SEP congressional candidates hold initial meetings in San Diego and Berkeley

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Over the weekend, the Socialist Equality Party's congressional candidates from California, David Moore (US Senate) and Kevin Mitchell (US House of Representatives, 51st Congressional District), held the initial public meetings of their election campaign. Both candidates spoke in the City Heights district of San Diego on Saturday and at UC Berkeley on Sunday.

Under the title, "No to War, Inequality and Censorship! The Socialist Campaign in the 2018 Elections," the meetings elaborated upon the program and perspective of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP). Both speakers highlighted the growing danger of world war and the resurgence of class struggle, which have led the US government and major technology companies to begin censoring the Internet and social media.

In fact, Sunday's meeting in Berkeley was directly censored by Facebook, which blocked an advertisement for the meeting during the peak online traffic window from Friday evening until midnight Saturday, roughly 14 hours before the event took place.

After an ad was submitted and approved on Thursday evening, on Friday evening Facebook sent an email titled, "Your active ad is disapproved," writing vaguely, "We have reviewed your ad more closely and have determined it doesn't comply with our Advertising Policies." On their website, Facebook wrote, "We don't allow ads that contain shocking, disrespectful, or sensational content, including ads that depict violence or threats of violence."

An appeal was sent to Facebook, demanding clarification on why the ad was "disapproved" and stressing that there was nothing "shocking, disrespectful, or sensational" in the ad, nor any depiction of "violence or threats of violence."

Facebook responded with silence for 31 hours, at which point an automated message was sent, titled, "Your appealed ad is currently active." The message said, "It looks like the ad you appealed for is already active. As a result, we won't be looking into this case any further."

In a similar fashion, SEP ads related to the Oklahoma teachers' strike were also blocked by Facebook on Sunday. These moves towards censorship and the suppression of socialist political viewpoints underscore the looming threat of dictatorship, which Moore and Mitchell delved into at both meetings.

Moore opened the meetings with an overview of the political and economic situation: "New crises are emerging at such a rapid pace because of the objective crisis of world capitalism. It is not the result of one rotten person or a particularly bad policy.

"The American ruling class has two main methods of protecting their profits in the world economy: militarism to control other countries' access to material and markets, and cuts to social services to direct more of the wealth produced by the working class to the financial elite."

Moore noted that the new allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria raise the imminent threat of nuclear war.

He then turned to the growth of inequality in the United States, and traced its continuity from the bank bailout, through the Affordable Care Act, to the latest tax cuts.

Moore highlighted the fundamental agreement between the Democrats and Republicans on war and austerity, and how the Democrats have attacked Trump from the right for being too soft on Russia. "There's no shortage of reasons to attack Trump--his defense of white supremacists, his anti-immigrant chauvinism, his belligerent foreign policy," Moore said, "But the Democrats insist on sex scandals and fabrications of Russian interference that leave Trump's right-wing politics untouched."

He then explained how the campaign over fake news was being used to censor the Internet and social media. Under the guise of combating Russian interference, Google, Facebook and Twitter were directly collaborating

with the state to remove socialist, left-wing and anti-war websites from search results and news feeds.

Moore concluded his remarks with an overview of the upsurge of working class struggles worldwide, appealing to attendees to join the SEP and take up the fight for socialism: "2018 has already seen mass protests in Tunisia and across the Middle East, statewide teacher strikes in West Virginia and Oklahoma, hundreds of thousands of youth protesting against mass shootings, and mass strikes in France. Our task is to break the isolation of these individual struggles and transform them into a politically conscious, international mass movement for socialism."

Kevin Mitchell began his remarks by describing the recent attacks on immigrants by the Trump administration. He explained that the deployment of the National Guard to the US-Mexico border was ultimately bound up with the resurgence of class struggle in the United States, especially the ongoing strikes by teachers.

He warned the audience, "It is not impossible to see a situation where striking teachers may be subject to search and detained by National Guard checkpoints," adding, "Yuma and Tucson are close to the border and could be used as staging areas."

Mitchell then underscored the international context of the deployment, citing the recent comments by Trump threatening to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Mitchell also stated, "The district I'm running in, the 51st, runs along the US-Mexico border, and it contains the poorest region in California, the richest state in the country." He noted that Democrat Juan Vargas, his opponent, pretended to be a friend of immigrants while doing nothing to speak out against deportation while Obama was in office, when more than 3 million immigrants were deported. Vargas was also a supporter of sanctions against North Korea and Iran and supported the Democrats' program of war.

He implored the audience to support his candidacy, stating, "Our campaign is not simply a regional or even a statewide effort. We see ourselves as part of an international movement. Even if you cannot vote because of your immigration status, we want you to join our campaign and the fight for socialism."

When an audience member in San Diego asked the candidates what made them join the SEP, Mitchell replied, "The two events which galvanized my generation more than anything else were the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the 2008 crash on Wall Street. I joined the SEP in 2007 at the height of the Iraq War and here we are more than 10 years later and things are worse now for young people. That's what keeps me going."

In Berkeley, a question was raised about what the SEP would do if elected to office. Would they compromise with the capitalist parties to try and make short-term gains? Moore responded that, if elected, "we would oppose every budget and piece of legislation that attacked workers anywhere in the world, and the Democrats and Republicans are incapable of doing anything else."

Mitchell added, "Our program and platform is the total opposite of the electoral campaign of Kshama Sawant, who represents Socialist Alternative in the Seattle City Council. Her campaign was meant to provide a left cover for the political establishment, while our campaign wants to use the election as a means to win people over to a genuine socialist and internationalist perspective."

Turning to another audience question about the role of Internet censorship, Mitchell stated, "To me, the most revealing aspect of the campaign to censor the Internet is the timing. The American ruling class knows that teachers and students have been using social media to coordinate protest outside of the usual channels, like the Democratic Party and the trade unions." He added, "They saw what happened in Egypt and the Arab Spring, and they are scared of the internet, and that is why we are being censored."

The two candidates will speak together again in Los Angeles on April 19, and more meetings are planned in Northern California in Newark and Tracy. If you live in California and would like to help organize a meeting in your city or region, contact the SEP today to get involved.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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