

Workers and young people in Australia and New Zealand concerned by US election result

Our reporters

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Following the US elections, the prospect of an administration headed by Republican Party candidate Donald Trump, a fascistic billionaire, is the subject of widespread discussion among workers, young people and students in Australia and New Zealand.

There is a sense that the election marks a turning point, not only in the US, but internationally. Many who spoke to the WSWs noted the similarities between the increasingly crisis-ridden character of US politics and developments in Australia. The Socialist Equality Party is holding public meetings in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Auckland, New Zealand, to discuss the significance of Trump's election and elaborate an alternative for the working class.

The Australian political and media establishment has responded to the result by voicing nervousness over the foreign policy implications of a Trump administration, because of their post-World War II dependence on the US alliance. At the same time, the outcome has been invoked by a host of media pundits and representatives of the major parties in an attempt to push official politics further to the right by depicting ordinary working class people as xenophobic and hostile to immigrants.

Rachel, who studies social work in Melbourne, said she was opposed to both Trump and Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton. "Look at the terrible things Clinton has done—and the cover ups," she said. "Why did they [the Democratic Party] choose her? She says what she believes someone wants to hear. I was very disgusted to read about the WikiLeaks exposure of the secret speeches to Goldman Sachs."

Rachel commented on the mounting social crisis in the US. "People are afraid, they are angry and sick of being treated like they don't mean anything. People have lost their houses. Look at Detroit—it's a bare city. There is nothing there."

Rachel said there were parallels with the situation in Australia. "We're getting like that now," she said. "My husband works full time, and yet we're really struggling."

"The destruction of welfare here is really full on, compared with when I started studying four years ago. Now everything is going up, like housing, bills. It's impossible to survive. I've noticed since the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments how Labor helped make the cuts just as much as the Liberals. Historically Labor was meant to be there for the working class, for the people who need a voice—but they're just as bad."

Rachel denounced Bernie Sanders, who won mass support by claiming to be a democratic socialist, before promoting Clinton's candidacy. "As for Sanders, and what he did, turning to Hillary Clinton, I was quite shocked by that. I didn't understand it at all. I believe 100 percent he got paid to do that."

In Dandenong, a working class suburb of Melbourne, **Slava**, a pensioner from the former Yugoslavia, commented: "I think there was a lot of cheating from his [Trump's] side. Because he's so rich, he's owning the world, and I don't think he's suitable to be a president at all. I hope they kick him out. He promised so many things. People are falling for that because they need jobs and a better life."

"I didn't like Obama either. There's a lot of war. Do you think Trump's going to send his kids to fight the war? If there was not war in other countries then America and the rest of the world would be much better. They're remembering World War I but they're forgetting what's happening today. I hate war. It was in my country too and I hate it."

Slava compared the outcome to the referendum earlier this year on Britain leaving the European Union. "I think it's like Brexit," she said. "After the vote people are going to realise that they have big problems. In Britain people went to protest saying they don't want to leave Europe. The same thing is going to happen in America."

In Sydney's western suburbs, **Flavio**, a 21-year-old from Germany on a working holiday, said: "The election of Trump is the worst thing that could happen for the world and the United States. He's like the blonde version of Hitler. I think people who don't have jobs, poor white people, are

being told to be hostile to coloured and Asian people. Like the Germans did against the Jews in the 1930s. I compare those times with now.”

Flavio said Germany’s turn to remilitarisation was “the worst way. Other countries will increase their military as well. I’m totally against war. Internationalism is perfect. We need to work together. We shouldn’t think in borders anymore.

“I have doubts about my future. Someone could do something very quick—just with one push of a button. The whole beautiful life could go. When I think about Trump, I just shake my head.”

Clare, a law and arts student at Western Sydney University, said: “I don’t think there was a real choice between Clinton and Trump. I preferred Bernie Sanders but that was wishful thinking. I liked his policies. He talked about the lack of jobs and the decline in living standards of the middle class. I support raising the minimum wage for Americans and focusing on the types of issues Sanders promoted, rather than the extremist views promoted by Trump, such as his accusations that the Chinese are taking all the jobs.”

In Newcastle, **Rebecca** said she hated both candidates. “Some of things Trump said and his policies are just awful. My children are half Indian and they have Muslim relatives over in America who are scared to go out on the street.”

Rebecca said social conditions in America “are bad enough as it is, and it is going to get worse. The people we know in America have to work full time and rely on relatives for babysitting, just to get minimum wage. One works as a cleaner in a hotel and the other works in fast food. They are the same age as me, 40, and they cannot get ahead.

“Trump’s slogan of ‘make America great again’ appealed to people in those horrible conditions because they think he will make things better. People think they are going to get help, but they are not. It was all lies.”

Mitch, a young father, said he found Trump’s election a “complete shock.” He said Trump’s election reveals “faults in the two-party system, especially the Democratic Party. Instead of backing Bernie Sanders they supported Clinton because they figured they would have a better chance at getting a women elected than a socialist.”

Mitch spoke out against the racial and gender politics of the Democratic Party and the denunciations of a “reactionary white working class.” He commented: “The claims of white male privilege are ridiculous. The people who voted for Trump weren’t privileged, they have awful lives. People talk about this election being a whitewash and the last stand of the white man. It is not about that. The people who voted for Trump were not rich guys, they barely made minimum wage.”

Shelly, a young woman who works at a pathology clinic in Newcastle, said: “The reason Trump got elected was that there is a lot of poor people in Middle America who are hard done by, aren’t being listened to and are being ignored by the left. The left focused on the cities and making things better for immigrants and people of colour because that is what they see. But in rural America people are struggling. The industries never recovered from the recession. They are angry and hurt. Trump tapped into that and is using it to his advantage.”

Shelly said she “was a Bernie supporter and I think that it was very sad that they abandoned Bernie for Hillary. I think that she was agreed upon ages ago. They wanted to have a black president, then a female president to seem really progressive and keep their power.”

In Auckland, New Zealand, **Maxi**, a secondary school student, said the election result was “really bad. As soon as Trump won, there were Americans who started leaving, moving to Canada and New Zealand as well. I don’t like Trump, he’s not a good man.

“There have already been marches in Seattle against Trump. It’s going to escalate even more. I sympathise with those people who oppose him. I don’t think anything’s going to get better any time soon.”

Her friend **Mackenzie** added: “He’s racist. I’ve seen videos of black people being kicked out of his rallies, and he said he liked the old days where you could throw them out and they had no rights.”

Commenting on the low vote for both candidates, Mackenzie denounced Clinton, saying: “None is better than the other. They’re both liars. She deleted emails and hid stuff from people.” She agreed that the wars carried out by the Obama administration had played a role in Clinton’s defeat. “There could be a World War III,” she said.



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