

Support the Socialist Equality Party in the 2019 Australian Federal Election

No to Militarism and War! For Socialism and Internationalism!

The SEP (Australia)
16 April 2019

The Socialist Equality Party is standing candidates in the 2019 federal election in order to build a political movement of the working class on a socialist program, to oppose the unprecedented levels of social inequality, the danger of world war, the development of authoritarian forms of rule and the re-emergence of fascist forces.

For the ruling elites this election is one of unparalleled crisis, marked by deepening hostility to the entire political establishment.

The Liberal-National Party government, despised by the working class, is controlled by extreme right-wingers, including Morrison, Dutton and Abbott. They carried out a leadership coup against Turnbull to take the Liberal Party even further to the right, while their policies—above all, their attacks on refugees and immigrants, together with their promotion of militarism and nationalism—are aimed at fostering fascist movements directed against the working class.

Lacking any positive popular support, the Labor Party hopes to come to power through duplicity and deceit. Behind closed doors its leader, Shorten, tells the major corporations that Labor will maintain the country's credit rating and boost profits. At the same time, he makes populist pitches to workers and young people about "fairness," including promises to legislate a "living wage." These are worthless. As Labor has done for the past three decades, a Shorten government will impose new economic burdens on the working class.

To a greater extent than ever before, this election will be characterised by lies and diversions, as the parties of the political establishment, together with the corporate media, work to cover over the real situation facing working people.

The SEP is the only party telling the truth: there is no basis for the reform of the capitalist system. Whatever government emerges after the election will intensify the attacks on living standards and social conditions, accelerate the evisceration of democratic rights and collaborate in the drive to war.

The vital issue facing the working class is not the futile attempt to change the mindset of the ruling elites through the ballot box, but the development of its own independent political movement for socialism, to abolish the profit system, the source of all the social ills and political dangers it confronts.

Fundamental to the fight for socialism is the principle of internationalism: that workers must consciously strive to unify their struggles across national borders to meet the great dangers posed by the crisis of the global profit system. The SEP is utterly opposed to the putrid Australian nationalism and anti-refugee xenophobia that is used to divide workers from their class brothers and sisters around the world.

Capitalism threatens a return to the horrors of the 1930s and 1940s.

International relations increasingly take the form of gangsterism, as the major powers seek geo-strategic and economic advantage against their

rivals and nominal allies alike. The objective contradiction between the global economy and the capitalist nation-state system is once again bursting to the surface, giving rise to innumerable flashpoints—in the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific and Europe—that can suddenly erupt into a devastating war between nuclear-armed states.

In Australia, as in the rest of the world, all the economic and financial institutions are mechanisms for siphoning off the wealth produced by the labour of the working class and pouring it into the pockets of the ultra-rich.

At same time, however, the solution is emerging in the form of immense struggles by the working class, the outcome of which will determine the fate of society.

The growing international upsurge of the working class—from the struggles of teachers in the US, auto workers' strikes in Mexico, to the "yellow vest" movement in France—is characterised by a revolt against the establishment political parties and unions, which have played the key role in suppressing the class struggle and enforcing the austerity dictates of the financial oligarchies on the mass of working people.

Deeply fearful of the upsurge of working-class struggles, the ruling classes internationally are responding by promoting fascist groups and parties and instituting authoritarian forms of rule.

Their onslaught on democratic rights is epitomised by the arrest and jailing of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange and the continued incarceration of courageous whistleblower Chelsea Manning, in an attempt to force her to give false testimony against Assange. Their only "crimes" have been to expose the criminal wars and interventions of the US and its allies, including Australia, and reveal the truth.

Fascism is re-emerging around the world. In the US, President Donald Trump seeks to create a fascist-type movement in a war directed against socialism and the working class, while across Europe, openly fascist parties sit in governments and parliaments.

Trump is spearheading the accelerating attack on all forms of democracy, as he scraps the constitutional framework within which the US has been governed for the past two centuries. He is seeking to establish an authoritarian regime to meet the upsurge of the working class. His actions are setting the pace for parallel developments in every country, including Australia.

Contrary to the official nationalist myth that Australia is the "lucky country," separated from the international class struggle and insulated from the laws of the global capitalist economy, it was profoundly impacted by the financial meltdown of 2008, when the banking system came within days of collapse as the flow of international finance was cut off.

Since then the economy has been sustained by a mining boom, which has collapsed, and a housing bubble, which is now in the process of

collapse. The slowing of the Australian economy is proceeding at a faster rate than in any other advanced economy, signalling the onset of a deep recession that will spur mass opposition by the working class.

Just as in Europe and the US, the ruling class here is nurturing far-right forces. The March 15 massacre in New Zealand was carried out by an Australian fascist. It demonstrates that all the reactionary filth that erupted from the bowels of capitalist society in the 1930s, is spewing forth again, and no country, no matter how “isolated” or “peaceful” it may appear, is exempt.

Fascism is not yet a mass political movement in any country. But the fascist organisations are supported by the highest levels of the military, police and state apparatus and have been able to exploit the rising levels of frustration, anger and social discontent for their own reactionary ends.

To ignore this threat, and fail to act, will court disaster. The bloody historical experiences of the 20th century established an indelible lesson: the fight against fascism and war can only be developed through the independent political mobilisation of the working class on the basis of a socialist program.

This perspective forms the foundation of the SEP’s election campaign, which we advance as part of the struggle for international socialism waged by our world party, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), and its sections in North America, Europe, and Asia.

Our program is based on the following principles:

For the international unity of the working class

It is impossible to halt the drive to war, climate change and environmental disasters, or the sustained attacks on democratic and social rights, within the borders of a single country. The cutting edge of the fight for socialism is internationalism—to unify the working class around the world, end the domination of the global corporate giants and reorganise society to meet the pressing social needs of all humanity.

* The SEP opposes all forms of racism and nationalism, which pit worker against worker and scapegoat the most vulnerable layers of the working class—particularly immigrants and refugees—for the social crisis created by capitalism. We unconditionally defend the basic democratic right of refugees and immigrants to live, study and work in Australia, or anywhere in the world, with full citizenship rights.

* The SEP opposes identity politics, including the retrograde #MeToo movement, used by the upper-middle class to enhance their privileged economic and social position. Identity politics is aimed at splitting the working class and obscuring the fact that in capitalist society the fundamental divide is that of class—between the working class and its exploiters, i.e., those who own the means of production and finance. The democratic and social rights of workers, whatever their gender, sexuality, skin colour or religion can only be defended through a unified movement from below to abolish capitalism.

For social equality!

A recent Oxfam report found that the world’s richest 26 billionaires owned more wealth than half the world’s population—some 3.8 billion people. This polarisation is a consequence of decades of conscious economic and social policies, implemented by governments around the world, on behalf of finance capital.

In Australia, the top 20 percent of households own 62 percent of all wealth, 100 times more than the poorest 20 percent, which own virtually nothing. At the other pole of society, around three million people—one in eight adults and one in six children—live below the austere official poverty line.

Rising unemployment rates, poverty-level welfare entitlements, stagnant real wages, huge housing costs and the prevalence of insecure part-time, casual and contract work all combine to generate immense social stresses, leading to family breakdown, mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse, and a host of other social problems.

* 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 retirement income, free and high-quality public education and health care, affordable housing, and access to culture and the arts.

* We call for emergency spending measures to resolve the deepening social and economic crisis that confronts Aboriginal people, as a consequence of Australian capitalism’s genocidal destruction of traditional indigenous societies.

* 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 crises in social services and develop the infrastructure needed to address climate change.

Defend democratic rights!

Extreme social inequality is incompatible with democratic forms of rule. The determination of the wealthy elite to accumulate ever greater corporate profit and personal wealth, while suppressing any challenge from below, is driving the global embrace of authoritarian and dictatorial forms of rule. Under the fraudulent “war on terror,” the framework for a police state in Australia has already been erected.

Hand-in-hand with the promotion of reactionary Australian nationalism, Labor, Liberal, and the Greens have pushed through further anti-democratic measures. A nationalist witch-hunt in parliament has targeted all those holding, or eligible to hold, dual citizenship. After the High Court interpreted the constitution as requiring “unqualified allegiance to Australia,” some 50 percent of the population has been stripped of its right to stand in federal elections—making this election the most anti-democratic ever held.

As well, amid a xenophobic scare campaign against China, draconian “foreign interference” laws have been enacted, with bipartisan support, that can be used to suppress anti-war opposition, illegalise international political co-operation, and prepare for the mass internment of “enemy aliens,” as occurred during the two world wars.

The entire political and media establishment, in both Australia and New Zealand, bears political responsibility for the Christchurch massacre. The filthy anticommunism and Islamophobia at the centre of Australian fascist Brenton Tarrant’s manifesto are not far removed from the diatribes emanating from state and national parliaments and the mainstream media.

The attack on democratic rights and the associated drive to war finds its most acute expression in the collaboration of Labor and Coalition governments with the vendetta against WikiLeaks’ founder and editor, Julian Assange.

Hostility to Assange from the political establishment, the mass media and the various pseudo-left organisations intensified after 2011, when he was awarded the Walkley award for journalism. It deepened when the Obama administration announced the US “pivot to Asia,” which was directed against China, and when Washington launched its bloody interventions in Syria and Libya, following the Egyptian revolution. In 2016, the attacks on Assange were stepped up, with denunciations characterising him as a stooge of Putin’s Russia, following WikiLeaks’ exposure of Clinton as the direct candidate of Wall Street. This made clear that his ongoing persecution has been bound up with US imperialism’s war drive against both Russia and China, and the integration of Australia into it.

* The SEP demands that the Australian government protect the rights of Assange, an Australian citizen, and guarantees him safe passage to Australia, without any threat of extradition to the US. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of Chelsea Manning, who has been railroaded back to prison for refusing to collaborate with a bogus US

grand jury, convened to prosecute Assange.

* The SEP will take the fight for Assange and Manning's freedom into the working class, make it a central feature of our election campaign and challenge the political establishment's silence on their fate.

* The SEP insists that the military-intelligence-police apparatus be dismantled. We demand the abolition of all laws and regulations designed to restrict or outlaw democratic rights, including all anti-strike legislation, section 44 of the constitution, the draconian anti-terror and foreign interference laws and mounting efforts to censor the internet and media.

For the political independence of the working class! For a workers' government!

In every country around the world, the re-emergence of the working class is assuming the form of deepening hostility to the entire social and political order.

Desperate to suppress and divert this movement, the trade unions seek to boost false and lingering illusions that Labor represents an alternative to the Liberals, or at least a "lesser evil." Conscious of the enormous social anger that has built up, they warn of a "tsunami" of social unrest. But, as the industrial police force for big business and government, the unions will do everything they possibly can to isolate, demoralise and suppress any independent movement of the working class, as they have done for decades.

The lessons of these experiences must be drawn and action upon. The Hawke-Keating Labor government of 1983–96 smashed every independent organisation of the working class, as it integrated Australia into the "free market" framework of global finance capital, initiating the greatest redistribution of wealth up the income scale in history. The Rudd-Gillard Labor governments, with the collaboration of the trade unions, enacted the Fair Work legislation, virtually outlawing strikes and other forms of industrial action. The Shorten Labor party leadership has designated the Hawke-Keating government as the "model" it will follow.

Shorten's pathetic populism is a desperate attempt to imitate figures like British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn. Yet what has been the experience of British workers? Despite its "left" face, the Corbyn leadership has demonstrated that the Labour Party is a pillar of the capitalist establishment. After opposing any struggle against the hated right-wing Blairites within the Labour party, Corbyn has now come to rescue the Tory prime minister, Theresa May, from the Brexit crisis, by agreeing to her appeal for "national unity to deliver the national interest."

The Australian Greens rest on a privileged layer of upper-middle class professionals and "green" business interests. Promoting themselves as the party of parliamentary stability, they work to prop up whichever party forms government, and to defend its anti-working class policies.

The various pseudo-left formations—Socialist Alliance, Socialist Alternative, and their parochial Melbourne-based electoral front, the Victorian Socialists—also represent layers of the affluent middle class. Their chief function is to maintain the threadbare illusion that progressive change can be achieved through Labor and the trade unions. As the political establishment swings ever further to the right, so too have these fake lefts—backing US-led wars in Syria and Libya, and the reactionary, anti-democratic nostrums of identity politics.

* The Socialist Equality Party provides the only genuine means for young people and workers to develop the struggle against capitalism. We call on workers to establish factory and workplace rank-and-file committees, democratically elected by the workers, to break the trade union straitjacket that prevents them from fighting for decent wages, conditions, and secure jobs. We advocate the establishment of workers' action committees to defend basic social rights, and have already taken the initiative to form the Committee for Public Education.

* Genuine socialism is revolutionary—we advocate not paltry reforms, which the ruling class will never accept, but social revolution; that is, the mobilisation of the working class to take political power and establish a

workers' government, to reorganise economic life on the basis of social need and equality, not private profit.

Oppose militarism and war!

The danger of war between the US and China is escalating. The Trump administration has junked nuclear weapons treaties, massively increased military expenditures, and issued numerous reports detailing its plans for "total war" against Russia, China and other potential rivals. In the Asia-Pacific, Washington aims to forcefully maintain the unchallenged hegemony it established in 1945, after defeating Japan in World War II. A minor "misunderstanding" between American and Chinese forces in the South China or East China Seas could quickly trigger a devastating military escalation.

Labor and Coalition governments alike prosecute the predatory interests of Australian imperialism. They have supported every criminal US-led war and military intervention over the past four decades, including the ongoing occupation of Afghanistan and the illegal 2003 invasion of Iraq, which claimed up to a million lives.

As part of the US-led "Five Eyes" intelligence network, Australian facilities, including Pine Gap, play a key role in supporting the reckless US-led encirclement of China. Successive governments have closely integrated the military into the US army, navy, and air forces in the region. Military expenditure will increase to an extraordinary \$38.7 billion in 2019–20 and is set to reach 2 percent of gross domestic product in 2020–21, a higher rate than in many countries, including China and Britain.

The entire political establishment has placed the Australian population on the front lines of a potential nuclear third world war. Prime Minister Scott Morrison heads a militarist, pro-US government. Labor leader Bill Shorten is no less militarist and is a long-standing US embassy source and advocate for American military operations around the world.

The Greens are no alternative. In 2011, the Greens-backed Gillard Labor government signed an agreement with the Obama administration, pledging unconditional backing for a US military build-up throughout the Asia-Pacific. Their limited criticisms of the US military alliance, and their calls for a more "independent" foreign policy, reflect concerns in ruling circles that the US cannot be relied upon to defend Australian imperialist interests. The Greens, moreover, have been at the forefront of the xenophobic "foreign interference" campaign, used to foment nationalism and anti-Chinese sentiment as part of the ideological preparation for war.

* The SEP, alongside its sister parties internationally in the ICFI, fights to mobilise the working class against the war danger. We demand 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. The military-intelligence 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.

For urgent action on Climate Change!

There is no possibility of arresting climate change under the capitalist system and its "free market," dominated by the drive for private profit. The growing threat to the future of the planet derives from the operation of this system. Real action to arrest global warming necessitates conscious economic planning, on a national and international scale.

The first step, therefore, in halting a climate disaster requires that the major corporations, above all those bearing central responsibility for pollutants, be taken out of private hands, and placed under public ownership and democratic control. Such a program necessitates international collaboration and control. It can only be developed in struggle against all the parties of the political establishment—Labor, Liberal and the Greens—that defend the profit interests of the major corporations, financial institutions and their "own" national state.

Join the fight for a socialist future!

Around the world, the manifest crisis and bankruptcy of capitalism has fuelled a resurgence of support for socialism. A survey conducted last year by the right-wing Centre for Independent Studies found that 58 percent of Australians, between 21 and 38 years of age, had a favourable “overall view of socialism,” with 59 percent agreeing that “capitalism has failed.”

Young people have already begun to express their determination to fight back. Tens of thousands of high school students recently defied threats and intimidation to join strikes and protests to demand action on climate change. As has historically been the case, this movement of student youth is yet another harbinger of the re-entry of the working class into struggle.

Without revolutionary leadership, however, socialism is impossible. Youth and workers who want to fight for a socialist future must assimilate the political lessons from the strategic experiences of the 20th century. The Russian Revolution of October 1917 demonstrated, for all time, that the working class, when provided with revolutionary leadership, can carry out the overthrow of capitalism and begin the construction of a new society.

The defeats that followed were the outcome of the betrayals of socialism by Stalinism, the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy that arose from the isolation of the first workers’ state. But the fight for the revolutionary program responsible for the revolution’s victory was continued by Leon Trotsky, in his protracted struggle against Stalinism from 1923 onwards. In 1938, Trotsky founded the Fourth International to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership in the international working class. The International Committee of the Fourth International, of which the SEP is the Australian section, alone represents the continuity of Trotsky’s struggle against all forms of national opportunism, which is essential in the fight for world socialism today.

We urge you to get involved in our 2019 campaign! Vote for the Socialist Equality Party Senate and House of Representatives candidates! Join and build SEP election committees in our candidates’ electorates, and around the country. Circulate this statement as widely as possible to your family, friends and workmates, including on social media. Organise meetings in your workplace, university or community group and invite an SEP candidate to speak. Donate as generously as you can to our election fund. Above all, take up the fight for socialism, study the program and history of the ICFI and join the SEP and its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE)!

Authorised by James Cogan for the Socialist Equality Party, Suite 906, 185 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact