

SEP (Australia) electoral members condemn anti-democratic legislation as “both cynical and sinister in intent”

Our reporters
29 September 2021

While the corporate media maintains a stony silence on the sweeping implications of electoral laws rushed through parliament last month, workers and young people apprised of the legislation by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) are speaking out against its anti-democratic character.

The laws require the SEP and other parties without parliamentary representation to treble their membership in less than three months if they are to remain registered and to have their party name on the ballot in a federal election.

In addition to signing up to join the SEP and help it reach the requirement of 1,500 electoral members, growing numbers are making thoughtful comments on the political context in which the legislation has been passed. Many are noting the indistinguishable, pro-business policies of Labor and the Liberal-Nationals and are drawing the connection between the assault on democratic rights, the stepped-up drive to war and the attempts of the ruling elite to suppress opposition from the working class.

To sign-up as an electoral member and join the SEP campaign, [click here](#).

Mitchell Beer, a 31-year-old chiropractor on the New South Wales Central Coast, commented: “The first question that comes to my mind is why? Why have the government and Labor rushed these changes through now? Australia is always presented by the major parties as a representative democracy. Quite plainly the changes that have been pushed through, which attempt to prevent minor parties standing in elections under their name, are not in the interests of democracy.

“With these changes it is the people who lose out, as

it diminishes their election choices to just the official parties. This undemocratic move is aimed at maintaining the political status quo and is taking place under conditions where millions of people, and especially young people, are looking for alternate answers to the many serious social issues they face, including rising levels of inequality and the increasing danger of war, which are all linked to capitalism.

“The two-party system offers no real choice. It does not matter if people vote in Liberal or Labor, nothing changes because both support the capitalist profit system and are determined to maintain it at all costs.

“The ruling class is desperately aware that there is a growing opposition to its rule, with many looking for an alternative, and so they are determined to use all means to suppress this before it takes root.”

Raising the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic, Beer said, “People are growing ever more aware that whilst millions of working people are suffering under the pandemic, big business has benefitted massively with many corporations making record profits. The rich have gotten richer.”

“People are also concerned and are becoming more critical about the issues of war,” he added. “These concerns have sharpened further with the recent events in Afghanistan. People have seen the destruction resulting from this 20-year US-led war and are looking at the vast destruction across the Middle East and what imperialism has done to it.

“Also, when people realise what has been spent and continues to be spent on war it causes them to think. The question then arises, what essential social services—like health and education—could these billions have been used to fund and support?”

Beer concluded: “More than anything the ruling class and the political parties that support it want to prevent a socialist perspective and Marxist analysis being presented in elections. Such an analysis presented by the SEP is essential to understanding the many burning issues that the working-class faces: war, social inequality, and the danger of the growth of the far-right and what the alternative is. When you read a Marxist analysis and the alternative it presents, it makes sense.”

Batuhan, an 18-year-old computing student at the University of Melbourne attended an SEP public meeting against the laws on September 19 and recently joined as an electoral member.

“The major parties in parliament are united in their attempt to remove all these smaller parties,” he said. “They’re losing popularity due to multiple factors, including the pandemic.” By removing smaller parties, “they give the illusion that people only have a choice between the establishment parties rather than anything outside parliament.”

Batuhan noted the media blackout on the legislation, and commented: “The major media companies decide what the public sees. They have nothing to gain from the loss of support for the major parties. They are looking after their own profits.”

“The AUKUS [alliance] was something I learnt from the SEP public meeting” Batuhan said. “I would never have guessed the alliance would involve nuclear submarines.” Referring to the threats of war against China, he added: “I know that America has at least one military base in most countries around the world and Australia is definitely one of the most US-influenced countries in the world that is near China.”

Paul Saxby, a Brisbane teacher and new SEP electoral member, also denounced the AUKUS alliance. “Where’s the mandate to have a target painted on our backs?” he asked.

“Australia, as we know, is simply a defence force satellite state of Uncle Sam but with the purchase of these submarines we have fallen further into line with their imperialist agenda through the perpetuation of the military industrial complex and our continued subjugation to their aggressive foreign policy agenda.

“This agenda has seen the abandonment of Afghanistan, has no consideration for human rights and by implication is in contravention of United Nations Policy on The Right to Democracy.

“[Defence Minister] Dutton along with [Prime Minister] Morrison and [ex-Prime Minister] John Howard should be tried in an International Court of Law for crimes against humanity for the abandonment of people who should have been evacuated earlier. Blood is already on their hands, as we know, for the illegal invasion of Iraq and the resultant multiple deaths in detention of asylum seekers.”

Saxby also condemned the new electoral laws saying, “The recent passing of federal laws that require political parties to triple their membership overnight on the eve of a federal election is both cynical and sinister in intent. The two major parties have colluded to minimise opposition to their respective hold on power.

“It is also an example of how the public remains largely ill-informed about how power-sharing in the public sphere remains in the hands of a relative few.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact