

## 27/10/07 Socialist Equality Party's answers to questions posed by the Australian Student Christian Movement

### **Q What is your vision for how government can best benefit the poor?**

A- The SEP advances a program for the reorganization of the Australian and world economy to meet the needs of the vast majority of the global population.

Instead of the present setup, where the major industries, banks and financial institutions are privately owned and controlled, we advocate the creation of a socialist system of public ownership and the fullest democratic control over the economic policies and priorities of society.

Only when, social need, not private profit, becomes the organizing principle of production and all aspects of social life, will the extraordinary human and technical resources that are now available be utilized to provide a better living standard and safe environment for all.

### **Q2 – How do you intend to address global poverty? Will you be increasing Australia's aid budget to at least 0.7 per cent of GDP?**

We are an international party in which all sections of our party across the world fights for the same program. We advocate the reorganization of the world economy in the interests of the majority of the world's population. We believe that foreign aid and assistance should be significantly greater than just 0.7 per cent of GDP.

For example in some of the most immediate cases such as Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor and the Solomon Islands, which are being subjected to invasion and occupation by the US and other foreign powers, including Australia, we call for the immediate withdrawal of all US, Australian and foreign troops from these countries and that Australia, along with others make reparations to the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan for the damage and suffering inflicted by the war and in the case of East Timor for example we call for the allocation of resources necessary to construct decent housing and social infrastructure – including schools and hospitals – for the local population. This would require billions of dollars rather than just 0.7 per cent of GDP which is given to countries by nations such as Australia not to assist ordinary local people but with conditions attached such as allowing Australian companies to invest and exploit local resources and the local population as cheap labour.

**Q3 – How do you propose to support humanitarian entrants to Australia, including those who arrive informally to seek asylum?**

A- If the world economy is reorganized to meet the needs of the world's population and an end is put to the wars, political repression and social misery in countries throughout the world you would not have the growing refugee problems that afflict the whole planet which are the by product of the political meddling and domination in many countries by the major world powers and somewhat minor powers such as Australia.

Nevertheless, the SEP demands that refugees held in detention centres be released immediately and all forms of immigration control and restriction lifted. Workers must have the right to live and work wherever they wish, with full citizenship rights and full access to social benefits.

**Q4 – How do you intend to address the crisis in accommodation for homeless and low –income Australians?**

This is a major problem here in Western Australia with the resources “boom” pushing up rents, property prices and a major lack of public housing and accommodation. It is a problem throughout the nation.

New, high quality public housing units must be constructed in every state and territory to provide decent and affordable housing for all.

Mortgage repayments and rents must be capped at no more than 20 per cent of household income, and evictions and home repossessions outlawed.

**Q5 – What is your national anti-poverty strategy?**

A- The SEP's program cannot be realized without deep inroads being made into the vast reserves of private wealth accumulated in the hands of a few.

As an initial measure, along with the social ownership of the major corporations in which profits are utilized to meet human need not to enrich the companies and major shareholders, we advocate a genuinely progressive tax system to significantly lower taxes on working and middle class families while increasing taxation of the ultra-wealthy and large corporations, including closing the various tax loopholes and accounting gimmicks that allow them to avoid paying any tax.

This would open up resources to provide decent well paying jobs for all and the raising of social security and welfare benefits for every person, including Aborigines, immigrants and refugees, the unemployed, disabled and the aged to a proper living wage not the below the poverty level incomes people now attempt to survive on.

**Q6 – How will you ensure low-income earners are supported through the tax and welfare system? Will you be introducing a less punitive welfare system?**

To answer the first part of the question I refer you to the outline in the answer to question 5. In regards to the second part of the question we call for an end to the cutting or “quarantining” of welfare payments and the demand the abolition of all work – for – the – dole schemes and the raising of social security and welfare benefits to a living wage. We also call for the cutting off of electricity, gas, water or telephone services to be outlawed. We don’t believe there should be any punitive measures.

**Q7 – How does your industrial relations policy protect the powerless, support family life and ensure adequate income for all?**

A – Workchoices is destroying penalty rates and wages and allows employers to hire and fire at will. The Labor Party IR laws are not much different to the Howard government’s laws.

The SEP advocates the cutting of the working week to 30 hours, with no loss of pay, guaranteed penalty rates and five weeks annual leave for all employees. All workers must have the right to join a union and full legal protection from unfair dismissal. All laws against strikes and pickets must be repealed.

**Q8 – What policies do you have to support the development of indigenous Australians, including closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australian’s health and well-being?**

The SEP condemns the government’s police-military intervention into the Northern Territory – carried out through the suspension of the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act – as a monstrous assault on the democratic rights of the Aboriginal people. We demand the immediate withdrawal of all military forces from the NT. Aboriginal people must have the democratic right to decide their own future, free from state harassment and coercion.

The SEP seeks to unite Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal alike in the struggle against the profit system which has been responsible for the heinous crimes against the Aboriginal population and in that way lift every persons living standard to not only close the health and well being gap but to ensure genuine social and political equality.

**Q9 – What is your party’s policy response to student poverty and high levels of debt?**

The SEP demands that billions of dollars be poured into education to ensure free, high quality public education, including child care and kindergarten for all. Every student must have the capacity to fully develop his or her talents and capabilities. The SEP opposes voluntary student unionism, and insists on the right of all students to access free tertiary education, along with the full range of cultural, intellectual, recreational and sporting activities that are critical to campus life.

The SEP proposes a vast expansion in apprenticeships and free higher education for all who wish to pursue it, including overseas students. HECS debts, which now total some \$18 billion, must be cancelled and tertiary students should automatically receive a living wage.

**Q10 – How will you ensure universal access to high-quality education and health care?**

In terms of education I have outlined in the previous answer Q9.

In regards to health care the SEP calls for billions to be provided to the public health system, to finance a huge expansion in staffing, training, technology and equipment. WE call for a massive injection of funds also into public mental health, including residential, and into public dental hospitals and clinics, which must also be free and available to all.

**Q11 What is your plan to reduce Australia’s negative environmental impacts?**

The SEP advocates an internationally co-ordinated plan to combat global warming and environmental disaster.

The subordination of all human activity to the profit motive and the accumulation of personal wealth threaten to unleash an environmental catastrophe.

None of the mounting environmental problems – including the water crisis, deforestation, and climate change – can be resolved within the framework of the capitalist system. The slashing of carbon emissions requires nothing less than the complete reorganization of the world economy, taking production out of the hands of the major polluters and placing it under the democratic control of working people.

**Q12 – What is your position regarding the loss of civil rights brought about by recent anti-terrorism legislation?**

A- The SEP demands the repeal of all federal and state “anti-terror” laws.

The SEP insists that the real target of the anti-terror measures is not terrorists but ordinary people – as revealed in the extraordinary police-military mobilization against protestors during the recent APEC summit in Sydney. Behind the attacks on democratic rights lies the growing disparity between the social conditions of the mass of ordinary people and a privileged and powerful layer at the top.

The social tensions arising from deepening social inequality and unpopular military operations cannot be maintained by democratic means. This is the impetus behind the anti-terror legislation and the establishment of authoritarian forms of rule. What they are carrying out is the erection of the scaffolding for a police state.

**Q12 How do you intend to work for peace, especially in Iraq and in our region?**

The SEP calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US, Australian and other foreign troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. Our campaign demands that all the architects for the war – in Washington, London and Canberra – be placed on trial for war crimes.

Likewise the SEP calls for the immediate withdrawal of all Australian military and police personnel from East Timor and the countries of the South Pacific.

The SEP fights for a socialist foreign policy based on international working class solidarity. This includes the rescinding of the ANZUS Treaty, the closure of all US military facilities in Australia, including Pine Gap, and the ending of all Australian intelligence operations against the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region and at home. We also advocate the disbanding of the entire Australian military apparatus and utilization of the resources for socially useful purposes, including the building of badly needed infrastructure – in Australia and throughout the region.

The SEP also condemns the current campaign to glorify the military and any plans to revive conscription. Unable to meet its recruitment targets, the government is preying upon young people, especially the unemployed and those in regional areas with no prospect of a permanent job – trying to dragoon them into the armed services as a means of securing a career.

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