

Workers and youth discuss Julian Assange, social conditions and war at SEP election meetings

Our reporters
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Students and workers spoke to the WSWWS this week about why they came to the Socialist Equality Party's final election public meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane what they regarded as the most important issues discussed at them.

In Sydney, **Christina**, a Western Sydney University social work student, said:

"I came to the meeting after discussing opening up international borders and Marxist theory with an SEP member. I wanted to know more about how the imperialist powers use immigrants to conquer and divide. This is so prevalent in the work that I do and the things that I study, and I wanted to immerse myself with understanding that. I studied Marxist theory at university and have done some of my own reading.

"I have also been very much aware of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning and their impact on freedom of speech. They have been denounced by many people in power who obviously see what they have done as a massive threat to their hold on power. I found it really surprising that no other party had taken a stand, because it seems like something so important to our democratic rights. They are staying silent, because to shine a light on what Assange and Manning have revealed would uncover many other cruel things that our governments do."

Christina referred to the statistics on the huge levels of unemployment in Sydney's western suburbs that Oscar Grenfell, the SEP's candidate for Parramatta, reported to the meeting.

"The statistics didn't surprise me because as a member of the working class, I see that all the time. People continue to lose their jobs and the workforce has become casualised. You are just living from employment to employment. It's been a reality in my world.

"What your party is trying to do is an operation on a grand scale, but considering the number of people of the working class it also sounds do-able, if workers can recognise the

power that they hold. I heard about the Mexican workers coming to the borders and uniting with American workers a few months ago, so I think that people are dissatisfied with governments and how the current regime is operating, and people want control back in how they live."

Michael, a young worker and part-time student, referred to the refusal of Labor and Liberal-National governments alike to address climate change.

"I haven't been able to see the difference between them as long as I've been living here. Nothing feels like it's going to change. I'm actually at a point where I don't even care which party gets voted in. I just want to see a new party so that something changes.

"The biggest things that are impacting the climate are the fossil fuel corporations and the mining companies. The wealthiest people in the country are controlling these industries, so the governments are scared to oppose them.

"They're very short-sighted. They seem to only plan for the next three years between each vote. There doesn't appear to be any kind of goal for a better future for the planet. That's why young people are protesting and not going to school.

"People are really seeing [climate change] as a problem, but the politicians are just focussed on the money and ignoring them, thinking that the masses are idiots. Nothing's going to change until we all stick together and stand up."

On Julian Assange, Michael said: "He's a hero to people. The fact that [the political establishment] is silent is scary to me, because that means that there's influence on our politicians that people can't even explain. There must be some kind of vested interest behind siding with the American military."

At the Melbourne meeting, held in the northern working-class suburb of Broadmeadows, **Salman** commented: "The gap between the capitalist class and the working class is widening. It is going to be a very challenging situation for the working class. The working class pays the taxes, but that

money is being poured into the pockets of the capitalists, who are being backed up by the governments.

“So the only solution for the working class is what the SEP is saying: campaign internationally. The working class of every country has to synergise. The only way forward is for the working class in every country to unite.

“Julian Assange revealed the crimes of the US in Afghanistan and in Iraq. He unveiled these crimes to the entire world. It is our duty to stand by him, and to unite the working class of the entire world to put pressure on these governments to release him. He deserves justice.

“If the US succeeds in their persecution of Assange, it will be the responsibility of the Australian, British and Ecuadorian governments as well. The responsibility of any government is to protect its citizens from injustice.

“Assange has revealed the conspiracies of governments, which the mainstream media cannot do, since it is in the pay of these governments. The working class can only find the truth out from alternative sources, such as social media, and above all from the WWSWS.”

Matt, an IT worker, formerly from Iran, said:

“I have supported Assange for a long time. He is doing everything that journalists should do—they should disclose everything. He has the right, and he has to do that. Governments don’t want to inform the population. They support censorship. It isn’t just the US. Almost all governments are the same. They want to rule the people. When some facts are disclosed they can’t rule so easily.”

At the meeting at Goodna, in the Brisbane electorate of Oxley, **Gulshan**, a Griffith University student and part-time cleaner, also spoke about the importance of defending Julian Assange.

“For a system to be democratic, it needs to be transparent. Transparency comes with exposing unfair situations. That is exactly the what Julian Assange has done. He wanted transparency and he was silenced. Therefore this system is not transparent.”

Gulshan, originally from Azerbaijan, said the persecution of Assange related to the issue of war. “If the system was sophisticated, it would never use war to solve its problems in any way. The most sophisticated societies use education to resolve problems. They don’t resort to physical force.

“Our future is in the hands of people who have the wrong way of resolving issues. They have profit interests, as well as human greed. The way they act makes us suffer. We are the suffering class. Therefore we need to stand up.

“We need to emphasise basic human dignity and the need for equality, which comes with that. The root of the problem is that these ruling people treat things like commodities, rather than communities.

“It is absolutely vital that we have meetings like this in

working-class areas. People need to understand their rights and what equality really means, in the true sense. Having this meeting, as a party, is one step ahead towards the goal of achieving equality. Please keep doing this, it is a great thing.”

Peter, an injured worker, said he thought the meeting was “excellent.” He commented: “It’s important that you guys are going out and getting the truth out there. Every worker needs to know what was being said here. The way you guys explained why they are going after Assange in order to suppress freedoms was exactly right.

“The working people need Assange, and need to defend him. Whether they are young or old, wherever they are from, whatever their background is, they need him, or they are not going to know anything about what’s going on in the world.”

Asked what had convinced him to come to the meeting, Peter said: “It was your candidate telling me that he had no truck with the other parties, and the usual rubbish they put out. I was instantly attracted by his defence of Assange, and telling me that the only way forward was for workers all over the world was to be united. None of our problems can be solved without all of us coming together.”

Formerly an Australian soldier, Peter added: “I am against war, we are invading other peoples and stealing what’s theirs, or destroying them. That’s what creates the refugee crisis too. It forces people to flee their homes.”

Asked about the climate strikes by school students, Peter commented: “I absolutely support them, and I’m not surprised at all that they are out. It’s a social outcry from the heart. They know that the rich billionaires and corporations don’t care about young people. To the rich, all young people are specks of dust to be crushed by the chariot wheel. Young people know all about the pollution, they breathe it every day, and know there’s no solution being offered by the politicians and corporations.”

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