

SEP speaker addresses antiwar protest

Our Reporter
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Nearly one hundred protesters held an hour-long march and rally prior to the “Town Meeting” in Columbus, Ohio, to oppose preparations by the Clinton administration to launch a war against Iraq. The protest was called by the Middle East Peace Committee, a campus group.

The rally was held near the entrance to St. John Arena, between the long lines of ticket holders waiting outside to attend the meeting. Several speakers opposed to the war were given the opportunity to address the crowd.

Larry Roberts, a leading member of the Socialist Equality Party, was the first speaker. Along with other members of the SEP and the Students for Social Equality, Roberts handed out over 1,500 leaflets carrying a statement from the *World Socialist Web Site* answering Clinton’s February 17th speech on Iraq.

Roberts said, “This is not a genuine debate that has been organized here today. This is a farce. CNN has been given the job by the State Department to vet those who will be able to speak. This is not a forum open to all who want to speak. This government cannot have a real debate. Millions of people in this country are opposed to the preparations for bombing Iraq, but if this government has its way those voices are not to be heard.

“The Socialist Equality Party stands with those opposed to the plans by this government to bomb Iraq. The Clinton administration is not interested in a peaceful resolution to this crisis. They want a war. They are prepared to carry out bombing unilaterally, indifferent to the public statements of their allies in Europe, Asia, or the Middle East. This is different even from the last war against Iraq.

“The US is launching this war because of the strategic location of Iraq in the Middle East and because they want control over the oil. Japan and other Asian countries get 90 percent of their oil from the

Middle East. If the US were able to control these resources it will have additional leverage to use against its economic rivals.

“The policy that this government is pursuing is one that was once widely known as imperialism — the oppression of a less developed country by a major capitalist country. The major imperialist countries, especially the US and Britain, are returning to a policy of open colonialism and gunboat diplomacy.

“Our party does not support Saddam Hussein. He is a brutal dictator whom the US government supported during the Iran-Iraq War and supplied with weapons to suppress internal opposition. Our party fights for the political independence of the working class and the international unity of workers against all forms of oppression. It is the job of the Iraqi working people to get rid of Saddam Hussein, not the American government. At the same time, the enemy of the working people in America is not in Iraq, it is here at home.”

Roberts concluded by urging all those attending the town hall meeting to read the SEP leaflet and to visit the World Socialist Web Site, which provides an analysis of the Clinton administration’s crisis and a program to unite the working class.



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