

Workers and youth in South Australia speak out against war and major parties in the state election

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) spoke with workers and young people in South Australia during the March 21 state election, revealing widespread discontent with the major parties and opposition to war.

As the WSWS wrote, the election marks a deepening crisis of the two-party parliamentary system.

The pro-business Labor government was returned to office, but there were sharp swings against it in key working-class areas. The conservative Liberals' vote plummeted, as part of its existential crisis, not only at the state level but nationally. The far-right One Nation received the second highest vote of any party, exploiting discontent with the major parties and the social crisis.

SEP campaigners went to polling booths in the working-class suburbs of Salisbury and Elizabeth in Adelaide's north, a region hit by job losses and entrenched social disadvantage. The former centres of auto production have been battered by the closure of the car industry, enforced by Labor and the corporatised trade unions.

The SEP found widespread hostility to the illegal US war on Iran and Australia's participation in it; hostility to inequality and the cost-of-living crisis; concern over the degradation of social services and an interest in a socialist alternative.

Tyryn, a young worker in Elizabeth, said the war against Iran is about US control of oil reserves in the region. "They're accepting nothing less than a total surrender, which would mean integration into the US, and also that the American dollar has more control over the oil than it currently does." Every party in the election supports the war because, he said, "they're going to get a slice of that pie. Once they get the oil, they're going to have extra money for their own personal gain."

Tyryn had followed the Gaza genocide protests, including in Sydney where police had gone on a violent rampage against protesters in February. "It's horrible," he said. "People that want change are the ones being suppressed."

He believed that to fight against war, "you've got to break down the system and build it back up from the bottom, because otherwise the cycle will repeat. Socialism is a good ideology. I wish it was more embraced in modern society as a whole. Capitalist democracy has taken us to a certain point where only through exploitation can people rise up, meaning they crush those below them to then rise up. But with socialism, exploitation can be completely cut.

"The options in this election all feel the same. They say different things, but at the end of the day it's the same person, just a different face. They say one thing but do another."

When SEP members explained the necessity of building a party of the working class against the establishment, Tyryn responded: "It's probably the best bet for Australia moving forward. Currently capitalism is in this constant downward trend, since I started getting into politics when I was 15. Something needs to change."

Corey, a warehouse worker in Salisbury, said, "The election is a big waste of time. It's corrupt. There's a lot of stuff going on in the world, and these elections won't change anything."

When asked if he thought the Labor government had done anything for workers, Corey said: "Not at all. Neither Liberal nor Labor. It goes back and forth, but each election things for us keep getting worse, life gets harder. The cost of living keeps rising. A lot of broken promises. Just before every election, all those so-called leaders come out and promise all these things, but never come through with them."

Corey spoke on the war on Iran: "No worker wants war. No one wants to be killing or to be killed. If you put your military bases in a region and surround a country that doesn't want you there, what do you think is going to happen? America shouldn't be doing this, and Australia shouldn't be involved. It's a disaster. I don't think we should go to war, especially when we didn't start it. Donald

Trump did.”

Ranti, a nurse working in Adelaide who we met at Elizabeth, spoke on the worsening crisis in the healthcare system.

“The main thing is that this election feels like we are just going through the motions,” she said. “The people we elect don’t really do much.” While she said she still hoped “if we choose the right people, they could do something,” she stressed that in healthcare “there have been so many promises... and nothing has been done.”

Describing conditions in the hospitals, Ranti said: “As nurses, we are under pressure. There is a shortage of nurses... and the care is increasing.” She explained that she is frequently called in to work additional shifts due to understaffing, sometimes immediately after finishing overnight work, warning that “that’s not safe.”

She pointed in particular to the impact of ambulance ramping and lack of resources in emergency departments. “Patients who need immediate care are left waiting... because there are not enough staff or resources,” she said. “There is a shortage of nurses, doctors, everything. The resources are very low. So how can patients receive proper care?”

Ranti also drew a connection between the crisis in healthcare and government spending priorities. “We say we don’t have enough resources for our healthcare system, but we have money to spend on war... That money should be prioritised to help the community and help ourselves.”

Michelle, also a nurse, spoke on the deepening crisis in the healthcare system “It’s hard. It’s exhausting and it’s just... sad,” she said. “I go to work and it’s like a repeating issue that no one’s addressing.” She pointed to the ongoing crisis of hospital capacity: “No one’s fixing the ramping. There’s not enough beds... the critically sick patients can’t get beds.”

Michelle stressed that the crisis is compounded by the inaccessibility of basic services. “Even the GP... some people could go there, but it’s not accessible. They’re working Monday to Friday and it closes early,” she said, adding that the solution is clear: “Build more hospitals... make it more accessible for people.”

She drew a sharp contrast between these conditions and government spending priorities. “Where’s the money going? Anything but what we need to spend money on,” she said, pointing to military expenditure. “We have money to spend on war... when it should be prioritised here in Australia.”

Michelle opposed the war on Iran, stating: “I’m against any war... I don’t like the killing of innocent people. This war should stop.” She attributed the conflict to geopolitical interests, adding: “It’s all about the oil.”

Michelle noted the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. “I don’t even think billionaires should exist... what do you do with all that money?” she said, describing the

situation facing workers as “deflating.”

Tyson, 22, another warehouse worker, said: “The major parties definitely represent an agenda that doesn’t reflect your average sort of person. Even if you look at the how-to-vote cards, you can see their preferences and how they want you to vote. The favouritism they give to other parties. It’s all set up to benefit a two-party system.”

Tyson agreed that One Nation was not an alternative to Labor or the Coalition, but a far-right party of big business. “I have no fondness for One Nation in my heart,” he said. “Look at [One Nation leader] Pauline Hanson’s history. What they say doesn’t represent what they are. They say one thing but go in a completely different direction.”

He strongly opposed the US war against Iran: “This war is entirely unfounded. It’s just a ploy for the US to control. There’s no reasonable grounding for the war. There’s no benefit to average people at all. In fact, it has a negative impact on them. The government here is following Trump, someone who just wants to make money out of the chaos of war.”

On the SEP’s perspective to build a movement of the working class against the whole political establishment, he said: “It’s definitely very interesting and unique. I want to read your statement. And the way the official parties are going, it’s not beneficial to ordinary people, so it makes sense to have an independent movement.”

Mike, a child protection worker originally from Uganda said, “This war is not good. It’s affecting people even here in Australia, in Adelaide. Even though the war is not directly here, people are already suffering. Prices have gone up, fuel, food, groceries. Everything is skyrocketing.”

Asked on why the war is occurring he said, “I think it’s political. They’re playing political games. The US wants to control Iran.”

On the SA election, “If all of these parties support the war, then the election has no meaning. What are we voting for? Are we voting for the war to continue or for change? No one is even raising the question of war, so people don’t get a chance to have their voice heard. It’s just not good.”

Asked about socialism, Mike said, “People should be equal, and if the whole world is involved, then people need to come together and do something good.”



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