

# Democratic Congressman admits no evidence against Iraq

Elisa Brehm

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US Congressman John Dingell, the most senior member of the US House of Representatives, admitted at a September 29 “town meeting” that he has seen no evidence that the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction. The absence of such evidence, however, has not prompted the Michigan Democrat to question, let alone oppose, this central premise for the war of aggression that the Bush administration is preparing against Iraq.

Anyone under the illusion that the Congressional Democrats will mount an opposition to Bush’s plans for invading Iraq would have been disabused of this notion by the Sunday evening meeting held in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Over 100 students, and others from the Ann Arbor community, came to meeting at the University of Michigan seeking information about the threatened war. They received none. One student asked the Congressman, “Do you have any information that Iraq is a danger, that the US is in imminent danger?” Dingell answered, “I have no information.” Another student asked, “How can we replace the present Iraqi government with a democratic regime after we devastate the country and destabilize the whole region?” Dingell’s response was, “Good question, I have no answer.”

Dingell was further asked, “Do you have any evidence that Saddam Hussein was actively involved with the events of September 11 or linked to Al Qaeda?” Again, Dingell answered, “There’s no evidence he was and I am aware of none.”

Dingell’s admissions raised the obvious question: if the most senior member of the US House of Representatives has seen no evidence, then who has? Dingell never expressed any concern over this state of affairs. On the contrary, he said Bush must get the support of both Congress and the United Nation to win such a war. Dingell, like the rest of the Democratic Party, is appealing

to Bush to provide a coherent plan for attacking and conquering Iraq.

Many people in the audience voiced opposition to the war plans. Some referred to previous US alliances with both the Taliban and Saddam Hussein during the 1980s. One person asked Dingell how the administration could claim that Iraq’s alleged biological weapons justified military action, given that Washington had aided the regime when it was using such weapons in the Iran-Iraq war.

Another questioned how war could be waged against Iraq over violations of UN resolutions when Israel—Washington’s closest ally in the region—has violated more such resolutions than any country on the face of the earth. The Congressman chose not to address any of these issues.

He flatly rejected another person’s assertion that the present drive toward war was being used by Bush to win the midterm elections for the Republican Party.

A supporter of the *World Socialist Web Site* challenged the Congressman, stating: “It is clear from your remarks that, given the right conditions, you will vote in support of a US military attack on Iraq....This is a war for oil and the recolonization of that country. It is only the beginning of military actions that are being prepared by American imperialism to conquer and dominate the globe.”

While stating that the WSWS is no supporter of Saddam Hussein, the speaker disputed the claim that the Iraqi regime poses a grave threat to the US and the world. “A far greater threat is posed by the reckless actions being carried out by the Bush administration,” she said, to applause from the audience.

“Congressman Dingell, you stated that the US has to do everything to win this war,” she continued. “What does that mean? It means the slaughter of thousands of innocent Iraqi people who have done nothing to the American working class. Students must oppose this

military aggression and not allow the US government to commit such crimes in the name of the American people. From what Dingell has said this evening, it is futile to base opposition to the war on appeals to the Democratic Party.”

Dingell responded: “You seem to arrive at the conclusion that the Democratic Party and I are in support of Bush. But we live in a dangerous world.” Denying the war was about oil—“it’s about keeping the people who sent me to Washington safe”—he claimed he had not made up his mind on how he would vote on the upcoming resolution for war against Iraq. “I am seeking your guidance in this issue,” he told the audience.

Dingell however, is no political novice. Part of a family dynasty, at 76 he is the longest-serving member in the House of Representatives. He won his seat in 1955 after the death of his father, John Dingell Sr., who held office since 1932. He has become one of the most powerful members of Congress, serving first as chairman of the powerful Energy and Commerce Committee and then as its ranking minority member since the Republicans gained control of the House.

In concluding the meeting, Dingell asked the audience for a show of hands on support for a war. Initially, only two people were in favor. Dingell then asked for a vote given that the Europeans would support the war, and 10 more people raised their hands. Finally he got a total of 20—less than a fifth of the audience—on the condition that the United Nations and Middle Eastern countries also backed the war.

Significantly, Dingell revealed that at a similar meeting held in Monroe, Michigan, a working class community south of Detroit, the vote was similar.

While the American media works to stampede public opinion behind the war, both meetings demonstrate that there is a growing skepticism and opposition toward the Bush administration’s plans. In contrast, Dingell’s reaction demonstrates that the Democratic Party is preparing to endorse military aggression against Iraq.



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