

Australian election laws an “attack on the entire working class,” say SEP electoral members

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is continuing its campaign against the anti-democratic electoral laws pushed through parliament with Labor Party support on August 26.

The legislation forces the SEP and 35 other parties that do not have a seat in parliament to submit a list of 1,500 members to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), treble the previous number.

These smaller parties have less than three months to present their new list of members or face deregistration, even as the Delta variant is infecting working class communities across the country. Without registration, parties cannot run in the federal elections with their own name on the ballot paper. The AEC also has the power to decide which parties can include certain words in their registered name, such as “socialist” or “communist.”

The SEP is appealing to all supporters and readers to join the campaign, become an electoral member and take forward the fight for a socialist perspective at the next election.

The following comments are part of a series of statements from electoral members, *World Socialist Web Site* readers and others supporting this campaign.

The new election laws have “demolished any pretext that Labor is a party for working class people,” **Jenny Campbell**, a full-time carer in Queensland, told the *World Socialist Web Site*.

“Liberal and Labor are capitalist parties—they’re two sides of the same coin—and they’ve put these laws in place to block votes being taken away from them. They want it to be a two-party system and nothing else.

“Labor supported the Afghanistan war and the war in

Iraq. Over a million people in Australia protested against these wars, some people demonstrated for the first time ever. That was one of the turning points of people’s attitudes towards the Labor Party, which for years has postured as representing the working class, which is not the case.”

Campbell noted that the Liberal-National Coalition government and the Labor Party parliamentarians, “rammed these measures through while the pandemic is out of control. They are telling everyone that they must learn to live with the virus—that this is the ‘new normal’—but they don’t hide the fact that this ‘new normal’ is going to result in the deaths of thousands of people.”

Commenting on rising social inequality, Campbell continued, “The gap between rich and poor has grown wider since the 1990s and wages and pensions have not kept up with inflation. The unions have played a role in this—they work for employers now—and their betrayals are becoming more obvious to anyone who engages in industrial action. The rich elite have increased their wealth in the pandemic by billions of dollars, partly due to government bailouts. This is why young people have over the last decade taken an interest in socialism.”

Campbell concluded by declaring: “I want the Socialist Equality Party to have its name on the ballot paper and not be written up as independent. I want to see these laws repealed.”

Stephanie Green, a young office worker from Brisbane, said the laws were an attack on the Australian working class and an assault on free speech and democratic rights. “This is what it means when you legislate to try and stop parties who are against war and in opposition to the two major parties running in

elections with their party name on the ballot paper,” she said.

“Young people today don’t have a future under capitalism. Housing prices are going up and up, people are struggling to pay rent or find a place to live, and more people are becoming homeless.

“Over the last ten years the casualisation of workers means there is no job security,” she continued. “Employers can hire and fire at will and don’t have to pay sick leave or holiday leave. People live paycheque to paycheque and there are hardly any job prospects for the younger generation. There is despair for many and rising mental health problems. This is what the system offers”

Ali is a state public sector worker from Bankstown and a long-time SEP electoral member.

“This is an anti-democratic measure, and it has been implemented, not just because of the pandemic, but because capitalism as a whole is in crisis,” he said. “There’s the destruction of the environment—floods, bush fires in Europe in Turkey, Greece and in America—and the danger of war—all being produced by the profit system. We have misery and suffering on a global scale, and this is changing the thinking of millions of people.”

“The pandemic has revealed how unprepared and ill-equipped the system is and the hardest hit by this is the working class—the majority. Sydney is now like the title of Charles Dickens’ great novel, ‘A Tale of Two Cities.’

“[New South Wales Premier] Berejiklian is attempting to deny it, but this is the reality. Nothing that she and her government, or the federal government, does is believable about the pandemic. Labor is virtually invisible and has done nothing to challenge the government. It works in partnership with the state and federal governments.

“What is building up are bitter divisions, bitter resentments and real anger about how working-class communities are being treated which will be reflected in the next election, whenever it is. People here in Bankstown, and the rest of Sydney’s west and south-west, are never going to forget the brutal, uncaring response of the government to COVID-19. People are not stupid, and they will act accordingly in the next election.

“Labor and the trade unions have always been used to

dampen down and control the class tensions in society, but these mechanisms only work if the working class—the majority—trust these institutions. This has broken down. Large numbers of people, and especially young people, don’t have any confidence in these organisations.

“The response of the capitalist politicians is to stop all dissenting voices, and in particular the voice of the SEP. Restricting more than one organisation having socialist in their names makes it clear what this is all about and who the political elite that run this country are afraid of.

“The working class is being confronted with life and death questions. This is not a slogan but a real issue and one you are forced to think about—whether you or your family will be infected—every day when you go to work.”

Ali, who first became an SEP electoral member in 2007, urged WSWS readers in Australia to support the party’s campaign. “This is important because the SEP is the only genuine socialist movement in this country. I agree with the SEP’s analysis because it connects with the world.

“Workers and ordinary people want real and truthful answers about what is happening and what needs to be done from the standpoint of the majority in society and not the wealthy elites. The SEP tells the truth about the political situation, and it educates. Without this humanity cannot go forward.”



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