

# SEP (Sri Lanka) public meeting: A socialist program to defend plantation workers

1 March 2016

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka are holding a public meeting at Hatton in the central hill district to discuss a socialist program to defend the wages, jobs and working conditions of plantation workers.

For almost a year, the plantation companies have pointed to the crisis in the world tea market and vehemently rejected any wage increase for 200,000 plantation workers, one of the most oppressed sections of the working class.

Instead, the Planters Association, representing 22 large companies, has proposed the replacement of the present meagre system of daily wages by a revenue-sharing scheme that is akin to share-cropping. The plan will not only reduce workers' income but increase workloads and scrap the current pension funds and welfare facilities.

The plantation trade unions, many of which are partners in Sri Lanka's coalition government, have abandoned their limited demand for an increase in the daily wage to 1,000 rupees. The government and unions are fully backing the plans of the companies. Workers in several estates took action to fight against increased workloads but the unions betrayed them and connived with police witch-hunts instigated by the companies.

The ruthless attacks on plantation workers are part of a broader assault being unleashed on the working class and the poor to make them bear the burden of the country's worsening economic crisis.

Workers cannot defend their rights through the unions and need a socialist perspective to fight the escalating attacks. The SEP is campaigning for workers to form action committees, independent of the unions, to wage a political struggle for decent wages and living conditions.

It is impossible to defend workers' rights while the plantations are privately owned and run for profit. The SEP calls for their nationalisation under the democratic control of the working class. This can be achieved only as part of a common struggle of the working class to bring to power a workers' and peasants' government to implement socialist policies.

The SEP and IYSSE urges the workers in the plantations and other workplaces, as well as young people, to take part in the Hatton meeting, which will discuss this socialist program.

Meeting venue: Town Hall, Hatton

Date and time: Sunday March 13 at 2 p.m.

To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>