

Protest against Iraq war in Dearborn, Michigan

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Some 500 people demonstrated outside the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Dearborn, Michigan on October 14 to protest the threatened US invasion of Iraq. Inside the hotel, President Bush addressed a \$1,000-a-plate political fundraising event.

The protest was called by the Michigan Emergency Coalition Against the War with Iraq. Those picketing in front of the hotel included college and high school students, Arab and Iraqi Americans, workers and professionals.

Bush was in town to support the campaigns of Republican candidates for US Congress as part of a two-week nationwide tour. After Bush's speech in Dearborn, about 40 people attended a private reception with the president that cost \$25,000 per person.

Bush centered his remarks on the case for war against Iraq and the global "war on terror." He attempted to create an artificial amalgam between the terrorist bombing on the island of Bali, the Al Qaeda network, and the regime of Saddam Hussein. "My biggest worry is that there is an enemy out there who still hates America," he declared.

Dearborn, a suburb of Detroit, is the site of the world headquarters of Ford Motor Company. It is also home to a large Arab-American community.

A group of about 100 Iraqi Americans, including many Shiite Muslims, picketed the hotel to support an invasion of Iraq. The pro-war demonstration was organized by wealthy Iraqis and religious leaders who support the overthrow of Saddam Hussein by the US military. They seek to manipulate the hostility to the Baghdad regime felt by many Iraqi expatriates, some of whom have lost family members under the dictatorship.

Mike, a young technical support worker who is employed at Ford as a contractor, is a regular reader of the WSWS. He said, "I am delighted to see all the

people here. There is a lot of popular opposition to war against Iraq. The war is not what it is claimed to be. There is no threat from Iraq. In my opinion, if one nation has nuclear weapons and is making threats and another nation decides to get them, it is for defense.

"This blood lust is ridiculous. The idea is that if we want to have our lifestyle, we have to conquer and enslave other nations.

"We supposedly have a choice between the Democrats and Republicans. There is no choice. The whole idea of democracy in the United States is really corporate sponsorship."

An Iraqi-American employee at a Detroit auto parts company criticized the pro-war picket across the street, "Do I want the killing of thousands of people to get rid of a bully they created in the first place? They are blinded by Hussein. They are ignorant of what lies ahead. I'll bet in ten years a lot of those people will be carrying rifles against the US.

"Hussein is a dictator who has to be removed. But they want to get rid of him at the expense of the Iraqi people. There is more to this than just Hussein. It is just a pretext.

"I have lived here 25 years. My mom lives with me. She cries day and night. Would you want your house demolished because you have a burglar inside? They just sit back and push buttons. I've protested against Hussein for 15 years. The US supported Hussein, now he is a bad guy. I saw Bush's father sit on the sidelines while Hussein slaughtered people.

"It is all about oil and controlling resources. That whole region is full of dictators. It is the whole region, not just Iraq."

A high school student told the WSWS, "I think all of this is 'wagging the dog,' like they accused Clinton of in 1998, to distract the public. They want to keep

attention off the falling economy. Like in all wars, the economy will drop farther. I have a brother who is in college, and if this turns into a total war he may have to go.”

A realtor from Birmingham, Michigan said, “They want to keep the hysteria going because they have nothing for here. It’s for corporate America, not for the people. I don’t understand why now? What is the reason? I don’t trust Bush’s motives. This is about politics.”



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