

SEP public meeting interviews:

## "The most coherent political analysis available"

**Our reporters**  
**14 May 2002**

World Socialist Web Site reporters interviewed several people who attended the Socialist Equality Party public meeting in Sydney on the war in Afghanistan. All expressed their enthusiasm for the lecture with many commenting on the WSWS analysis of events in Afghanistan and the dearth of serious commentary in the mainstream media.

**Chris**, a university lecturer, said the meeting provided the only clear and coherent assessment of the war in Afghanistan. "The war was not launched simply in response to September 11. Its attack is directed to securing the oil and gas in the region and for the US to stake its interests more generally.

"In the first place, the US government made no attempt to have a dialogue with anyone about the events of September 11. It attacked without providing any proof of who was responsible. The excuse that the crime was so serious that proof was not needed is absurd—the more serious a crime is, the more proof is required."

Chris said the global "war on terrorism" was not a sign of strength. "In general, people don't attack others when they are strong. They attack to establish their interests.

"The fact that the same governments are attacking democratic rights highlights the crisis they find themselves in. They do not have the trust of the people, so they have to find other ways to exert influence.

"They are seeking to take away people's voices in order to prevent criticism. They also use terrorism as a red herring. They say someone is a terrorist, and leave others to fight that lie and to take energy away from other spheres."

Chris said he appreciated the analysis provided at the meeting.

"One of the things I have enjoyed from hearing Nick Beams speak several times is that he does not draw random examples to make a superficial analysis. He offers a huge amount of historical material. He drives points home by quoting members of the ruling elites, ministers of various governments. You feel like you are getting an honest and complete analysis.

"At the same time, it is extraordinarily confusing because you feel that to answer a particular point, the only way is to give an historical analysis. The only way to understand the Afghanistan

war is to understand the contradictions of global capitalism, which is not easy. It is confusing in the sense that if I were trying to explain the meeting to someone else, I could present only the smallest portion."

Chris doubted that the present political system could be reformed.

"Historically, things have seemed to go from bad to worse. Every time something is taken away—such as the right to a lawyer, or a student grant, or a health service—you have to fight to get that back, rather than go forward.

"If hundreds of thousands were demonstrating against the government, it might be forced to change, but it would be just an appearance. Whenever there have been demonstrations against the Howard government, ministers like Howard and Ruddock say: 'we are not swayed'. The recent protests in Italy were huge but the government there still said it would go ahead with its plans."

**Marley**, a 20-year-old TAFE student, said the meeting made clear that the war in Afghanistan "was not about terrorism" and explained that the September 11 terrorist attack on the US "provided the perfect opportunity for right-wing elements in America to advance their agenda."

"I think the war is terrible," she added, "but I think it is going to make the American working-class rise up because the government will have to cut social welfare and other things to pay for the military."

Commenting on the mass media Marley said: "The newspapers have no real analysis. They also isolate every event, like yesterday didn't ever happen, and do not explain it is the result of something that happened a few months ago. This is what I found interesting about Nick Beams' lecture. He connected everything happening in the world at the moment and how they're all linked to the resurgence of imperialism.

"The WSWS site is so much better because it connects what's happening around the world—that everything is part of a picture. It's not little bits and pieces."

**Nadia**, a student originally from southern Iran, has been in an Australia for a year. She said there were many questions about the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre,

but she “didn’t believe the story is exactly as they say. They control all the media and can make a story any way they want.”

“I think it was organised from the US to provide a reason to make war in other countries—to make decisions in other countries—and do what they want in other countries, especially Third World countries.”

“And I think the decision to make war in Afghanistan,” she continued, “was organised months before because it is the best strategic place to have a big say in the Middle East and to bring part of Russia under US control. They have chosen Afghanistan because it is the best place for America to control everything.

“They say that this is a war against terrorism but if terrorism means killing ideas and killing innocent people then America is the biggest terrorist. Look what they did in Vietnam, Africa, South America, the Middle East, to the Palestinians.”

Nadia said she did not support any particular party in Iran or anywhere else but believed in “the working class and poor people. I defend equality, not skin colour or country of birth.”

“I think the most important thing is to give knowledge to the poor people, especially the working class, about what is happening to them. To provide them with this is the biggest power for the future because knowledge is much stronger than a Kalashnikov. To teach them what are their rights and how their rights have been destroyed. To teach them all these things is the best.”

**John** has been reading WSWS for two years and attended his first SEP meeting in November 2000 on the US presidential election crisis. Asked why he attended last week’s meeting John said: “To hear the voice of reasonable analysis that’s lacking elsewhere. I find the website the most coherent political analysis available.”

He said Nick Beams’ lecture was “excellent” because it “explained the Middle East crisis and its relationship to the history of the working class movement and the outcome after World War II. His analysis of the recent French election was also interesting and I learnt something there.”

John said that the *World Socialist Web Site* provided a “revolutionary opportunity” for the working class. He spoke to a friend “from the political left” about the site who claimed that it represented a “sellout of traditional revolutionary activity” and was “anti-trade union”. This was “common criticism from other left wing groups,” he said.

“But for me,” he continued “the WSWS was a break that needed to be made. To make that break, which I hope proves to be a decisive political move, was an advancement out of the quagmire which left a lot of us very demoralised in the eighties and the nineties.”

When asked how he came in contact with WSWS, John replied: “I think I just discovered it on the Internet. Its content is what I’ve been waiting for. It’s what I’ve wanted to read for so long.”

**Karen**, an assistant editor, said the lecture reinforced what she had read on the WSWS about protest politics.

“Protest politics is counterproductive because it doesn’t do anything to educate or give people a real understanding of what’s happening around the world. Thousands of people gather and protest, but what does it achieve? First of all there is no program offered to actually break from the existing framework. It’s just a lot of shouting without any content whatsoever.”

Karen said Beams’ lecture clarified many questions for her and emphasised: “I needed to understand, and need to understand even more, the rise and development of capitalism through industrialisation; how the capitalist economy works. The lecture went some way to explaining this and whetted my appetite to learn more.”

“From what I’ve read on the WSWS and heard at SEP public meetings in the last two years, the site is the only place which actually provides a perspective and explains why things happen. And in contrast to what is out there in the media at the moment, it is excellent.

“For instance, the war between Palestine and Israel is completely turned on its head in the media. In reality Israel is like a huge military machine that is mobilising itself against a group of dispossessed, desperate people. And yet it’s presented in the media as the desperate Israelis tearing their hair out in desperation at these Palestinian suicide terrorist bombers.

“I’m realising that I have to reassess everything that I learnt at university. It was all about single issue, identity politics, like feminism, cultural studies, which as the chair commented, all serve to divide the working class and stop them from identifying themselves as a potentially powerful united class. That’s why I think the site and its analysis is necessary.”

Asked about the task of educating the working class about the lessons and the history of the 20th century, she replied: “This is as an enormous task but I subscribe to the idea that political consciousness is absolutely crucial to the development of a movement that’s capable of restructuring society.

“The lecture clarified for me that there can be no emancipation for working class people by maintaining this system. It also showed in the French elections how parties that call themselves socialist or Trotskyist just pander to the existing structure. I think it’s just another example of parties that declare themselves to be on the side of the working class that have shown where they really stand.

“It is impossible to understand anything unless you see things in their connections to each other, how events are related. I think I understood this from the outset, but reading the WSWS and listening to this lecture has reinforced it.”



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**