

Voters explain why they supported the Socialist Equality Party

Our reporters

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The following are a selection of interviews at the polling booths last Saturday with voters who explained why they voted for the Socialist Equality Party.

Abbir Ayoub, a young mother from northern Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows, voted for the SEP because of its opposition to the Iraq war. “The war is my biggest concern. I don’t think Australia should be involved, and as soon as you said you were against the war, that’s what turned my vote from Labor to the SEP. I was going to vote for Rudd, I didn’t really see it from the war standpoint, but as soon as you said it, I really felt strongly about it. This war is completely wrong, it’s going to start a worse situation in the Middle East. We didn’t agree with it, and Howard still sent troops. We have to do something to stop this war, it’s terrible what they have done there. You don’t read about it in the newspapers, but I still think it’s very important that we have to stop it.

“Interest rates for me is important, everything has gone up. I find the Liberals IR [industrial relations] laws have had a big effect on my family. My husband is a cleaner and his wages have gone down, since the laws were introduced. We’re really scared and we don’t feel as secure as before. My husband’s been a casual for four years, some of my family have been waiting a whole year to get a permanent job. It’s getting hard to buy a house, your job isn’t stable, you know you can’t be secure enough to be able to pay it back, so we haven’t been able to buy a house.

“When I heard you said health and education should be free, I thought, that’s exactly what we need. We’re too scared to go on a holiday. My husband gets \$9 an hour, his English isn’t good so they take advantage of him. I think we have to start understanding why things are like this and do something about it. We can’t leave things like they are. I know it will take a long time to do it, but we have to start somewhere with educating people.

Steve, an IT worker in the western Sydney suburb of Telopea, said he had voted for the SEP because he was “just sick of Liberal and Labor” and the SEP offered “an alternative”. “I was almost going to vote Labor because they

were going to introduce a new broadband network, which is really needed here, but I decided not to.

“I think I did vote for Hawke and Keating, but not any more. I don’t think we should be in Iraq—it’s over oil. We should be more like New Zealand, and don’t do whatever America tells us to do. They haven’t been invaded all the time just because they are not helping America in conflicts.”

Steve said he was worried about the prospect of another world war, started by the US in the Middle East, over energy resources. The conflict would involve China and Russia. “It’s scary and I don’t think America is on the right side,” he said.

Lily Prins, 27, in the inner Melbourne suburb of Flemington, had come off night shift tired and was angry about having to vote, then made up her mind to vote for the SEP. “I’m sick of everything. I’m sick of working in hospitality and being casual, not having a decent pay rate, or any time off or any sick leave. Anything I do above 40 hours a week is taxed at 50 percent anyway. I do three standard shifts, but I get called in all the time and asked to do other shifts as well.

“It started when I was 16, 11 years ago, and it has gone on from then. I was studying, but I couldn’t afford to study full time. I was studying fashion, but then I dropped out, I couldn’t keep it up. I’m just working to pay off my HECS. My life is not liveable. I work for two weeks to get the money for bills or other stuff. Then I get one day off, then I go back home and start again. Even on my day off there is nothing to do except go and spend what I have left over in some bar. And I work in hospitality anyway. All the work around is casual, it’s all in the same direction. Things have got to branch out differently.”

Shaylee, from Newcastle, north of Sydney, had just graduated and is now looking for a job in the legal profession. She was undecided who to vote for but decided to vote for the SEP after speaking to supporters at the polling booth.

She explained that it had cost her about \$40,000 through the HECs loan system to pay for her university degree and

that this would have to be paid back when she began employment. She stated her agreement with the SEP's policy for a fully funded education system and the abolition of the HECs program.

"I think this election has been a lot of 'bull'. I do not like the way things are going. I had always thought that Labor had to be better but I disagreed with their policy on war. On the Iraq war I just don't think we should have been there in the first place. I also did not like the Howard government's policy on immigration".

William Henwood, 23, also from Flemington, voted for the SEP in the Senate. "I'm casual at the moment, I work in retail. I hope, I mean I'm praying to be made permanent after Christmas. I'm disgusted with the whole thing—I think all the politicians are in it for the money. It's so hard to get a job. I've been fired twice from previous jobs, and both times I did nothing. At one I was falsely accused of theft—yet they didn't call the police, just accused me of stealing.

"At the next job, they got rid of me just because they could—they didn't want me any more. I'd been a good crew person, now they were laying me off. No comment, that was it. The job I have now I was lucky to get. I don't see why people should have to lie to get a job. I tried several other retail stores—either I was too over-qualified or too under-qualified. How can you be too under-qualified to work in a retail store?"

Kathy Don, in the inner Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy, is currently unemployed, previously worked as a social worker with people with drug addiction problems. In her early 30s, she walked up to the booth and said she wanted to vote for a socialist—took our statement, went off and read it, and then voted for the SEP.

"The main issue for me in the elections is the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and social inequality. I agree with what you say in your statement about capitalism. It is totally appalling that the issues of war were not raised in the elections, particularly because the Australian public are totally against the war. This is meant to be a democracy—how is it that everyone is against the war—but the government goes ahead with it anyway—there is no democracy. I'm sure that is exactly the same in the US with the war with the majority opposing it.

"The governments say they represent the will of the people but they in fact represent the will of big capital. I think that we have a problem that people are so entrenched in the system they can't see a way out. All the information is controlled by the media which defends capitalism. Young people are taught to be individuals, consumers, there is no free education, all education does these days is dumb down people.

"I don't agree with the Greens, they preferred

Labor—they are the same as the other parties. Labor is the same as the Liberals. The Greens are a single issue party. All we are going to get with Rudd is more of the same. I think things are going to get tough, people are in debt, they are going to lose their homes. Ordinary people have been sold out. We need hospitals, schools, not tax cuts. Governments need to invest in the population so they can be critical, to think for themselves—not to be controlled like a slave.

"A long time ago I voted Labor, then I voted Greens, now I voted SEP because they have a far broader outlook on a wide range of issues."

Samira Fitaax, 23, is a personal care assistant training at St Vincent's Hospital. She helped distribute SEP how-to-vote cards at Debney Park Secondary College in the seat of Melbourne, near the Flemington public housing estate.

"Our course is a one year course, to look after old people and sick people. We also have to make the hospital environment clean. There are 10 of us doing the course, and we do a lot of practical work. I have three children aged between one and five and it is a lot of responsibility to look after them. I have to get my husband to help me part time. We both work morning shift, so we have to put the kids into child care."

Samira explained that the Greens had visited her family while door knocking the estate, and had asked them to hand out how-to-votes for the Greens. When she said that she had already promised to hand them out for the SEP, the Greens said that she would be paid if she changed her mind.

Samira had distributed SEP manifestos after meeting SEP members at an Eid festival held near the flats in late October, where SEP candidate Will Marshall had been able to speak. "I had made a promise to help the SEP. The money didn't matter," she said.

"I think the SEP policies are good. The most important thing is the need for more nurses. It will be good if we can get more nurses and decent public housing for families. We need to speak up regarding housing.

"We need to speak up for all Africans. I went to Immigration with my cousin and they said that no more Sudanese can come to this country. That is very bad to say that."

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