

Interviews from SEP public meeting:

The war has 'a hidden agenda'

Our reporters
6 November 2001

The World Socialist Web Site interviewed several people who attended the Socialist Equality Party public meeting in Sydney on the war in Afghanistan. All of them felt that they had gained a greater understanding of the reasons behind the war after it had been placed within its historical and international context.

Robert, a worker who travelled from Adelaide to attend the meeting, has been reading the WSWS for the past year.

“The thing that strikes me most is that it is hard for the average person, by themselves, to understand processes that are at work and that have been operating longer than their lifetime. A person generally only comprehends what he sees. It is very difficult to see things that have happened over a whole historical period.”

Robert related this to the confusion created by the mass media since the terror attacks in New York and Washington. “It was pretty clear to me there was a different agenda to what was said publicly, but it was a hidden agenda. I didn’t know about the oil and gas resources in Central Asia. One of the first newspaper headlines in Adelaide was, ‘You’re either for us, or you’re for the terrorists’. They were trying to whip up a patriotic stand. They do not want any opposition.

“Definitely there is confusion but there’s nowhere near the support of 10 years ago for the Persian Gulf War. There is far more concern. People say, ‘We just had one war—where is this going to end?’

“I think people about my age, I’d say people 30-50 years, have thought that big wars were behind us. World War I, World War II—that was something that happened in the past. With the Gulf War they could say, ‘Well, Saddam was a bit of a madman.’ But this is another one.

“The media are supporting all the government’s

actions—and this is coinciding with the refugee issue. The media are certainly not analysing what’s going on.

“Today’s meeting was referring back to the 1800s to show that today’s actions are really reactions to what began to happen more than 120 years ago. It is still going on. It did not all start when someone flew planes into a building.”

Robert said the Australian federal election campaign was unlike any other he had witnessed. “It’s not a campaign. It is like two football teams in one town. I think that is the general consensus—it is not like one side against the other, it’s that they’re both the same. I wonder how many people don’t support any of the parties.”

Dyaindra, who is studying information technology at the University of New South Wales, has been reading the WSWS since an Indonesian journal reprinted an article from the web site.

“Since then I have been using the WSWS as my main source of information. And since September 11, I have intensified my use of the WSWS because I want to know the other side of what has happened—what really happened with September 11 and the war in Afghanistan.

“I agree with the view of the WSWS that the war in Afghanistan is a war of global capitalism. There is a military-industrial complex in the United States. In the terminology of the WSWS, this is the right wing of the Bush administration.

“After September 11 the Bush administration issued statements that this was an attack against democracy and freedom and that there was a war between good and evil. In my view this is racism, a discourse of racism. According to the Bush administration, any faction that attacks US interests anywhere in the world is attacking good, democracy, freedom and civilisation.

“I don’t understand the deeper issues about the working class struggle. I just understand that one side of the people is getting richer and the other side is getting poorer—not only in the United States, or Australia or Indonesia, but everywhere in the world. I am pessimistic that the conditions for the workers will be better than before, in the next year or in a decade. That is because the nature of capitalism is to oppress, to take more from the working class.

“The meeting was very good. I learnt much more regarding socialism. I didn’t know much before, that is why I bought some books regarding the working class struggle. I want to know how to relate every event to the issue of the working class struggle. At the moment I analyse events with my own framework, according to the books I have read, but I don’t have a framework to analyse them in terms of capitalism and from the standpoint of the interests of the working class.”

Chris, a student at Newcastle University, said the meeting had changed his understanding of the war in some ways.

“After September 11, I was frustrated by seeing the same old CNN and other media coverage. It gave me no perspective. When I came into contact with the Socialist Equality Party Student Club, I found that it encouraged thought.

“Now the meeting has broadened my perspective of the true intentions behind the war and given me a better historical understanding of the Central Asian region. Beforehand, I basically had socialist ideals but no education to back up my arguments.

“My initial response to September 11 was influenced by the shocking images that were used to promote a pro-war stance. It was a time of confusion. I didn’t understand and I felt a rage. How could the terrorists do this? I was all for the war until I discovered the true motives. I did not know that that there had been decades of intervention in the region by the major powers in their own interests.

“We have seen all this before in the 19th and 20th centuries, as the rival powers come into conflict over their interests. This time we have President Bush saying, ‘you’re either for us or against us’ and ‘we can choose new targets any time’. Fear is being instilled in other countries. It will be a volatile period, and things will get worse before they get better.

“Young people like myself are living in a highly

commercial society, bombarded by marketing. The only way we can contribute to an international socialist movement is by educating people. I was involved with one of the radical groups, but they avoided true discussion. They were not informed and there was no intellectual development, just demonstrations.

“Revolution is not an overnight step. One of the main problems is that, growing up with the media, many people associate communism with Stalinism. It is still widespread with my friends—they say they don’t support socialism because of what happened in the Soviet Union. But Stalinism was a true contradiction of Marxism, which is founded on the rights and equality of the masses. How can force and repression be true socialism?”

Sarah, a University of Western Sydney student, said the meeting had placed the war in an historical context. “It is refreshing not to have the mass media providing the only opinion.

“I had watched a documentary about the war, but I was not aware that the US has maintained its presence in the Persian Gulf since the war on Iraq. Now I understand why there is a war against Afghanistan—how the imperialists fight each other to gain control of resources. This intervention is just one more way of doing so, under the cover of defending democracy.

“I came to the meeting because I wanted to hear the socialist perspective. I had learned a little about Marxism in a course on the economics of health care. I can’t say that I was entirely for it, but I was just skimming the surface. I am worried that many students seem apathetic, although I know there is a lot of confusion about socialism.”



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