by global economic and political processes that were intensifying inter-imperialist antagonisms, as the major global powers sought to offload the burden of the financial crisis on their rivals and the international

working class. This was also behind the eruption of imperialist militarism and posed the danger of a new world war.

“The road of manoeuvre and compromise has been closed off,” Beams said. “This means that the only alternative is the mobilisation of the Greek and European working class to overthrow the dictatorship of imperialism and finance capital—the socialist revolution.”

Beams explained: “The overriding objective of the privileged middle class layers that form the social base of Syriza and the pseudo left internationally is to prevent socialist revolution by the working class.”

Beams told the meeting that a revolutionary situation was not “willed into existence” by revolutionists but emerged from the objective contradictions of the capitalist economy and stressed the critical role of the revolutionary party in politically clarifying the international working class.

“What is required is the development of revolutionary leadership that continuously demarcates the independent interests of the working class from all those political tendencies that strive to tie it to the capitalist order ...

“Social revolution is on the agenda in Europe and the same forces producing it on that continent are present everywhere,” he said. “Everything depends on the preparation in advance of a revolutionary leadership to realise the first alternative.”

The speakers were given sustained and appreciative applause by those in attendance with lengthy and lively question and answer sessions at both the Sydney and Melbourne meetings. Over \$3,000 was collected in donations and almost \$300 spent on Marxist literature.

In Melbourne speakers answered questions on the origins of the Greek sovereign debt, the role of the European Union and the euro in the Greek crisis, and on the deepening economic crisis in Australia. An extended discussion developed on the prospect of nationalising the Greek and European banking system and the implications of this measure. Will Morrow and James Cogan both emphasised that nationalisation of the Greek banks meant a struggle against international finance capital and therefore required a turn to the working class in Europe and around the world.

“On the expropriation of the financial sector by the working class—we’re not talking about some national measure,” Cogan told the meeting. “There is no national solution to the crisis in Greece, or to the crisis in any other country, including Australia. What is needed is a unified political movement of the working class on a socialist

program across Europe, above all in Germany, and internationally.”

In Sydney the discussion continued for almost 45 minutes. Questions were asked about the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the role and political record of the Stalinist Communist Party in Greece.

One audience member asked why the European ruling class had not handed out money to prevent the eruption of social struggles. Although the capitalist class were historically outmoded, he asked, had not the working class outlived its usefulness and suggested that they could be replaced by machines.

Beams provided a detailed answer on the historic origins of the global financial crisis, reviewing post-WWII economic developments and key turning points since the late 1960s up until 2008-09. He explained that every attempt by the capitalist class to overcome its fundamental contradictions of the profit system had failed, no concessions were possible and the global economy was breaking down into competing trading blocs and the danger of another world war.

“The only way out for the bourgeoisie, is the intensification of the attacks on the working class and that means the destruction of social services—health, education and other basic needs ...

“While the ruling class have outlived their usefulness, the working class is the only source of value in society and the only force capable of providing a progressive alternative to the danger of war and depression,” Beams said and emphasised the necessity for the construction of revolutionary leadership to prepare the working class for the struggles ahead.

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