

Third National Congress of the SEP (Sri Lanka): Greetings from Canadian, Australian and UK sections

20 June 2022

The following greetings from the Canadian, Australian and UK sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) were read to the Third National Congress of the SEP in Sri Lanka held from May 14 to May 16.

Greetings from David North on behalf of the ICFI and the US SEP are available here and from the German and French sections are here.

Dear Comrades,

It is an honour to extend the fraternal revolutionary greetings of the Socialist Equality Party (Canada) to this, your third national congress.

Coming amid an unprecedented mass upsurge that has shaken the reactionary, communalist Rajapakse regime and Sri Lanka's entire venal capitalist elite, your deliberations this weekend are of great consequence for the global working class and the Fourth International. Animated as they are by the program of permanent revolution and a materialist appraisal of the systemic crisis of global capitalism, your main perspectives and emergency resolutions provide a strategic compass and guide to revolutionary action.

Comrades, only you are fighting to mobilize the working class as an independent force rallying the rural and urban toilers against capitalist rule. Only you are advancing a program of transitional demands that begin with the needs of the masses, not what bankrupt capitalism can afford, and are fighting to build a network of workplace and neighbourhood action committees that can organize the struggle for these demands and serve as organs of workers' power. Only you are alerting the working class to the parallel threats of authoritarian rule and an interim capitalist government involving the opposition parties, backed by the Frontline Socialists and other pseudo-left forces. And only you are fighting to fuse the struggles of the working class in Sri Lanka with those of their class brothers and sisters across the Palk Strait in India and around the world.

The Canadian bourgeoisie long promoted Canadian capitalism as a gentler and kinder society than the rapacious American dollar republic to the south. Its ability to do so was bound up with Canada's privileged position as an imperialist power. One, moreover, that has enjoyed a close economic and military-security partnership with the most powerful capitalist power of the day, Britain in the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, and the USA thereafter.

However, its ability to do so has been fatally undermined by the ever-deepening capitalist crisis. As in America, the class struggle in Canada is rapidly intensifying and bourgeois democracy is rotting on its feet.

The ruling class's ruinous profits before lives policy has resulted in six waves of mass infection and death that have officially killed more than 40,000 Canadians. Meanwhile, the wealth of the rich and super-rich has swelled to unprecedented heights.

Canadian imperialism is playing an outsized role in the NATO war on Russia. Just since January, Ottawa has pledged to funnel more than \$613 million in military aid, including heavy weaponry, to Ukraine. Eager for a

share of the spoils of the imperialist repartition of the world, Canada, like Germany, is massively boosting its overall military spending and has signaled its readiness to join the US ballistic missile shield, a weapons system aimed at waging a so-called winnable nuclear war.

The trade unions and social-democratic NDP [New Democratic Party] have responded to the pandemic and now the outbreak of NATO's proxy war on Russia by deepening their decades-long corporatist partnership with big business and the state. When powerful section of the ruling class, including the opposition Conservatives, sponsored a menacing, three week-long far-right occupation of Ottawa to press for the immediate abolition of all anti-COVID health measures, the unions and NDP prevented any independent action by the working class against the fascists. Instead, they supported the Trudeau government invoking the never-before used Emergency Powers Act to disperse the so-called Freedom Convoy, thereby legitimizing the recourse to authoritarian forms of rule.

Only weeks later, in direct response to the outbreak of the NATO war with Russia, and with the full-throated support of the trade unions, the NDP formed a governmental alliance with the minority Trudeau Liberal government. They are now formally committed to keeping it in office until June 2025.

The union-NDP-Liberal alliance is aimed at suppressing the class struggle, at giving the Canadian ruling class a free hand as it wages war, dramatically expands military spending, and pivots to imposing austerity and inflation-driven real wage cuts.

They will not succeed. The past year has seen a wave of militant strikes, involving broad sections of the working class, including public sector workers, miners, and railway, food processing and construction workers. These struggles are increasingly erupting in opposition to, if not outside, the corporatist trade unions. Moreover, the SEP, through its political sponsorship of rank-and-file committees among educators and railways workers is increasingly emerging as the pole of opposition to the pro-capitalist trade unions and the anti-worker union-NDP-Liberal alliance and the protagonist of the struggle for workers' power.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the SEP Canada's commitment to assisting you, our Sri Lankan comrades, in the building of sections of the ICFI in mainland South Asia, above all India. India is a social powder keg with a fuse that is both short and afire. As in Sri Lanka, there is seething working class anger. This anger is rooted in the ruling class's criminal mishandling of the pandemic and its efforts to revive Indian capitalism through an intensified class war assault, but also in 30 years of pro-investor "reforms" that have transformed India into one of world's most socially-unequal societies and 75 years of independent bourgeois rule that have left India mired in poverty and backwardness and communal reaction.

Conditions were never more propitious for rallying the workers of India to the program of permanent revolution and the banner of the Fourth

International. And by the same token never were the stakes higher. In the coming weeks and months, we must intensify our common efforts to build a section of the ICFI in India. Pivotal is the development of the work of the *World Socialist Web Site*, including systematic exposure of all shades of Indian Stalinism and petty bourgeois politics, including the reactionary casteist politics of the Dalit elite.

Keith Jones

National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Canada)

On behalf of the Socialist Equality Party Australia, I send our warmest revolutionary greetings to your 3rd National Congress.

It is being held under the most extraordinary conditions of the upsurge of the working class and masses in your country, which is the sharpest expression of the response by workers throughout the world against the ongoing death toll of the COVID-19 pandemic, the escalation of the war in Ukraine against Russia and the threat which this poses of a third world war, and the deepening assault on the conditions, wages and lives of the working people internationally as a consequence of these crises.

The two general strike actions by the working class across the island demanding the resignation of Gotabaya Rajapakse strike terror into the bowels of the ruling class, not just in Sri Lanka but internationally.

The fact there is virtual silence in the media in Australia on these events is not because they are not newsworthy or would not be eagerly watched by broad sections of ordinary people here, but out of fear that the same contagion may develop here.

In fact, the 2022 Australian election campaign has been characterised by diversion, stunts and personal jibes between Prime Minister Morrison and opposition Labor leader Anthony Albanese. The louder they shout at each other the more they are attempting to camouflage their complete unity of political perspective. Their only difference is who can best serve the ruling class.

While both Coalition Liberal government and Labor agree on the reopening of the economy and the mass infection of a quarter of the country's population—so does every other party standing in the election, with the exception of the SEP. The unleashing of COVID-19 onto the population has coincided with the dispensing of all measures to even limit its spread. More people have died in 2022 than in the previous two years.

All parties agree on the escalation of the proxy war in Ukraine against Russia—both voting in favour of millions of dollars of lethal military aid to Ukraine. Both Liberal and Labor vie with each other on which can best prosecute the war against China on behalf of US imperialism.

And all agree that it is the working class through intensified exploitation and productivity drives, assault on wages and conditions and burgeoning inflation who must pay for the huge redistribution of wealth from the working class to the rich in the course of the pandemic.

As is the case throughout the globe, the Australian working class is fighting back. There have been strikes in the course of the election campaign of teachers, university staff, bus drivers, aged care workers and nurses, to name only a few. Despite the desperate attempts by the unions to isolate these struggles from each other and to try to channel them into a "Vote Labor" dead end, there is growing opposition to the unions and all the major political parties. That opposition is not being directed into the right-wing populist parties. The fear is palpable in the ruling class that the result of the May 21 election will be a hung parliament which will be unable to rule effectively on behalf of corporate Australia and capitalism.

US imperialism will certainly not tolerate a government of its "high end partner" that cannot function effectively on its behalf.

The SEP, which is standing six senate candidates, does so in opposition to every other political organisation. We are fighting to provide a socialist, internationalist perspective against war and austerity and for the elimination of COVID-19.

Despite being deregistered along with 12 other political parties by the

anti-democratic laws preventing the minor parties from standing under their own name, our campaign has reached broad layers of workers and young people in the three states in which we stand. The SEP fights for a program of transitional demands and the formation of independent rank-and-file committees through which this much needed program of action can be implemented.

The response of the SEP in Sri Lanka to the rapidly transforming situation provides great inspiration and decisive lessons for all the sections of the ICFI. These struggles take place under conditions where there is a long-established section of the ICFI that has created deep roots in important sections of the working class. The tasks and responsibilities which arise in this advanced situation takes place only first in Sri Lanka and will develop worldwide.

We salute your struggle comrades and the decisive role your congress will play in the development of the leadership necessary in these ongoing struggles.

Yours with warmest fraternal greetings,

Cheryl Crisp, National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia)

Dear Comrades,

On behalf of the Socialist Equality Party (UK), I would like to extend the warmest revolutionary greetings to your national congress.

We are very aware of the extraordinary circumstances in which this meeting of our comrades in Sri Lanka takes place, and of the great significance of your discussions in these three days.

The anti-government protest movement has not only grown since it began in March. In response to the attempted intimidation and thuggery organised by the state, it has begun to get a sense of its own strength. Most importantly, the working class is stepping to the forefront of events. In the looming shadow of a Third World War, Sri Lanka is providing irrefutable proof of the Marxist perspective for basing opposition to the wars of bourgeois governments on the class struggle of the workers.

We know the challenges and the dangers that accompany such a struggle. There is no complacency in our ranks. But have we ample reasons to be confident.

This pre-revolutionary situation has taken shape in a country in which the International Committee of the Fourth International has an established section, and, moreover, a section with a long history of principled and determined political struggle. The statements produced by the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka) have put that heritage into practice and provided a clear axis for the working class to intervene independently in this crisis.

Above all, the party has oriented workers to the international dimensions of their fight. As comrade Jayasekera concluded his speech to this year's May Day Rally, "The fight of the Sri Lankan working class, rallying poor farmers and other oppressed masses for a government of workers and peasants based on socialist policies, is part of a broader struggle for socialism in South Asia and internationally and to be conducted with the unity of their class brothers in South Asia and globally."

Events in Sri Lanka are only the most advanced expression of an emerging international movement of the working class, driven forward by fundamentally the same grievances and concerns, produced by the same intractable social contradictions of a world capitalist system in its death agony. The pandemic, through its medical and social consequences, has devastated the working class across the world. Government bailouts of the corporations and the super-rich have incurred debts now being clawed out of workers' backs and helped to drive price rises robbing them of their wages. Spending cuts and inflation are everywhere accelerated by militarism and the imperialist war drive against Russia, which threatens all of humanity with destruction.

Under these conditions, mass struggles of the kind seen in Sri Lanka are

inevitable. The urgent question now is the education and organisation of the advanced workers, who must lead the decisive battalions of the working class in the fight for power.

As workers in Sri Lanka navigate the lies, illusions and diversions sown by the trade unions and bourgeois and pseudo-left parties, and confront the repressive powers of the state, they will, under the guidance of the SEP, make vital strategic experiences. These must become the common property of the international movement on which the success of the working class in every country depends.

We will continue to do everything in our power to bring these experiences into the working class in the UK—into the significant migrant Sri Lankan communities, who have organised repeated solidarity protests, and into the entire working class.

British workers confront a collapse in their living standards dwarfing that which followed the 2008 financial crash, amid a pandemic whose UK toll is approaching 200,000 dead. Already, in the sixth largest economy in the world, two million adults say they cannot afford to eat every day. Five million households are in “fuel stress,” forced to spend a crippling percentage of their incomes on heating and lighting their homes.

Workers are responding with a wave of industrial action, including among critical transport and communication workers.

The British ruling class, discredited and in a state of deepening crisis, has nothing with which to pacify this movement. Not a single piece of social legislation has been proposed, nor funds made available to alleviate financial hardship. That money which has not already been handed to the corporations is ringfenced for the British and Ukrainian military. Last weekend, the UK announced an additional £1.3 billion in funding for Ukraine, bringing the total to date to around £3 billion. It has tens of thousands of troops, tanks, planes and warships deployed to Eastern Europe.

In place of a social programme, the government is erecting the framework of an authoritarian state, passing laws to outlaw protest, grant immunity to state agents, deport workers, and ship asylum seekers to Rwanda.

Besides repression, the ruling Conservative government of Boris Johnson relies primarily on the trade unions to sabotage strikes and the Labour Party of Sir Keir Starmer to suppress any opposition to war, mass infection and austerity. He in turn leans on a rump of “left” MPs led by Jeremy Corbyn, and the pseudo-left groups who insist on backing Labour.

But Corbyn and the unions are exhausting their ability to hold back the tide of social anger and militancy in the working class. As workers in the UK come forward into struggle, they will find a leadership in the SEP, comrades in the working class of Sri Lanka and lessons in the experience of their fight already underway.

Yours fraternally,
Thomas Scripps, SEP (UK) Assistant National Secretary



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact