

“No one’s looking after the working class apart from the SEP”

Australian workers and youth support Socialist Equality Party election campaign

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) launched its Australian federal election campaign on Monday with a strong and lively online public meeting.

SEP candidates outlined the party’s anti-war, socialist and internationalist perspective, which stands in direct opposition to all other political parties.

Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition alike are committed to a massive military expansion and the drive to war. Whichever party forms government will continue the murderous “let it rip” COVID-19 strategy already responsible for millions of infections and thousands of deaths.

The meeting explained that the only alternative to the capitalist program of war, mass illness and austerity is for the working class to take up a fight for socialism.

After the event, *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke with attendees, who warmly received the revolutionary socialist perspective put forward by the speakers.

Dmitri, a 23-year-old writer in the South Australian state capital Adelaide, said the meeting provided a “good outline of the history of politics in Australia, as well as internationally.”

Speaking on the anti-Russia and anti-China campaign accompanying the aggressive US-led war drive against both those countries, Dmitri said it was “the first time I saw the full force of propaganda.” He added that this is “happening at a time of crisis for capitalism and for our whole ecological system.”

He said: “So-called ‘left’ parties like Labor and the Greens, and the unions, have a history of being complicit in anti-Chinese sentiment.”

Dmitri noted that, in the election campaign, “parties are scrambling to get support. I’m pretty sure it’s one of the times with the least enthusiasm for the major parties. You have [the far-right, ultra-nationalist] One Nation capitalising off the chaos.

“I think, broadly speaking, most workers would agree with a Marxist analysis,” Dmitri said. He noted that the SEP is “not just trying to get elected. They’re trying to actually dispense information and to form new structures and organs that can actually deal with issues. Instead, the current state of

democracy doesn’t represent the working class, and only represents a very small contingent, the ruling class.”

Penny and Rob Smith, a registered nurse and high school science teacher in Queensland, were appreciative of speakers’ contributions on the COVID-19 pandemic and answers to questions on the persecution of Julian Assange and the SEP’s program and history.

“It was really interesting to hear the background of the SEP,” Rob said. “The meeting went for over two hours, so a lot of people think the issues are urgent, as I do.

“I was particularly baffled by the lack of airplay being given in the elections to Assange. The SEP clarified that. Both the Labor and Liberal parties are kowtowing to the US. That is disturbing but enlightening.”

Rob said that he had previously supported the Greens, but the meeting explained their close collaboration with the Labor Party and that they would not resolve the environmental catastrophe. “To stop the use of fossil fuels and plastics is all about corporate interests.”

Penny said the speakers’ reference to the significance of Pine Gap to the aims of US imperialism in the Asia-Pacific region was “very true.” She and Rob had lived in Alice Springs, less than 20 kilometres from the US satellite communications and missile guidance base in central Australia. “It’s very secretive,” Penny commented. “It was very interesting what you said about the expansion of the base to guide new missiles and for space war.”

Rob said he was currently infected with COVID-19, which was circulating widely at his school. Shocked by the deadly “live with the virus” policy, he commented: “I see the normalisation of the abnormal. The numbers speak for themselves. I see three or four kids dropping out of class every day. They just disappear and the only question is, ‘who’s next?’

“Nobody has to wear a mask in the school. I would only see half a dozen masks in a school of 800 to 900 students.

“It’s all about the economy. The silence in the media about the pandemic is deafening. From the meeting, I can see this is profit-driven, for the main benefit of the ultra-rich. I have

started to see the point made by the SEP.”

Susan, a primary school teacher in Melbourne, Victoria, said the meeting “highlighted what I already knew about the SEP, that it really does provide the only alternative to what’s happening at the moment.”

Agreeing with the analysis put forward by the speakers that the federal election is one of crisis, Susan said: “Either way, Labor or Liberal, we’re in a terrible spot. The world is in an absolute catastrophe and hurtling towards world war and COVID being absolutely mismanaged or not managed at all. Australia is in no way different to any other country. We’re making alliances with the US and UK which puts us in a precarious position.”

She added that the years-long provocations against China are a “stepping stone” towards all-out war. Susan denounced the media justifications for aggression against China and said, “having read the WSWS, I understand the motivations behind it and the lies that have been fed to the general public.”

The educator also noted the link made by the SEP candidates between the drive to war and austerity and the criminal response of governments to the COVID-19 pandemic. “If the government’s happy for 50 people to die every day, thousands over the last couple of months, clearly they’re not going to care about people dying in war. It’s an obvious next step. No one’s looking after the working class apart from the SEP.”

Susan said Labor present themselves as “being a little bit less bad than the Liberals,” but that they have no policy difference. She “used to think the Greens were better. But clearly, absolutely not. Their link with Labor makes them no different.”

She agreed with the SEP’s internationalist perspective, saying “climate change, COVID, the cost of living” are all “whole world issues and need a whole world solution.”

In Sydney, New South Wales, young worker **James** referred to the contribution to the meeting by Deepal Jayasekera, who spoke about the situation in Sri Lanka, where workers are engaged in mass anti-government protests sparked by rising food and fuel prices. James said that the “problems confronting workers here and in Sri Lanka are international in nature. The biggest looming threats are COVID, climate change and war, and these cannot be tackled on a national basis.

“The track record of both parties is such that it is evident that neither will tackle any of these issues affecting the working class,” James said. “Neither party has any mass support. The cost of living has risen everywhere, mirroring the Sri Lankan situation, and therefore there is the possibility of similar protests here.”

James noted that the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and natural disasters are so destructive because of the criminal neglect of “successive Labor and Liberal governments.”

“People affected by natural disasters such as the floods in Lismore are left without assistance, but there are no resources and money because these are mobilised for war, such as in the Ukraine or bailing out big business and the banks,” he said.

Working-class unrest “can erupt suddenly,” said James. But workers “need a program and perspective, as outlined in the SEP meeting.”

Vicki is a worker in Adelaide. She said she “liked the contribution from the member of the Sri Lankan SEP. It was really interesting to have someone to look at events from an international perspective. It helps you understand that the struggle is a global struggle.”

She said it was clear the Australian political establishment was in crisis “especially within the context of COVID and the way the governments have handled it, and the fact that Australia is involved in the Ukraine conflict as well, which could lead to nuclear conflict and even trouble with China. It is definitely a crisis.”

Labor and the Liberal-National Coalition are “just the same, they really have no different policies,” Vicki added. “It’s like the Australian people don’t have any option, they’re both the same party.”

On the issue of war, Vicki said the threat of world war is “very frightening.” She added, “the fact that the US is talking about nuclear war and not even bothering to talk about peace is very scary, and it does have the potential to lead to nuclear conflict. I’m not saying Russia is perfect by any means, but I believe the US and NATO are the aggressors.”

Vicki said: “There are lots of people who don’t know about the Socialist Equality Party, they don’t know there’s an alternative. They see the pseudo-left, as if that’s going to be the opposition to Labor and Liberal, but they’re really just all part of the same flock. The capitalist politicians aren’t going to make any changes, because they’re the ones who have brought us to this situation in the first place, due to the nature of the capitalist system.”

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