

Workers speak out on war, genocide and the social crisis at Queensland polling booth

Our reporters

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Workers spoke to a Socialist Equality Party (SEP) campaign team at a polling station in Inala, a working-class suburb in the state capital of Brisbane, during Saturday's Queensland state election.

They voiced their concerns about the huge political issues of war, the Gaza genocide and the deepening assault on the working and living conditions of workers and their families under the state and federal Labor governments.

Labor was defeated in the election, underscoring widespread hostility to its pro-business and pro-war program at the state and federal levels. More broadly, the result highlighted a crisis of the official political set-up and all of the parliamentary parties (see: "Australian Labor's defeat in Queensland election underscores historic political crisis").

Nick, a retired electrician who used to work at the Evans Deakin plant in nearby Woodridge in the 1960s and 1970s, said he agreed with the anti-war and socialist policies being advanced by the SEP, having been in contact with the party for numbers of years.

"I worked hard all my life, seven days a week with overtime included," he commented.

"But we're ruled by the multi-millionaires who are, in a lot of cases, ignorant and arrogant. They start wars all over the world and they want to keep promoting wars, and then blame everybody else for the problems they cause, whether it's inflation, high prices on food, high import taxes and everything else that goes with it."

Nick spoke with contempt for both the Liberal National Party (LNP) and the Australian Labor Party.

"They're just smooth talkers, like [incoming LNP Premier David] Crisafulli. People forget that we had Campbell Newman [the last LNP premier] who sacked hundreds of workers. They like to sack workers and support their corporate mates, to feed them with the

money that gives the politicians half a million to a million-dollar salaries."

Nick agreed that the federal Albanese Labor government's support for the genocide in Gaza and other US-backed wars opened the door for right-wing forces, like the LNP, to exploit discontent.

"That's right, it absolutely does. Why are they supporting the Nazi-type people in Ukraine? They're Nazis, and yet the government has got bans on Nazi symbols in Australia. What can you say to that?"

"All the Americans and their allies are doing is trying to encroach on Russia's territory and putting ballistic missiles right on its frontline. Who's right? Putin has offered them agreements not to encroach on the borders, but the Russians can't stand back and watch NATO forces approaching on all fronts and threatening their existence and trying to overthrow governments."

Nick said the Putin regime was deliberately goaded into the war and that could not be separated from the Gaza genocide and the wider wars being provoked by US imperialism on every front.

"The Americans are involved in every war in this world in the name of democracy. What sort of democracy is it when they're all billionaires, running for election in a couple of weeks' time? They're all being run by big business, by big armament companies. It doesn't matter how many billions of dollars they send overseas in armaments; they all support their own armaments industries."

Nick said these were the real issues being covered up in the election campaign.

"In the Vietnam War we had young people out on the streets in protest against that war, and yet they still proceeded with that war. And the poor people that got sent to Vietnam came back not feeling like they're wanted, even in Australia."

Now the same governments were defying the global protests against the Gaza genocide.

“How can any reasonable person in this world stand by and watch children and men and women being killed by American bombs, to no end. All their buildings, all their hospitals, all their schools are being demolished, down to ground zero. All the Palestinians are walking around in rags, hungry and living in scanty tents. That’s no way to treat people!”

The Gaza onslaught was continuing despite being broadcast around the world because the governments and the UN were allowing it.

“They’ll all one-sided basically. They all want their own way. But they’re not going to have their own way because the socialist party exists, workers exist and always will exist. The capitalist parties always say workers are getting smaller but have a look at some of the big marches, like against the Labor government takeover of the CFMEU [the construction union], and fighting for good wages and conditions.”

Daniel, a removalist worker, expressed the widespread working-class distrust in the political system.

“They say they are going to do one thing today and in six months they’ll change their minds and do the complete opposite. It’s just to get us to come and vote for them. Labor and the LNP are like twins. It’s like sibling rivalry. Nothing’s changed. I’m 43 years old, and it’s always been the same two parties running the government.

The real issues were not being addressed. “They are spending all this money on war. The government said we were not going nuclear and now we’re going nuclear,” Daniel said, referring to the federal Labor government’s \$368 billion purchase of AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines from the US and UK.

“Where will that money come from? From us taxpayers of course! From the backs of workers. And to be spent on weapons to fight a war that we’re not even involved in...”

“You can already see another world war happening now, because it’s between Ukraine and Russia and now Korea is getting involved and the rest of the world is getting involved. Now the US is getting involved, after they said that NATO would not get involved...”

“It could be a nuclear war. I reckon Putin could go that way if the US and the others keep going the way

they are against Russia... Again, the US always provokes the ‘first shot.’ Again, it is the US that is the original terrorist of the world. Again, it’s the world police, being involved in other people’s stuff.”

Daniel blamed Britain, the former colonial power in Palestine, for creating the Gaza crisis by helping to establish Israel in 1948 on land already occupied by the Palestinians. “There is a long history behind this,” he said.

“To be honest, every time I think about it, it makes me upset. All the protests have made no difference. We need to overthrow the governments responsible because it makes no difference what I say when I vote.”

James, a forklift driver at the nearby Primo meat processing plant, drew a connection between workers’ deteriorating pay and conditions and the spending of billions of dollars on AUKUS submarines and other military weaponry in preparation for war.

He said he was paid just \$27.50 an hour—a poverty-level wage—for working afternoon shifts. Management had also issued unsafe instructions that forklifts had right-of-way over pedestrian workers in the plant. James said that showed the company’s disregard for the lives of workers, many of whom were lowly-paid immigrants.



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