Electoral members call on workers and youth to join the SEP and fight Australia's undemocratic election laws

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party's (SEP) fight against Australia's anti-democratic electoral laws continues with long standing and new electoral members encouraging workers, students and young people to join the campaign.

The laws threaten the SEP, along with 35 other parties, with deregistration if they fail to submit a list of 1,500 members, treble the previous number, by December 2. Rushed through parliament in late August by Prime Minister Scott Morrison's Liberal-National Coalition government, fully backed by Labor, the laws are aimed at preventing the developing opposition to the major parties from finding a socialist and left-wing expression.

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

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Rick, 64, a decades-long supporter of the SEP, met the Socialist Labour League (predecessor of the SEP) when he was a teacher in the 1980s.

"I've been interested in history since I was a young man and that led me to an interest in socialism. Capitalism has no answers to the problems that confront the world. It has systems of oppression that exist to keep working people down and that includes the Australian Labor Party and the trade union movement," he said.

"The new electoral laws are terribly undemocratic. Democracy and people having their say in the system, all this ideology is thrown out the window with this law.

"Why now? The system is weak, it's diseased and there's no longer any pretence about freedom of expression or allowing the people's will to be heard. It's all about maintaining those structures of oppression."

Rick commented on the recent book launch of Vadim Rogovin's *Was There an Alternative?* and noted that "in the 70s and 80s the Stalinist groups were strong in Australia and there was confusion about socialism in the working class and still is today. One of the problems when talking to people about socialism is that they immediately think of Russia and China. They see Stalinism as socialism and say that kind of oppression is inevitable.

"Rogovin demonstrates and documents the struggle that took place in the Soviet Union against Stalin. In previous works he wrote about the mass murder of socialists and members of the Bolshevik Party. These pose questions about how this happened? What qualities did Stalin have that allowed him to come out on top? Understanding all this is vital in order to answer the question as to whether or not socialism leads to oppression," he said.

Commenting on the rising danger of war with China, Rick said, "The idea that it's impossible for trading partners to go to war is false by reading the history of the First World War. There's a wonderful passage by Leon Trotsky where he talks about how before the war the great powers were tobogganing towards conflict, although no-one wanted it. The UK and Germany were major trading partners and there were even familial connections between the ruling classes. But it happened. If we end up in a war, by any kind of analysis, the results are going to be absolutely terrible and Australia is likely to be on the front line. War is certainly not in our interests."

Rick urged workers and youth to become SEP

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electoral members, “firstly to oppose these anti-democratic electoral laws and secondly, it’s a good first step to developing a resistance to the terrible reactionary forces that are leading us to war, vast inequality and ecocide—the destruction of the environment. Capitalism not only has no answers to those problems, it is the problem.” Becoming an SEP electoral member, he concluded, “is a great chance to develop a good understanding of what’s going on. It’s certainly something you won’t get anywhere else.”

Biljana, 58 and a former teacher, emigrated to Australia from Yugoslavia 31 years ago. She became an electoral member this year. “I’m a socialist deep in my heart because my family has always been a socialist family,” she said.

“We care deeply for social justice and ensuring that people have equal opportunities, decent standard of living and all the interests that a socialist party should stand for. When I arrived, I was only 27, raising a family and furthering my education so I didn’t have a lot of time to understand politics in Australia. I was happy that the Labor Party was in power,” she continued.

“It was only when I started working for the unions that I understood that Labor and Liberal were basically playing a game. They weren’t sincere in their claims to be serving the people. I started voting for the Greens, but they supported the Labor Party too.

“When enterprise bargaining was introduced by Labor it had disastrous results on vulnerable sections of the population because they couldn’t negotiate fairer wages for themselves. It was an opportunity for people in power and ruthless employers to underpay them and take away their conditions of work,” she said.

“I came across the Socialist Equality Party, took a couple of brochures and thought, ‘Wow, that sounds really interesting’ and decided to support the SEP. The world is a mess and I needed to find a party that I was confident in. I believe in social justice, freedom and democracy and equal distribution of wealth, these are the values that the SEP represents. No other parties have these values. I started reading the SEP’s *Statement of Principles* and I continue to find points that reflect my ideas and ethical values. I’m happy to support the SEP in any way because there is a global movement and it’s going to change the whole global atmosphere,” she said.

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