

Anti-democratic election laws in Australia were passed to “make sure that the working class can’t voice its opposition”

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party’s campaign to defeat anti-democratic electoral laws rushed through the Australian parliament on August 26 continues to build, as more electoral members of the SEP voice their hostility to the legislation and call for people to join the campaign.

The laws force all political parties, who do not have a seat in parliament, to submit a list of 1,500 members, triple the previous number. Otherwise they will be deregistered, meaning they cannot stand in federal elections with their party name on the ballot. The measures also gives the Australian Electoral Commission the power to veto parties that share common words in their name, such as “socialist” or “communist.”

In comments below electoral members link the laws to the dangerous reopening policy now underway in Victoria and New South Wales, which will allow the COVID-19 virus to run rampant. They make the point that this policy has and will provoke mass opposition amongst the working class and that the passing of these laws is to prevent these sentiments finding political expression.

To join the SEP campaign against the legislation, sign-up as an electoral member today.

Connie is a 30-year-old student completing a master’s degree at Western Sydney University. She has been an electoral member since 2015.

“These are very anti-democratic laws and if we allow the government to get away with it then they are just going to get worse. They will introduce more anti-democratic laws that are going to impede, not just who can run in elections, but in other areas of life,” Connie

said.

“Already new surveillance laws have been passed,” she continued, referring to legislation passed in August which vastly expanded the spying powers of Australian police and intelligence agencies. “If the government is willing to take away one democratic right, then it will be willing to take away a whole number of them until we have none left.

“The government knows that people are frustrated with how it has handled the pandemic. In every country they now say they can afford to lose so many people a year to COVID, so that the economy can continue to go on, despite the human losses.

“This is a very callous way to look at people; to say that they are expendable as long as you can continue to make profit. The working class is being told that the people around them—family, friends, caregivers—are going to die and to just accept their deaths and the trauma that creates.

“Both parties, Labor and Liberal, have agreed to the austerity measures that have been imposed on the working class and they both agree with the drive towards war, particularly against China. In a sense it wouldn’t matter which party was in the government as they are pushing the same policies.

These new electoral laws, Connie concluded, “are to restrict the rights of people. To make sure that the working class can’t voice its opposition to the fact that the rich are getting richer, while the needs of workers are being ignored. If people believe in protecting our democratic rights, then they should join as an electoral member of the Socialist Equality Party.”

Paxi, 29, lives in northern NSW. “I have just become an electoral member,” he said. “My uncle has been an

electoral member of the SEP for years and he encouraged me to get involved to defend democracy. When I heard these laws were passed, I thought I can't just sit back and let it happen. I'm interested in becoming more involved."

Paxi commented on what he had learnt since getting in touch with the SEP. "It was interesting to hear that governments around the world all submit to corporate interests. They're all implementing rules and regulations to push everyone back to work, ignoring the pandemic and not looking after the population, which I thought would be their first responsibility.

"The ethics and morals of the SEP mean it is the only party strong enough to resist the power of the corporations and government. Every other party has been neutralised and satisfied. The SEP is the only one with the strength and courage to oppose such a significant issue...

"It's about time we started to do something to save this world, our lives, our integrity and not stay silent on the inequality and abuses that we are told to accept. It's time to do something else, to take action."

James, 26, is currently unemployed and living in Sydney. He has been an electoral member for nine years.

"The ruling class is very cognisant that workers, when given the means and tools, will oppose things they find are deeply unpopular and undemocratic. There is a disconnect between the realm that workers live in and what big business and governments are doing. What's being imposed on the world from above is a competitive, backward structure. It's in stark opposition to what workers want...

"The disillusionment in the main parties is because things just keep getting worse. The media have also been complicit in this, they would have had the information leaked to them about [these laws], they allowed them to pass through silently."

Eskander, a retired research scientist living in Sydney, said there was a direct connection between the attacks on democratic rights and the abandonment of efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The number of cases and the number of people dying goes up and people are opposed to that. Polling shows that only 12 percent of people would be comfortable with a reopening that increases death and hospitalisations. They also know that the number of

cases is only going to rise," he said.

The assault on democratic rights, he continued, "is not just an Australian phenomenon but is happening globally. In America workers' right to vote is being undermined by legislation passed in different states.

"These assaults have been going on for a while but now it is taking a higher form. This is because they are getting ready for war, they have concluded that war is inevitable. This is why Julian Assange, the man who exposed the criminality of the American government, is in prison.

"The campaign that the SEP organised for Assange is unique. The SEP is the only party that led the fight for the release of Julian Assange from the beginning, and it did so, not by appealing to parliamentary politicians, but fighting to mobilise the working class."



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