

Attendees at Australia's "Invasion Day" defend free speech and oppose oppression of Aboriginal people

Our reporters
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Socialist Equality Party (SEP) members campaigned at Monday's "Invasion Day" rallies in multiple cities around Australia. The events drew crowds of tens of thousands of workers, youth and middle-class layers who oppose the ongoing oppression of Indigenous people in Australia and other capitalist crimes including the Australian government's support for Israel's genocide in Gaza.

The events are held on Australia Day, the nationalist celebration of the anniversary of British colonisation. Read the *World Socialist Web Site*'s coverage of the events here.

In stark contrast to the organisers of the rallies who promoted divisive identity politics and claimed that better conditions for Aboriginal Australians could be won through appeals to and working with the capitalist state, the SEP campaigned on a socialist perspective of uniting the working class across racial and ethnic lines in a common struggle against the capitalist profit system which is the cause of poverty and war.

Below are comments from attendees at the rallies who spoke with SEP campaigners.

Support worker, **Ian**, told SEP campaigners: "One of my clients is an Indigenous person. There are constant failures and multiple levels of not being able to access resources when it could have helped him as a child or as a teenager. Having resources to help him early would have changed his outcome and made his life completely different.

"My own brother was only able to access the NDIS [National Disability Insurance Scheme] through outside help because my parents were non-English speaking, so they didn't know how to access the NDIS when it first came about. When I heard the government planned to

cut the NDIS, I got so angry."

Ian denounced the murders by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) gestapo in Minneapolis where the fascistic Trump administration is conducting raids on immigrants and working-class communities.

"It would be inhuman to say that it wasn't horrible. It would be inhuman to not have your thoughts with the people at Minneapolis. I support the protest. I support the American people wanting to defund ICE," **Ian** said.

Ellie works in advertising. She said: "I've been coming ever since I was a kid because my parents have been coming to these kinds of rallies since they were my age... There's not enough government resources in Indigenous communities.

"The government has been so disappointing with Palestine and so disappointing with Indigenous issues," she said.

"There's a lot of just atrocities happening around the world and it's important to focus on Indigenous issues today. It's a day of mourning. That's why we're all here today. But we are all standing with the people in Minneapolis and with Palestine as well because there's a lot of interconnected issues all over the world."

Bronte, a 28-year-old psychologist attended the rally to oppose the official Australia Day celebrations "on the date that marks the start of the genocide of the Indigenous Australians."

"I don't think politicians are the ones that are going to be making the changes that we want to see," she said. "We have to scream for it, yell for it, protest for it.... We need to continue pushing forward together to get better rights for Indigenous people, because they are still oppressed, they're still marginalised."

The SEP campaigner asked Bronte what she thought about the bipartisan attempt to use the December 14 terror attack which killed 15 people at a Channukah event on Sydney's Bondi Beach to introduce sweeping anti-protest laws on the fraudulent basis of tackling "antisemitism."

"I think these laws they're bringing in are just a way to suppress people and to take away their freedom of speech," she said. "There's no real correlation between the laws that they put in place and the outcomes that they're wanting to get."

Bronte opposed the ICE attacks in Minnesota, adding: "They're scrambling harder and have come out with these more extreme measures, with insane levels of control and suppression which is showing that they're scared."

She said there "has to be everyone coming together for equality, for the betterment of the people, not the 1 percent, not where all of the wealth is and the money is, but the actual majority."

Lily, 56, is a mental health worker who travelled more than an hour and a half from Sydney's western suburbs to attend the rally.

She told SEP members: "There's so many systemic problems. We are not the United States by any means, but people are being squeezed and it's about profit. It's a smaller and smaller minority who are calling the shots for everyone else, and it has to change. Being out and showing what side you're on is really important for all of us."

Speaking of wealth inequality, Lily said, "[wealth] is all being squeezed upwards, like a tube of toothpaste, it's all going to the top. We've got people with a lot of money influencing how people see their news. That all has to change. You can't have a fraction of a percent of society dictating everyone else. The people who can afford less and less are working more and more and it's going to reach a tipping point."

Martin, a semi-retired doctor, said: "I see both major parties as corrupt. They are much more interested in staying in power than in delivering for working people. They're trying to suppress free speech. They've also concocted arrangements with the Coalition to try to reduce the chances of smaller parties and independents winning elections."

"The two major parties in Australia have spent the last month or so entirely focused on antisemitism.

Labor Attorney-General Michelle Rowland said this [Bondi terror attack] is the worst massacre in Australia history.... We have a history of massacres of Indigenous people, of humiliation, denial of land rights and displacement."

Martin noted that the governments and the Zionist lobby "want to suppress any criticism of Israel and Zionism, and they suffer from this delusion of some form of exceptionalism and I despise it as well." He pointed out that numbers of Jewish people, including his own partner, are hostile to the genocide and the use of the Bondi atrocity to suppress opposition to it.



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