

Support the Socialist Equality Party 2016 election campaign!

Vote against war and budget cuts! For internationalism and socialism!

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
23 May 2016

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is standing candidates in the July 2 federal election to win support for a socialist, anti-capitalist and anti-war program. SEP national secretary James Cogan heads the party's Senate team for New South Wales and is joined on the ticket by John Davis. Chris Sinnema and Peter Byrne are standing for the Senate in Victoria; and Mike Head and Erin Cooke for the Senate in Queensland. Will Fulgenzi will stand for the SEP in the House of Representatives' seat of Wills in Melbourne. In Sydney, Oscar Grenfell will stand for the inner-west suburban seat of Grayndler and Gabriela Zabala for the south-western working class electorate of Blaxland.

The SEP's campaign is directed to the ever growing number of workers and young people who want a genuine alternative to the Labor and Liberal-National Coalition dominated political system, which serves only the major banks, corporations and the rich. The Greens, along with other third parties and self-styled independents, are part of the same official establishment. They represent no alternative because they all defend capitalism—the ultimate cause of war, exploitation and social inequality.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced the first double dissolution since 1987 with his rhetoric about “exciting times” and “great opportunities.” In reality, the election reflects the desperate crisis of Australian capitalism in the face of the greatest global economic breakdown since the Depression of the 1930s and rising international tensions.

Australia is joining much of the world as it slides into deflation and recession—a result of the global slump and collapse of the mining boom. Over the past three decades, the wealthy have amassed obscene fortunes, while ordinary working people confront job destruction, declining real wages, insecure employment, dysfunctional health and education services, below poverty-level aged pensions and welfare payments, and outrageous house prices and rents. The policies of Labor and the Coalition are responsible for denying to an entire generation of working class youth the living standards achieved by their parents and grandparents.

Since 1991, successive Labor and Coalition governments have involved Australia in continuous US-led wars for oil and other resources, as Washington seeks to retain its global domination through military force. Millions have been killed and entire societies destroyed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, creating the worst refugee crisis since World War II. Sixty million desperate people have been forced from their homes, only to face brutal persecution wherever they seek asylum.

Now the US, with the backing of Australia and other imperialist allies, is targeting Russia and China. Conflicts are escalating in both Europe and Asia that threaten to erupt into a devastating war fought with nuclear weapons.

Only the Socialist Equality Party fights for a political perspective to prevent war and advance the independent interests of the working class. Our campaign appeals to all those who want to fight against militarism, nationalism, the persecution of refugees and the endless assault on social and democratic rights. It is aimed at raising the political consciousness of workers and youth and unifying the working class in Australia, Asia, the Americas and internationally in a common struggle to end the capitalist profit system.

The election program of the SEP is focused on three key demands:

Oppose militarism and war!

Australian workers are being dragged toward a war they do not want and which is being prepared behind their backs. Millions of people still do not know that in November 2011—nearly five years ago—the Greens-backed Gillard Labor government handed over Australia as a base of operations for US Marines and nuclear-armed bombers and warships. After participating in the US-led wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East, the Australian military has been totally integrated with its American counterpart. The US-run facility at Pine Gap in the Northern Territory plays a critical role in US global spying, American drone assassinations and “collateral” killings, and the Pentagon's ability to launch a nuclear war.

The Coalition continued and expanded Labor's support for the US “pivot” to Asia against China. In May, Turnbull signed an agreement to allow 14,000 troops from Singapore—a US-aligned one-party state—to train each year in Queensland. The 2016 Defence White Paper committed to a massive increase in the defence budget, raising it from \$32 billion in 2015–2016 to \$59 billion by 2025–26. At least \$495 billion will be squandered on military spending over the next decade, while both state and federal governments insist that there is “no money” for desperately needed social services and infrastructure.

Barely 48 hours after Turnbull announced the election date, the US Navy, for the third time in eight months, deployed a warship into Chinese-claimed territory in the South China Sea. The Chinese regime scrambled jet fighters in response. What will happen when the US military carries out its next provocation? Will an American ship be fired on or sunk? Will a Chinese aircraft be shot down?

Any candidate in this election who denies the danger of war is either deluding themselves or lying to the working class.

The Australian ruling elite's preparations for war are being accompanied by a four-year “celebration” of the centenary of World War I (1914–1918). After last year's extravagant commemorations of the catastrophic Anzac landing at Gallipoli in 1915, this year's nationalist myth-making will be devoted to the 1916 slaughter of nearly one million

youth—including tens of thousands of Australians and New Zealanders—on the Somme battlefields in France. School children are being indoctrinated with patriotism and militarism to weaken and undermine instinctive anti-war sentiment within the working class and boost recruitment into the armed forces.

To the extent they do discuss their war policies, Labor and the Coalition justify them with propaganda that China is an “expansionist” power, threatening “global rules” and the “international system.” In reality, the Australian ruling class is aggressively supporting Washington for its own economic and strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region and internationally. The policies of the Chinese regime, which represents a corrupt capitalist elite, only increase the danger of conflict. Beijing is answering US threats with an arms race and militarist actions of its own.

The SEP fights to break the conspiracy of silence surrounding the drive towards war. We call for the repudiation of the US-Australia alliance and all military basing arrangements with the US and other countries. Australian troops, as well as police and intelligence personnel, must be immediately withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Middle East and Asia-Pacific countries. The military apparatus must be disbanded, and the vast resources wasted on war preparations reallocated to socially useful purposes, including building badly-needed social infrastructure throughout Australia and the region.

The SEP’s candidates will appeal to workers and youth across Australia to join with their American and Asian counterparts—in New Zealand, East Timor and the Pacific Island states; in the Philippines, Indonesia and across South East Asia; on the Indian subcontinent; in Korea and Japan, and, above all, in China—to take up the call issued by our world party, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), and fight to build a new international anti-war movement to prevent the catastrophe of World War III.

For social equality!

On a world scale, one percent of the population now owns more wealth than the remaining 99 percent combined; while the 62 richest individual billionaires control more wealth than the poorest half of the world’s population—3.5 billion people. While millions of Australian families struggle to make ends meet, the 50 richest individuals in the country have a collective personal wealth of nearly \$120 billion. The Panama Papers are only the latest exposure of how the corporations and rich avoid paying tax on the profits and incomes they earn from exploiting the working class.

While Labor accuses the Liberals of wanting to abolish penalty rates, case after case has emerged demonstrating that the Labor-aligned trade unions have made sordid deals with employers to slash workers’ pay—ranging from McDonald’s, Coles, Woolworths, to cleaning firms, and mining and construction companies. Real wages for workers are declining, with the fall in wages growth in Australia among the sharpest of all developed economies. The real rate of unemployment is estimated at 10.4 percent, with another 7.7 percent underemployed. Youth unemployment is over 30 percent in some working-class areas.

The sharpest expression of widening social inequality is the horrific conditions facing the majority of Australia’s Aboriginal population. By every social measure—income, employment, education, health, housing, rates of imprisonment and life expectancy—they are the most oppressed and vulnerable section of the working class.

The SEP calls for a vast redistribution of wealth to secure the social rights of all, including the right to a stable and decent-paying job, a living income on retirement, free, high-quality public education and health care, affordable housing and access to culture and the arts.

These social rights cannot be achieved without ending the domination of a financial and corporate oligarchy over economic life. The major banks, mining transnationals, retail conglomerates, pharmaceutical corporations and communications and energy giants must be expropriated and placed

under public ownership and the democratic control of the working class. A multi-billion-dollar public works program must be initiated to provide full employment, resolve the crisis of social services and develop the infrastructure needed to address global warming and climate change.

Defend democratic rights!

For 15 years, Labor and Liberal governments, with the collaboration of the media, have manufactured terrorist scares and incidents as the pretext for handing draconian powers to the intelligence agencies and police to detain and interrogate “suspects” without charge and conduct rampant surveillance and spying. Unprecedented laws are being pushed through in NSW to give police the powers to restrict freedom of assembly, on the fraudulent grounds of protecting “public safety.”

The SEP insists that the entire intelligence-police-state apparatus must be dismantled and all anti-democratic legislation abolished.

The SEP opposes all forms of nationalism, racism and chauvinism, which are used to divide the working class, pitting workers in one country against those in another, in the interests of the ruling classes. We demand the abolition of Australia’s illegal “border protection” regime, which denies refugees their fundamental right to claim asylum. All people, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion or income, must have the right to live and work wherever in the world they choose, with full citizenship rights.

Break with the two-party parliamentary system!

The 2016 election is the outcome of a historic crisis of the Australian parliamentary system. Since 2010, three prime ministers have been removed through inner-party coups, while the position of prime minister has changed five times, expressing unprecedented volatility and instability within the entire parliamentary set-up. Moreover, after 30 years of unending attacks on social and democratic rights and 15 years of war, millions of people are deeply alienated from Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition. The response of all capitalist parties is to lie about their policies and conceal their real agendas. Behind the scenes, they are preparing authoritarian and dictatorial forms of rule, through the build-up of the state and police apparatus.

The entire election is a travesty of democracy. Turnbull changed the Senate voting system and set up conditions for a double dissolution—assisted by the Greens—with the most anti-democratic aims. He gambled on the Liberals and Nationals winning a majority in both houses of parliament with arrogant lectures to the population about “transitioning” to a “new economy,” while providing tax cuts to business and high income earners. His plan was to use such a majority to ram through savage budget cuts, attacks on working conditions and even greater handouts to the corporations and the rich. As Turnbull’s support plummets and he faces the possibility of leading the first one-term government to defeat since 1931, the Coalition is desperately seeking to divert the election campaign into racist attacks on refugees and hysteria over terrorist threats.

The Labor Party, the oldest component of the two-party system, is attempting to win government with shameless lies that it will pour billions into health, education and infrastructure. Labor’s real policies, no less than those of the Liberals and Nationals, are austerity and militarism.

Labor is not a “lesser evil” to the Coalition. Shorten and shadow treasurer Chris Bowen have committed themselves to doing whatever is necessary to maintain Australia’s “triple A” credit rating—which is crucial to the profits of the major banks. The credit rating agencies have made clear they will insist on savage cuts to social spending to slash the budget deficit. And Labor will obey their dictates.

As for the tens of billions being squandered on the military and war preparations against China, Bowen declared that Labor has “very little difference” with the Coalition. Labor’s defence spokesperson, Stephen Conroy, has demanded that Australia prove its support for the US “pivot” by sending its own warships into Chinese-claimed waters in the South

China Sea—and risk provoking a military confrontation.

Shorten has vowed to continue the bipartisan policy of denying refugees their right to claim asylum in Australia, and imprisoning them in hellish camps on remote Pacific Islands. The reactionary program of Labor and the trade unions is embodied in their nationalist and chauvinist efforts to blame overseas workers, particularly in China, for the destruction of jobs in manufacturing and other industries—rather than the real culprits, the profit-driven corporations.

The question before millions of people is which party represents a genuine alternative to both the Liberal-National Coalition and to Labor?

Within a day of the election announcement, the myth that the Greens are a “progressive alternative” was exposed. Greens leader Richard Di Natale and deputy leader Adam Bandt declared they would not only back a Labor government, but would take ministries in a Labor cabinet and implement its policies. Nothing could be clearer. A vote for the Greens is a vote for a government that will impose deeper social cuts, persecute refugees, expand anti-democratic laws and take Australia into a US-led confrontation with China.

Numerous other parties are contesting the election, including those established by Nick Xenophon and Jacqui Lambie, various anti-immigrant formations, and a variety of single issue protest parties. Workers and youth should draw conclusions from the role already played by similar “third” parties such as One Nation and the Palmer United Party, and by the “independents” that propped up Labor’s minority government after the 2010 election. Far from opposing the agenda of austerity and war, they serve as agents of the corporate elite, no less than the major parties. They all promote nationalism, defend Australian capitalism and act to protect it against its international rivals and against the working class at home.

By virtue of its history and program, the Socialist Equality Party represents the only genuine alternative for the working class.

Support an internationalist and socialist program!

Twenty-five years ago, the ruling elites and their media celebrated the restoration of capitalism by the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe, China and the former Soviet Union as the “end of socialism” and “triumph” of the capitalist market. The truth that Stalinism had betrayed the 1917 Russian Revolution and was the mortal enemy of genuine socialism, represented by the Trotskyist movement, was buried under a mountain of historical falsifications.

Today, the failure of world capitalism has set in motion a profound political realignment. Growing numbers of workers and youth are searching for an alternative. They are not prepared to pay with their living standards and their futures to defend a system that only benefits a tiny layer of billionaires.

In the United States, millions of people—especially those aged under 45—have voted to support the campaign of Democratic Party presidential contender Bernie Sanders, because he presents himself as a “democratic socialist” and advocate of a “political revolution” against corporate power and social inequality. In the United Kingdom, Jeremy Corbyn won the leadership of the Labour Party by portraying himself as a socialist and opponent of war.

Sanders and Corbyn are both capitalist politicians. Their aim has been to use left-sounding talk to prevent workers from breaking with the parties of the official establishment. They are only the temporary beneficiaries of a growing social movement. The support they have won, however, poses the need to bring into the working class an understanding of what a genuine socialist and revolutionary program actually is. That task is at the very centre of the SEP’s election campaign. We will expose the various pseudo-left pretenders, such as Socialist Alliance and Socialist Alternative, as well as “left” elements within the Greens, who seek to confine workers and youth to the perspective of replacing one capitalist government with another within the existing parliamentary set-up.

The virtually indistinguishable policies of the Coalition and Labor, the collapse of traditional political allegiances and the desire of workers and youth for real change have led to an election campaign marked by unprecedented crisis and unpredictability. What is incontestable, however, is that immense class struggles lie ahead. For 30 years, a ferocious and unending class war has been waged, but only by one side—by the corporate and financial elites and their governments. Now, workers around the world are re-entering the historical arena—and the Australian working class is no exception.

For the SEP, the most important issue in our election campaign is winning workers and youth to the socialist and internationalist perspective of our world party, the ICFI. The working class must be united internationally if it is going to prevent war and change the world in the interests of the vast majority.

The SEP fights for the establishment of a workers’ government—a government of the working class, by the working class and for the working class—that will implement far-reaching socialist policies. To those who say this is impossible, our answer is: what is possible or not will be determined by struggle!

We urge you to get involved! The SEP is based on the great heritage and principles of the Trotskyist movement and its fight against all forms of nationalism, chauvinism and opportunism. Our program represents *your* interests and the future of humanity.

Vote for the Socialist Equality Party Senate and House of Representatives candidates on July 2! Join and build SEP election committees in our candidates’ electorates and in other areas of the country. Circulate this statement as widely as you can to your family, friends and workmates. Follow our campaign on the *World Socialist Web Site* and share our statements and commentary on Facebook and other social media. Organise a meeting in your workplace, university or community group and invite an SEP candidate to speak. Donate as generously as you can to our election fund and provide us with the resources necessary to promote the socialist alternative. We need your financial support!

Above all, now is the time to take up the fight for international socialism and join the SEP, the Australian section of the ICFI!

To get involved in the campaign, sign up at <http://www.sep.org.au/> today.

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