

Greetings from the ICFI to the SEP (US) 2022 Congress

## New Australian Labor government intensifies assault on working class and war preparations against China

30 August 2022

*These remarks were delivered by Cheryl Crisp to the Seventh National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (US), held from July 31 to August 5, 2022.*

*Crisp is the national secretary of the SEP in Australia, the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.*

*Read the full report on the Congress and the resolutions adopted at it.*

On behalf of the SEP Australia, I send our revolutionary greetings to your Congress, which is being held under the most extraordinary conditions—ones that present the party with historic tasks.

It is the nature of these tasks and how we respond to them that has and will continue to characterise the discussion at the SEP 7th Congress and will have profound implications for the American section and the ICFI.

The death of a comrade such as Wije Dias, a comrade with such history, stature and authority, compels one to review, as we have done, how he and his comrades arose, the role of the party and particularly the decisive role of cadre.

The cadre, as it has been explained, is historically selected—it is far less that we choose the party but the party and the program choose us. Those who respond to the analysis of Trotskyism, a process which is determined in struggle, are the most far sighted, courageous and self sacrificing of the class. It is these cadre who can and must cut a path to the masses.

Comrade Wije was part of a group of “remarkable young people” whose response to the Great Betrayal of the LSSP in 1964 expressed the revolutionary interests of the working class and rural masses in Sri Lanka, the Indian Subcontinent and the working class internationally. But Keerthi, Wije, Ratnayake and others had to make decisions, despite the difficulties, despite their youth and relative inexperience, to take a stand. And had they not made those decisions, then we can say without contradiction that the founding of the

Revolutionary Communist League, the defence of the Trotskyist perspective, certainly would not have taken the path it did.

Comrade Wije demonstrated the same qualities when Keerthi died suddenly in 1987. He stepped into the position of General Secretary and led the RCL/SEP through some of the most difficult and dangerous conditions in the history of Sri Lanka.

What Wije and his comrades did mattered. What we do now matters. As has been made central at this Congress, the emphasis on the role of the subjective factor highlights the importance and centrality of the role of the party and cadre.

The development of the international crisis of capitalism is one which has taken a path, that of a profit-driven pandemic catastrophe, which we may not have predicted. That there would be a systemic and global crisis of capitalism, however, was very much forewarned by the IC.

The lives of billions of people, in fact the vast majority of the world’s population, have been transformed and transformed forever. Many look back at 2019 as if it was another world; in fact, it is the same world, but essence has appeared. The international unity of experiences is striking—only war could be comparable.

For countries like Australia and New Zealand—which have been promoted as havens of idyllic paradise, classless societies, where the rest of the world we are told looks on longingly—it has been the most profound shock.

Always false, always a mirage and now one which has been shattered with a speed and brutality truly devastating to many people. I recall Comrade North raised at a public meeting in Sydney a few years ago that in countries with the appearance of relative stability the shattering of such equilibrium is rapid and explosive. The response to the pandemic has not only thrust the country into the centre of the crisis, but it has caught up to the rest of the world in a little over six months.

From October 2020 to July 2021, there were no COVID-19 deaths in Australia and few infections. It was clear to all how that had been achieved: lockdowns, border closures, quarantining, testing, tracing and isolation. These have been dispensed with with staggering speed and ferocity. At the end of 2021 there were a little over 200,000 infections. In less than two weeks, the number of infections will reach 10 million. In two to three months, 13 million people, or half the entire population, will have been infected. There are now 12,000 dead, including almost 10,000 this year alone.

With the election in May of the Albanese Labor government, the first in almost a decade, with less than a third of the popular vote, the policy of the hated Morrison Coalition government not only continues but is accelerated. The election exposed the opposition that exists to the entire system of capitalist rule. Labor recorded its lowest vote for a century despite the Coalition's vote also falling. It was only the "other parties" that saw a rise in votes. That explained the reason for the bipartisan legislation that deregistered at least 13 non-parliamentary parties, including the SEP—the fear in ruling circles that the rout could be even sharper.

Despite the SEP's having to stand without identification of our name, our three slates of candidates in the election won over 10,000 votes. We have always said that our votes are highly conscious, but in this election our candidates had to be actively sought out and found on ballot papers a meter long.

Inflation is now officially at 6.1 percent and forecast to rise to around eight percent. Interest rates have increased four times in the past four months, with predictions that increases will be repeated every month until the end of the year.

The Labor Party has been brought to power in order to impose on the working class the full burden of the massive economic crisis engulfing the country. To do so, it must suppress the growing movement of the working class, especially of nurses, teachers, rail workers and public sector workers, for wage rises and to impose the most severe austerity measures onto workers.

This proceeds at an accelerated pace as Labor spearheads the buildup of the military. Australia's military funding for Ukraine is the highest of non-NATO governments in the world. Prime Minister Albanese has spearheaded the drive by the US in the Pacific with a whirlwind campaign that began within hours after he was sworn in. He went straight to the Quad meeting in Japan, then Indonesia, the NATO summit, France, Ukraine and Fiji. His government has taken up the mantle of the stalking horse for US imperialism.

There is along with rising prices for food, fuel and interest rates a mounting anger among broadening sections of

workers.

There is growing opposition among workers to the desperate efforts of the unions to divide and isolate the different strike actions. Among Victorian teachers, a rebellion is underway against the AEU for agreeing to and imposing a wage cutting agreement which left intact the intolerable workload conditions and schools rife with COVID infections. Thousands of teachers have publicly left the union. Many are discussing and seeking out the CFPE, which led the opposition to the agreement and the union. Almost 900 teachers have joined our FB page opposing the agreement. The pandemic has accelerated and deepened the already crumbling conditions in the education and health systems in every state.

The entirely correct and scientifically based program of elimination fought for by the *World Socialist Web Site* from the outset of the pandemic has attracted the most courageous and principled scientists, doctors and epidemiologists internationally and in Australia. The SEP's campaign against the sanctioning of Dr David Berger, who provided testimony for the Global Workers Inquest, has attracted wide support. The initial post on the CFPE Twitter page of the WWSWS article reporting the measures to silence him received over 354,000 impressions.

The lock out by Twitter of the SEP's Twitter site for connecting Berger's defence to that of Julian Assange, Lisa Diaz and Dave O'Sullivan came as a profound shock to Berger and others around him. Our campaign won strong support here and internationally, forcing Twitter to lift the lockout a week later saying "sorry we made a mistake."

There will be no shortage of opposition and struggle by workers, youth and the most principled sections of the middle class. But without a historical and political grounding and education these struggles will not of themselves resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership. It is not youthfulness, anger or determination alone that can meet the tasks of history.

It is our party and ours alone that will. A way forward can be forced only through the recruitment, training and education of workers, young and not so young, into the party where they will be developed, as it is only the conscious theoretical training and education that can steel the cadre for the opportunities that will and are arising.



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