

?Australian electoral members explain why they support the SEP

Our reporters

23 November 2021

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is campaigning to defeat anti-democratic electoral laws rushed through the Australian parliament on August 26. Behind the backs of the working class, the Labor Party joined with the Morrison Liberal/National Coalition government to put these laws through both houses of parliament in less than 24 hours.

The legislation threatens deregistration for all political parties without a member of parliament, unless they submit a membership list of 1,500, treble the previous number, by December 2. These laws affect the SEP and 35 other political parties.

The laws also grant the Australian Electoral Commission, and any other previously registered political party, the power to veto parties that use common words, such as ‘socialist’ or ‘communist’ in its name, if it is in use by another party.

In the latest interviews long-standing electoral members discuss their opposition to the laws and the policy of reopening in Australia, which has allowed COVID-19 to spread across the county. They discuss their experiences in meeting the party and why they joined as electoral members.

Support the SEP campaign against the legislation and sign up as an electoral member today.

The SEP spoke to Bernard, a longstanding electoral member, about how he met the party.

“I was in Lygon St, opposite Readings bookstore, when I was spoken to by a member selling the *Workers News*. He wanted to talk to me about the political state of things, it was during the privatisations in Australia in the 90s. I said: “I’ll just have to go and get some money. I’ll come back.” And I did.

“I was angry about the selling up of government banks and airlines. Much was said about the supposed

benefits of privatisation, as it had happened in Britain. However, the results were, of course, the diminution of services and accessibility in relation to hospitals. It is a scam on the part of the capitalist governments.

“I was a member of the Labor party. I had joined under my father’s influence; he was sort of right wing of the Labor party. And I went left, I was radicalised to some extent by the Vietnam war.

“I became more aware of the internal workings of capitalism, that it doesn’t allow for any alternative, or compromise. It was devouring everything, an insatiable monster as far as I could see.

“The Labor party was working along with privatisation,” he said. Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke’s Prices and Income Accords “made clear they were going along with it”. The Accords were part of an offensive against the working class, which illegalised strike action and make cuts to real wages. It set the stage for the privatisation of key infrastructure, including the Commonwealth Bank and Qantas.

“I knew privatisation was an international phenomenon. My wife had worked at the Working Women’s Centre through the church on free trade zones. She’d been involved in study tours of these free trade zones where obviously the workers were very exploited, and crushingly so. She toured in Japan, the Philippines and offshore in China, maybe Hong Kong.” he said.

“In 1998 I became a reader of the World Socialist Web Site. It was revealing how capitalism and militarism went hand in hand, grabbing increasing amounts of the world’s resources for profit of a small elite. It was bringing socialist consciousness to people in the world.

“In 2003 the Iraq War, despite the large numbers of protests, just went ahead. It was absolutely vindicated

that weapons of mass destruction were a pack of lies. And the barbarity of the war was made clear by Assange's mind-boggling revelations. Yet he is being prosecuted and they have kept him in jail for telling the truth. It is an absolute scandal."

Bernard spoke about why people should join the party as an electoral member stating, "Oppression is an inexorable process under capitalism—there is no escape from it unless socialist governments of the people, by the people and for the people take over."

The SEP spoke to **Joshua**, 39, who currently works as an arborist. "I oppose these laws; they come at a time of sharpened class tensions and are aimed at silencing any opposition to the status quo. The ruling class never lets a crisis go to waste!"

"As for restricting terms like socialist or communist, it is sabotaging any development of a left-wing alternative to capitalism". He continued, "Being listed under a party name should be a right, not a 'privilege'. They are determining who gets the privileges to operate in this so-called democracy.

"The parliamentary system is undergoing a breakdown. The politics of reformism, advanced by the Labor Party and the trade unions traditionally had large support, this has come to naught and now they've turned against the working class. Now you are seeing figures like Trump and Johnson being promoted and a turn to dictatorial methods of rule.

When asked about his thoughts on the COVID-19 reopening policy, he said, "Everywhere they are following the mantra, 'the cure can't be worse than the disease' and are letting it rip. There are also some cynical calculations that doing so will clear out the 'dead wood' of the population, lessening the burden on healthcare and pensions down the road.

The interview took place a day after the fascistic anti-lockdown protests that took place in major cities. Joshua commented, "All of the anti-vax positions are mixed with the right-wing and conspiracy theories such as Q-Anon. There is an absurd attempt to present the issue as a bottom versus top issue, rather than left vs right. But this papers over important class differences. Left-wing politics is preoccupied with the fight for equality, whereas right-wing politics is based on identity politics, whether Arianism, feminism, etc.

"There is mass opposition to these protests, but there is no political outlet for it. What is required is a

socialist orientation. Hence the need to silence the voice of the SEP which is the only party that gives the necessary voice to the working class."



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