

Socialist Equality Party candidate interviewed by community radio station

Our reporter
21 June 2016

Gabriela Zabala, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for the southwestern Sydney electorate of Blaxland in the July 2 federal election, was interviewed by a community Muslim radio station, 2MFM, on Sunday, June 12.

The station, which has a worldwide audience of 500,000 listeners, has been broadcasting for 20 years. Based in Blaxland, which has a high proportion of refugees and immigrants from the Middle East, the station's stated aims include the provision of "social information" and promotion of a "moderate view of Islam."

Blaxland, centred on the working class area of Bankstown, has a high level of youth unemployment. As documented by the WSWs, the deepening social problems facing workers and youth are the result of attacks by both Labor and Liberal-National governments—federal, state and local—over decades.

Explaining what the SEP stood for, Zabala said: "We stand for social equality. We stand for genuine democracy—the building of a world movement that represents the genuine interests of the working class."

Zabala was asked what policies the SEP had in Bankstown, with its large numbers of refugees, migrants and low-to-middle income earners. She responded: "These are important questions, and they are not necessarily confined to the Blaxland area. What Blaxland represents is a microcosm of the social issues confronting the working class as a whole."

"The levels of unemployment, the levels of unaffordable housing that are more prevalent in the Blaxland electorate have to be addressed through a program and perspective that addresses social ills in society as a whole—through a public works program for affordable housing, more schools, and job creation, particularly for youth."

Zabala added: "We are fighting to build a party against war." Except for the SEP, no candidates are talking about the drive to war. "The imposition of austerity at home is bound up with the drive to war abroad. Look at the amount of military spending that is taking place."

"No one is talking about this in this election. They have earmarked \$495 billion over the next decades, and they say there is no money for education, no money for jobs, no money for health services. No money for the necessary infrastructure. Where are the billions for war coming from? Directly from the very things that the working class needs [in] a decent, complex, modern society."

Asked about allegations of "radicalisation" and terrorism, through which Muslims were targeted and demonised, Zabala explained there was an attempt to "divide the working class on the basis of these terrorist scares."

"Look at the number of 'terrorist' scares, and what seems to be the entrapment of youth on terrorism charges, so coincidentally linked with this election campaign. It is a diversionary tactic, to separate the working class along these lines."

Muslims were identified as "the problem," Zabala said, and became targets for draconian anti-terror laws, "but these anti-democratic measures are going to be imposed on the working class as a whole."

Zabala added: "If they are not talking about the Islamic threat, what can they talk about? All of the major parties are proposing austerity. Just today, on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Labor Party is talking about ways of making savings to retain the AAA credit rating, which will inevitably mean more cuts to education, more cuts to welfare. So the ramping up of anti-Islamic rhetoric is entirely bound up

with keeping the working class divided.”

Zabala outlined the central plank of the SEP’s campaign in the election. “The one issue that nobody is talking about is the drive to war with China, where Australia is closely aligned with the US,” she said. “There are military bases all around Australia, and they [the US] are stoking up tensions in the South China Sea. This is what’s on the agenda, and it’s taking place behind the backs of the working class.”

Zabala added: “The refugee crisis—that’s the result of war. And war is the result of capitalism. That’s what our party fights to educate the working class about: to address the issue that capitalism is also the source of the social crisis.”

Asked about the SEP’s attitude to the “offshore solution”—the detention of refugees in camps on Pacific islands, Zabala said: “The working class has the right to live and work wherever it wants. We don’t believe in border control; we don’t believe in national borders. We are an internationalist party. There are 60 million refugees worldwide, the highest number of refugees since the end of the Second World War.”

Zabala was asked to comment on the SEP’s prospects of winning the Blaxland seat, against the Labor Party incumbent Jason Clare. She noted: “The Labor Party, as much as the Liberal party, is not popular with the working class. People are becoming more politically radicalised. They are beginning to reject official politics, Labor and Liberal, because they have virtually the same policies—bipartisanship on military spending, bipartisanship on austerity.

“The working class is looking for alternatives. We are the only progressive alternative. We are the only party that represents the interests of the working class, not the interests of big business.”

To contact the SEP and get involved, visit our website or Facebook page.

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