

Australia's new electoral laws are “blocking workers from having a voice” – SEP electoral members speak out

Our reporters
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Socialist Equality Party (SEP) electoral members continue to voice their opposition to anti-democratic legislation rushed through the Australian parliament on August 26.

Fully supported by the Labor opposition, the Liberal-National Coalition government's laws seek to silence smaller political parties, including the SEP, by forcing them to submit a list of 1,500 members in less than three months, treble the previous figure. Those organisations that do not meet the new requirements, amid the raging pandemic, will be deregistered.

The SEP is fighting to defeat these new laws. As part of this campaign it is calling on all supporters to sign-up as an electoral member today and join the SEP's campaign.

The SEP spoke with **John**, a 72-year-old retiree who grew up in a working-class household in Melbourne. His father had fought in New Guinea during World War II and had agitated, along with American soldiers, against the elitist officer corps in the military.

In the 1960s, John, like thousands of other 20-year-olds at that time, was conscripted into the army. He later became involved in the fight against the Vietnam War.

Commenting on the recently announced military alliance of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (AUKUS), John noted that the two major parties are in lockstep on the issue of war.

“There might be some differences around the edges but with the main frame I can't see much difference between them,” he said.

“AUKUS is a warning. There is a weaponised, nuclearised China facing off against Australia and

America...What's the endgame there? This has never been an election issue. The people don't even know about it, which is scary when you think about it.

“War is the capitalist way of solving differences. There's so much money tied up with it. Who made all the money, the trillions that went into Afghanistan? The weapons manufacturer would have lined their pockets.

“Vested interests want war because they know they can probably avoid the appalling consequences of it. Look at Bosch during WWII, it was making equipment designed for the mass extermination of people and ...they are still going.”

Referring to the anti-Vietnam war movement, John said Australia was fighting a civil war in a foreign country and noted that the anti-war opposition “wasn't a mass movement” when it started.

“There was a group of mothers that was so influential back then [Save Our Sons]. They were a small group at the time and came out of inner Melbourne. It grew and embraced people of all different colours... Today, I think there is a growing disquiet among young people about the threat of war. There are concerns and I hope that will translate into some form of action,” he said.

Noting the worsening social conditions now facing workers, John stated: “The capitalist system is built around the minority getting most of the benefit. While technology has changed and the nature of work has changed a lot, the class relations remain the same. You look at the figures from the United States, one percent of the population controls ninety percent of the wealth. There is a huge disparity.”

The new electoral laws, John said, “are very undemocratic because they are excluding or blocking workers from having a voice in a democracy. That's

how I read it. The ruling class has brought these laws in to maintain their power and privilege. The people want options, they are tired of the status quo of the two parties, Labor and conservatives. And it's very hard to tell the difference between them"

Ashley, 40, is an assistant in nursing from the Central Coast region who is studying to become a Registered Nurse. He met the International Youth and Students for Social Equality on campus before the lockdowns this year and became an SEP electoral member shortly after.

"They're not offering anything to us," Ashley said, referring to the major parliamentary parties. "They're not representing us at all and so instead, they're forcing people to vote for them."

Asked about the media silence over the new electoral laws said stated: "The media is on board with the interests of the major parties. They control a lot themselves, presenting some events over others... like promoting the anti-lockdown protesters for instance, but you never see them interviewing the average person, I don't think they'd like the answers they'd get!

"They're also emphasising the vaccination rates now, promoting the fact we're at 60 percent vaccination etc. They're not emphasising the actual deaths.

"The pandemic has exposed a lot of things about society that have always been there but under the surface. I notice that when they read out the condolences for the daily deaths it's like they're going through the motions. They don't really care, it's all staged. Politicians really only care about money at the end of the day, that's why capitalism is wrong."



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