

Australian election forum

## SEP candidate opposes Greens and Labor on refugees and war

Our reporter  
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Will Fulgenzi, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for the Melbourne electorate of Wills, participated in an election forum on Wednesday evening. He explained the SEP's anti-war, socialist perspective and its opposition to the nationalist, pro-war policies of Labor, the Greens and the pseudo-left Socialist Alliance.

Candidates were invited to give three-minute responses to three issues—climate change; whether they supported a “treaty” or constitutional “recognition” for the Australia's indigenous population; and their attitude to the brutal bipartisan system of detention of refugees. These were followed by questions from the floor.

In addition to outlining a socialist and internationalist perspective on these issues, the SEP candidate opposed the conspiracy of silence by Labor, the Greens and the entire political establishment, on Australia's alignment with the US war drive against China, and their complicity in successive illegal US-led wars in the Middle East.

Other candidates on the platform were Labor's Peter Khalil, Samantha Ratnam from the Greens, Zane Alcorn of the Socialist Alliance and the Sex Party's Tristram Chellew. The event was organised by the Brunswick Uniting Church and attended by around 60 people.

In response to the second question, all the candidates besides the SEP presented the desperate social crisis confronting the Aboriginal population as a racial, rather than a class question.

The SEP candidate stated that neither a treaty nor constitutional amendments would do anything to address the desperate social crisis confronting the Aboriginal population, “because it's predicated on the maintenance of capitalism... This is a class issue. It is not due to the supposed racism of white workers—a fraudulent argument that has always been used to divide the working class along racial lines.”

Fulgenzi indicted the Greens and Labor over the ongoing attacks on the Aboriginal population. The former Greens-backed Gillard Labor government, he noted, continued the Howard government's 2007 “Intervention,” including the punitive welfare-quarantining measures against all Aboriginal welfare recipients in the Northern Territory, extending it to selected working-class areas in other parts of Australia.

In countries where treaties have been introduced, including Canada and New Zealand, conditions for the indigenous population had only continued to decline. Opposing the official “land rights” campaign advocated by the Greens, Labor and pseudo-left, which benefits only a tiny layer of aspiring Aboriginal capitalists on land-councils, Fulgenzi advocated a united struggle by indigenous and non-indigenous workers as part of the fight for a workers' government.

The other candidates said nothing about the Northern Territory intervention but supported the official “land rights” campaign. Socialist Alliance's Zane Alcorn opposed constitutional reform on the grounds that it would be an obstacle to a “proper treaty” and “proper land rights.”

The third question, on the candidates' attitude toward the brutal offshore refugee detention centres in Nauru and Manus Island, provoked the greatest amount of cynical humanitarian posturing.

Labor's Peter Khalil, who personally advised the US occupation government in 2004 in the course of the illegal invasion of Iraq which killed over one million people and created millions of refugees, absurdly posed as a defender of refugees based on his parents' heritage as Egyptian migrants. He claimed that the refugee issue was “close to my heart.”

Greens candidate Samantha Ratnam declared that the

treatment of refugees would define “who Australia is going to be in the international community.”

The Greens represent a wing of the ruling establishment who believe the brutal treatment of refugees undermines Australian imperialism’s ability to employ “human rights” rhetoric to justify its predatory military operations in the Middle East and the South Pacific.

While Ratnam claimed to oppose “offshore processing,” it was the Greens that propped up the Gillard Labor government as it reopened the camps.

Socialist Alliance’s Zane Alcorn failed to mention Labor or Greens’ role in the treatment of refugees. His perspective was essentially identical to the Greens’ nationalism. Alcorn declared that “we’re a wealthy country” and called for an increase in Australia’s “resettlement” intake. Like the Greens, Socialist Alliance has no principled opposition to the reactionary program of “border protection.”

Fulgenzi told the meeting that the SEP opposed “offshore processing” and the entire framework of “border protection,” which asserts that the national state should determine who can and cannot live in the country. He insisted that the working class must have the basic democratic right to live and work in any country with full citizenship rights.

“The refugee crisis cannot be resolved while the major imperialist powers rain carnage on the Middle East and Africa,” Fulgenzi said. “There has been the bombing of Iraq, the intervention in Afghanistan, supported at the time by the Greens, the intervention in Libya and the regime-change operation in Syria, also supported by the Greens—and tacitly supported by the misnamed Socialist Alliance,” he said.

“Now the major powers are preparing for a war that is far more catastrophic—a nuclear war with China. The threat of war hangs over the election, but the Greens, Labor, Liberal and Socialist Alliance are all maintaining a conspiracy of silence over it, because they support it.”

During the question-and-answer segment of the debate, Fulgenzi pointed to the central role of the former Labor government in aligning with the US “pivot to Asia,” noting that Labor’s candidate for Wills, Peter Khalil, was identified in WikiLeaks cables as a “protected source” of the US embassy.

Khalil defended the build-up against China with the bogus rationale that the US was seeking to protect “freedom of navigation” and that Beijing, rather than the Washington, was the aggressor. In an answer riddled with inaccuracies, he declared that China had “expanded

missile batteries” and tried to claim “sovereignty” over international sea lanes. Khalil said nothing about his identification as a “protected source.”

Fulgenzi said that Khalil was providing the “rationale for stepping up US war plans against China... If China was sailing its battleships up the west coast of California and declaring that this was an ‘expansionist’ United States, and intervening in disputes between the US and Mexico, this would be declared an act of war. Yet this is precisely what the US is carrying out.”

The Greens’ candidate Samantha Ratnam falsely claimed that her party “did not support any moves to war in Afghanistan” and said the Greens had called for a vote in parliament “to consider the question of Australia’s involvement in these wars.”

Socialist Alliance candidate Zane Alcorn said nothing about the threat of a US-Australian war with China, in line with his party’s role in keeping silent on the “pivot.” The primary political role of Socialist Alliance, which speaks for a privileged layer of the upper middle class, is to channel oppositional sentiment among workers and youth back behind the official political set-up, through the lie that the Greens and Labor represent a “lesser evil.”

At the conclusion of the forum, Alcorn declared that his party would put the Greens, which he insisted were “streets ahead of everyone else here,” as its second preference, and called for “extra-parliamentary action” to pressure the major parties.

*To contact the SEP and get involved, visit our web site or Facebook page.*

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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