

Workers oppose Australia's anti-democratic electoral laws: "People don't hold the views of the three main parties, which all defend the capitalist framework"

Our reporters
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Workers, students, young people and Socialist Equality Party (SEP) electoral members are expressing strong opposition to anti-democratic laws rushed through parliament last month by the federal Liberal-National government and the Labor Party.

At a public meeting on Sunday, SEP speakers explained that the legislation was a frontal attack on civil liberties and an attempt to bar political alternatives to the pro-business parties from elections. Under the laws, parties such as the SEP that do not have parliamentary representation are required to submit a list of 1,500 members, treble the previous number, in less than three months. If they do not, they will be deregistered and cannot stand candidates with their party name appearing on the ballot.

The speakers placed the legislation in the context of the homicidal, pro-business response to the pandemic, along with the escalating drive to war, expressed in the formation last week of the AUKUS alliance, which brings together the US, Britain and Australia, against China. The militarist policies of the major parties, and their subordination of health and safety to profit, were provoking widespread opposition, which the laws were aimed at suppressing.

The SEP was linking its campaign against the legislation, and for the 1,500 members, to the fight to build a socialist movement of the working class against inequality, war and the turn to authoritarianism by governments internationally.

The full meeting can be viewed [here](#).

The SEP appeals 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 SEP spoke to **Jole**, a social worker in the healthcare sector, who attended the Sunday meeting, his first SEP event. Jole found out about the WSWs through his father, a longstanding SEP electoral member, and decided to join himself after becoming aware of the anti-democratic legislation.

"I think there needs to be significant representation for the peoples' views. People don't hold the views of the three main parties, which all defend the capitalist framework. They're moonlighting as democratic and doing what they will."

Jole said the laws were an attempt to suppress mounting opposition to inequality: "Why should there be so many struggling to feed themselves while others have billions of dollars? The gap between the elite and the working class is extreme."

"The government doesn't want deaths, but they also don't care if there are any. They don't want the cracks in the hospital system revealed. They're worried about their mismanagement coming out."

Jole contrasted the chronic underfunding of the health system with the "billions of taxpayer money, our money, that is being used to upgrade the military." He appreciated the analysis presented at the meeting on Australia's alignment with the US drive to war against China. "It was important that they pointed out the wider political motivations on the submarines and highlighted

where the government put their money in terms of preparing for war, and also contributing to the reason there are wars,” he stated.

The SEP also spoke to **Mehmet Bireroglu**, a retired Turkish born mechanic, who recently became an electoral member.

He said the legislation “is unfair to small parties. It makes it really difficult to be involved in political activity. They [the major parties] don’t want to give any other parties a chance to interfere with their politics. They are trying to weaken them. The main parties don’t represent the workers. They put pressure on the people. They don’t want the people to wake up.”

Responding to the AUKUS alliance, Bireroglu stated: “They are taking taxpayers' money. They don’t use it to serve the people, they just spend it on the weapons to kill people. The money instead should be used to make people's living conditions better, to fix the health system and deal with the coronavirus.”

Speaking about the pandemic in Turkey, Bireroglu said: “In my country, I heard that the hospital conditions are really bad. The government plays with the numbers. If they test 20,000 people, they say they tested 100,000. They don’t give the right information to people.

“With the deaths they change the figures as well. I remember we heard the mayor of Istanbul saying at one time ‘we have 600 deaths today,’ but the government announced for all Turkey there were just 300 and something deaths. So, the government is lying.

“Wherever you go it is almost the same. All over the world if the people don’t demand their rights the governments don't give them. You have to fight for your rights.”

Bireroglu came to Australia from Turkey in 1981. “I would say that in Turkey there has always been dictatorship, sometimes weaker, sometimes stronger,” he said. “But I believe we never lived with democratic rule ever in Turkey.”

The situation in Turkey was “similar for small parties. It is not a problem to have a party but then they limit your movement. If you want to have a meeting, they don’t allow you to hold it. The police sometimes kill people. I know of so many people who have been killed at meetings. In October 2015 in Ankara, there was a bomb that killed about 100 people. The intelligence agencies organised it and the government

says they have no idea who carried it out.”

Bireroglu concluded: “Here in Australia democratic rights are better than in the Middle East and Turkey, but still not sufficient. You see this in how they are toying with democratic rules. While the language and culture is different, the pressure and the slavery is almost the same.”



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