

“These laws aim to keep us in the dark”—Australian SEP electoral members denounce new anti-democratic laws

Our reporters
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As the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) has announced, it has extended its campaign to defeat anti-democratic electoral laws, rushed through Australia’s parliament on August 26. With the complete support of the Labor Party, the Liberal-National Coalition government passed laws that seek to stifle the mounting political opposition to the major parties.

SEP electoral members, new and longstanding, are continuing to speak out against the laws, which required the SEP and 35 other parties without members of parliament, to submit a list of 1,500 members—treble the previous number—by December 2 to remain registered. If parties failed to meet this demand, under conditions in which the greatest pandemic in 100 years makes physical campaigning very unsafe, parties would lose the basic democratic right to stand federal election candidates with their party name on ballot papers.

The SEP has not met that arbitrary deadline, but our campaign has won significant numbers of new electoral members of the party, and that is a crucial achievement. Our electoral members have not just signed an online form. They have consciously supported the SEP’s fight for a socialist program, in opposition to Labor, the unions and the Greens.

Electoral members are continuing to call for support from all workers and young people for the fight against these laws. In the comments below two members speak on the link between the laws, the homicidal COVID-19 policy and last week’s British High Court ruling to extradite WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to the United States for exposing US and allied war crimes and mass surveillance.

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

Ruby, 65, is a 34-year supporter of the SEP and a longstanding electoral member. She denounced the extradition ruling on Assange. “December 10 is another day that will live in infamy. Human Rights Day, they say, from ‘the great declaration of human rights’ adopted by the United Nations in 1948. With only a few hours’ notice to Assange’s legal team, the assassination plot against Assange was taken to another level.

“On December 10, 2021, British justice declared that the torture and continuing attempted murder of a journalist and publisher by the state is okay. With that brutal declaration, Julian Assange will remain indefinitely in the dungeon that the ‘great democracies’ have thrown him in. They seek to silence him and anyone else who dares expose the crimes of the powerful.

“At the same time, the Group of Seven or G7, those ‘great democracies,’ also met in the UK to declare their preparedness to start a war with a nuclear-armed power—with Russia; or together with Australia, with China, or both.”

Ruby explained the connection between the persecution of Assange, COVID and the bipartisan party deregistration laws.

“With journalists and whistleblowers locked up, or murdered, and the rest of us locked down and distracted with COVID, the parliament of Australia united to pass multiple pieces of legislation to further erode democratic rights, including these electoral laws.

“Central to democracy is the right to vote. This includes the right to be informed about what is being done in your name, and the ability to see when you are

being lied to by those in power. The one thing that WikiLeaks, and now COVID-19, has made very clear is: you cannot believe anything from the governments, big business or the press.

“Elections and every other democratic right have been under direct and increasing assault. By its very nature, democracy must be grounded in social equality. True democracy places life and health above the drive for profits—that also is socialism. That is why today it is only the socialists who are defending democratic rights.”

“Even though voting will not bring in the changes necessary to stop the climate catastrophe, we must defend democratic rights. Coal, oil and gas continue to be dug up. Operations are expanded with the enthusiastic or silent support of every politician, destroying the ability of this planet to support life and blasting the ancient artefacts of the local people—that is, destroying all our human history, heritage and future.

“Voting also will not bring in the changes necessary to eliminate COVID-19. Every political party or tendency or commentator, except for those on the WWS, adopt the ‘inevitable epidemic now, so nothing to do about it’ position.”

Ruby concluded: “The anti-democratic actions of the Australian parliament, with the silent complicity of the press, show that all the parties who have members in parliament are trying to draw up the drawbridge to make sure nothing progressive can ever happen by government action.

“The election cycle creates a period of time when we are all engaged in political discussions about what the government is doing, and what we want it to be doing differently. A crucial aspect of this process is more information about those running for office, not less.

“These rotten anti-democratic laws aim to keep us in the dark and preserve the status quo; it is the same reason Julian Assange is kept silent and in isolation.

“This is why I support the Socialist Equality Party. It is the only party defending democratic rights.”

Michel, 73, worked for more than 50 years in software development. He became an SEP electoral member this year, after being disgusted with the anti-democratic laws and increased membership numbers required for registration.

He explained: “I have been reading the *World Socialist Web Site* daily for many years. I was on the

internet before the world wide web started and I had some contacts with Julian Assange, via the internet, before he started WikiLeaks. I have been absolutely shocked at the treatment that Julian has received from the US, UK and, worse, the total lack of support that the Australian government, both ‘right’ and ‘left,’ has given to one of its citizens. That is, a citizen who must be one of, if not the most significant journalist of this century.”

Likewise, Michel said: “I found it unbelievable that Australian politicians, so keen on imploring democracy, would make the decision to increase the party membership requirements by such a large amount. The main parties are afraid of displaying their loss of support. They simply want to hold onto power.

“The current government is sliding to the right, as is the Labor Party, which can hardly be called even centrist nowadays. This is a global phenomenon. The centre of politics is being vacated. There are movements worldwide to both ends of the political spectrum. There is a shift to the extreme right, as it is orchestrated by a media at the mercy of, and with shared interests to, capitalism.

“I was also amazed that Premier Daniel Andrews’ Victorian state Labor government gave up its stance against the elimination of COVID. Politicians on both sides of the ‘spectrum’ only mention ‘freedom’ as related to their policies. They fail to mention the cost of freedom reflected in the number of deaths due to COVID that are still happening and will continue every day. Their interests are squarely on the side of capital.”



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