

Support the Socialist Equality Party in the NSW election! No to War! Lives before profits! Billions for healthcare and education!

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
6 February 2023

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is standing in the New South Wales state election in order to take forward the fight against war, austerity and “let it rip” COVID policies supported by every other party.

We are standing a slate in the statewide upper house of WSWs correspondents Oscar Grenfell and Mike Head. The SEP is also running SEP assistant national secretary Max Boddy in the lower-house Sydney working-class seat of Bankstown. The state’s anti-democratic electoral laws mean our party name will not appear on the ballot.

The SEP is fighting for the largest possible vote. But above all, we are standing to help build a revolutionary party of the working class, directed against capitalism, which offers nothing but social misery and an expanding series of existential crises that threaten the very future of humanity.

The SEP tells the truth. The NSW election will resolve nothing for working people. As many workers know, there are no real differences between Labor, the Liberal-National Coalition and the Greens. All of them are parties of big business and the banks. The Labor opposition of Chris Minns has functioned as a virtual coalition partner of the far-right government headed by Dominic Perrottet, backing all of its main policies. The official election campaign is based on mind-numbing diversion, lies and cover-up.

The major parties, the corporate media and the trade union apparatus are trying to suppress discussion of any of the important issues facing the working class. There is no debate on the COVID policies that have claimed tens of thousands of lives, the growing danger of a nuclear war or the offensive against the social conditions of workers. The SEP alone opposes this silence and will break it.

In every state election, an attempt is made to limit discussion to “state issues.” This is a fraud. The major issues facing workers in NSW are all national and international in scope.

The policies of the next state government, whatever its composition, will be determined by these broader developments. It will slash social spending to pay for the massive handouts to the banks and corporations during the pandemic. In imposing budget cuts, it will be following the lead of the federal Labor government, aiding its program of allocating massive sums to military spending, not to healthcare and education. The “let it rip” policy of the next government will be determined by the profits before lives agenda implemented by capitalist governments across the country and the world.

No to war!

The election is being held as a major war is already underway and rapidly escalating. The conflict in Ukraine is the opening shot of a third world war, between the US, NATO and its allies, including Australia, and Russia. It threatens a global nuclear conflagration.

The SEP opposes the Russian government of Vladimir Putin and its invasion of Ukraine. The Putin regime represents a corrupt capitalist oligarchy, produced by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But Russia was goaded into its reactionary invasion. For decades, the US and NATO had militarily encircled Russia and continually crossed its security red lines, including by transforming Ukraine into a garrison state on the Russian border.

Since the invasion, the US and its allies have poured hundreds of billions of dollars into Ukraine. They have dispatched military advisors and are now sending tanks and advanced missile systems. The escalatory logic is leading to a direct war, where the US would seek to overthrow the Putin regime and dismember Russia to advance its global hegemony. This is one step in preparations for a US war against China, which is viewed as the chief threat to the global domination of American imperialism.

All the official parties support this reckless rush to war. Federal governments, Coalition and now Labor, have poured \$655 million into Ukraine, \$475 million of it in “direct military aid,” i.e., guns, armoured trucks and other weapons. Labor, the Coalition and the Greens have backed every single US escalation, signalling their full support for policies that are leading to a world war.

At the same time, they have placed Australia on the frontline of war preparations against China. For more than a decade, governments, Labor and Liberal-National, have built up the military. Now, the Labor government is buying nuclear-powered submarines and advanced missile systems. It is dramatically expanding US basing arrangements, as a top American general predicts war with China by 2025.

Governments say that there is not enough money for decent healthcare and education. But Labor and the Coalition have already committed to spending \$575 billion on the military this decade. With announcements virtually every week of new weapons purchases, this is just an initial down payment.

The SEP is the only party fighting the program of militarism and war. Together with our sister parties around the world, we are building an international anti-war movement of the working class directed against the source of war, the capitalist system itself.

In this election we say:

- No to war! Stop the US-NATO war in Ukraine and the plans for conflict with China!
- Two world wars are enough! Stop the warmongers!
- Tens of billions for education and healthcare, not for militarism and war!

Oppose the “let it rip” COVID program! Lives before profits!

All the official parties are claiming that the pandemic is over. This is an outright lie. They have nothing to say about COVID, because they are responsible for the policies that are still killing hundreds of Australians every single week.

The NSW government, with the full support of the Labor opposition, was at the very centre of the conspiracy to overturn successful mitigation measures and to let the virus rip. Coalition Premier Dominic Perrottet worked hand in hand with then Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his Victorian Labor counterpart Daniel Andrews to unleash an Omicron tsunami on the population. Businesses had to be fully reopened and children and teachers forced back into COVID-infested classrooms, so that corporations could make maximum profits.

Anyone who thinks that NSW Labor leader Chris Minns would be any different, needs only to look at what the federal Albanese Labor government has done. It has lifted even more restrictions than Morrison. More people have died in the eight months that Labor has been in government, than in the more than two years before. Based on excess death figures, as many as 25,000 Australians lost their lives to COVID and related causes last year alone.

The SEP is the only party that has fought against this policy of social murder. We say no more unnecessary and entirely avoidable deaths. We are fighting for a scientific policy that can eliminate the coronavirus, because we oppose capitalism and its subordination of everything to profit accumulation.

We say:

- Health and lives before profit!
- Demand the immediate reintroduction of safety measures: universal indoor masking, free mass testing, contact-tracing, air filtration and, where necessary, lockdowns with full compensation for small businesspeople and workers.
- The pandemic can and must be finally ended!

End the social catastrophe!

The conditions facing working people are intolerable. Every day they are faced with the threat of COVID infection. At the same time, they are being hit with the biggest cost of living crisis in decades while wages flatline or go backwards. None of the other parties is putting forward any policies that will resolve this crisis.

Instead, all governments have given massive handouts to big business, while they facilitate the huge federal military spending. Across the country, state and federal government bailouts and Reserve Bank measures have equated to a \$400 billion handout to the major corporations and banks during the pandemic. The country’s billionaires have increased their wealth by 66 percent in the past three years, to almost \$236 billion.

Public schools and hospitals are in a complete breakdown. After decades of funding cuts, they have been pushed over the edge by the “let it rip” COVID policies. Teachers, education staff, nurses and other medical workers are leaving their professions in droves. They say the situation is simply impossible. Double-shifts, mandatory overtime, unpaid work, not enough resources or staff to care for the sick or to teach children—all this is now the norm.

Who voted for this state of affairs where the billionaires engorge

themselves, the military machine is massively funded but there is no money for decent schools and hospitals? The answer is nobody. These policies are a conspiracy against the population involving all the establishment parties.

The SEP advances a socialist program to reorganise society to meet the pressing social needs of the vast majority, not the private profits of the super-rich. Nothing can be solved as long as society’s resources, created by the working class, are controlled by a corporate oligarchy.

We say:

- Place the banks and the corporations under public ownership and democratic workers’ control!
- Hundreds of billions for public education, healthcare and other essential services!
- Major pay rises for all workers now, to compensate for years of cutbacks! Everyone who wishes to work must be given a decent job, with enough pay for a dignified and comfortable life! Affordable housing for all!

Workers need their own party

The working class is entering into struggle, in Australia and around the world. Over the past year, there have been major strikes by teachers, nurses and rail staff in NSW, and disputes involving many other sections of workers.

But none of them has succeeded. All have been isolated and shut down without their demands being met. This is the doing of the trade unions, which function as a police force of governments and the corporations. They are no longer workers’ organisations in any sense, but serve instead the interests of a privileged bureaucracy tied to big business and the state apparatus by a thousand threads. The union leaders who call for a vote for Labor are the same leaders who have imposed wage-cutting agreements and intolerable workloads on workers. Their aim is to trap ordinary people behind the Labor Party, which will carry out the same program as the outgoing Liberal-National government.

That is why workers need their own organisations of struggle, independent rank-and-file committees. Such committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves, are the only way to defeat the sell-outs of the unions, unite workers across industries and begin an industrial and political counteroffensive. The SEP will provide workers with every political assistance in forming rank-and-file committees, publicising their activities and developing their initiatives.

What is true of the unions is true of all the official parties. None of them even pretend to represent the interests of working people. Labor is no different to the Liberal-Nationals. It is an open party of big business and the banks.

The Greens are a capitalist party, which has joined with Labor governments in preparing for war, imposing austerity cuts and placing profits before health and lives in the pandemic. The Greens’ environmental posturing is a sham. Their program, even if it were implemented, would not meet what scientists state is required to address the existential threat of climate change.

The pseudo-left organisations, such as Socialist Alliance and Socialist Alternative, have nothing to do with socialism. They represent an affluent layer of the upper middle-class that is hostile to the working class. They support militarism, including the US-NATO war against Russia, and do everything they can to dragoon workers and young people behind Labor, the Greens and the unions.

The SEP is the only party that fights for the elimination of COVID, defends the social rights of workers and opposes the drive to war. Why is

it that the socialists are the ones taking the lead in these crucial struggles, against every other party?

Firstly, none of the issues confronting the working class can be solved in one country. They are global in scope and require an international movement of the working class. The SEP can fight for this perspective because it is part of a global party, the International Committee of the Fourth International, which fights every day to unite the working class internationally on a common socialist and revolutionary program.

Secondly, none of these burning questions can be addressed within the framework of the capitalist system. All of them, from COVID to war and austerity, express the fact that capitalism is a bankrupt social order that offers no future. Not a single major social problem can be addressed, let alone resolved, so long as the world is dominated by the tiny capitalist elite and the governments that represent it.

We have entered into a revolutionary period of war and social upheaval. There is immense and growing opposition and anger among workers. But this is not enough. Workers need their own revolutionary party, with a clear socialist perspective based on the lessons of history. That is why we appeal to all workers, students and serious middle-class people, who want to fight for a future, to promote and participate in our campaign as widely as possible, and above all, to join the SEP.

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