

The political issues in the struggle against war

World Socialist Web Site Editorial Board
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The following statement of the World Socialist Web Site and the Socialist Equality Party will be distributed at demonstrations to be held Saturday, January 18 in Washington DC and other cities.

The statement is also available on the WSWS in leaflet form as a PDF file. We urge our readers and supporters to download the leaflet and distribute it at Saturday's demonstrations in Washington, San Francisco and elsewhere, as well as at work locations, schools, colleges and other public venues.

The increasingly bellicose and reckless rhetoric of the Bush administration, against the backdrop of a relentless buildup of American military forces in the Middle East, means that war is inevitable. All of the actions and statements of the US government contradict President Bush's claim that no "final decision" on war has been taken. In reality, the invasion and occupation of Iraq has been a principal strategic objective of the Bush administration since taking office.

There is nothing the Iraqi government can do, short of inviting US troops to occupy Baghdad, that would satisfy the Bush administration. The endless denunciations of Saddam Hussein's phantom "weapons of mass destruction"—not a trace of which has been found after nearly two months of intrusive inspections—have never been anything other than propaganda designed to provide a pretext for a war of conquest.

Even in the highly unlikely event that the war were postponed, this would represent only a temporary respite. Sooner, rather than later, a new pretext for war would be found, if not against Iraq, then against Korea, Iran or some other country deemed an obstacle to the global interests of the American ruling elite.

To recognize that war is inevitable is not pessimism, but political realism. Such realism is an essential prerequisite for the development of an effective long-term strategy for the development of a powerful mass movement against the worldwide eruption of American imperialism.

It is necessary and correct to protest against the war policies of the Bush administration. But anti-war rallies such as those taking place on January 18 in Washington and other cities are only the first step. The foundations must be laid to transform popular protest into a mass political struggle, based on the working class, against not only the Bush administration but also, and above all, the ruling social and economic interests of

which Bush's war policies are an expression.

The war that is about to begin is not the product of merely one particularly reactionary administration. It is rooted in the increasingly desperate economic crisis of American capitalism and the material interests of its ruling elite.

The foreign policy of the Bush administration is inextricably linked to its domestic policy. The war against Iraq is the international expression of the same political and economic agenda that the government pursues within the United States. Whether at home or overseas, the US government serves the interests of the financial oligarchy that controls both the Democrats and the Republicans.

This oligarchy wants a war against Iraq for the following reasons: (1) The conquest of Iraq will place under the control of American-owned corporations the second largest proven reserves of oil in the world; (2) An American occupation of Iraq, it is believed by Washington strategists, will establish an American stranglehold over much of Eurasia, politically and militarily intimidate all present and potential rivals, and lay the foundations for a new American empire; and (3) the Bush administration and its media accomplices hope to distract the American people, with the gory spectacle of military conquest, from the intractable economic problems and potentially explosive social contradictions within the United States.

In the final analysis, the war in Iraq is a reactionary imperialist enterprise—a war of plunder whose ultimate aim is the subjugation of the entire world under the heel of Wall Street.

Even if the Bush administration, after slaughtering hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, were to achieve its military objectives, the logic of imperialist conquest would lead before long to bloodier military confrontations—against Iran, Pakistan, Korea and China. Moreover, the drive by Washington to establish global hegemony must lead to bitter confrontations with its increasingly nervous "allies" in Europe and Japan.

Thus, as in the twentieth century, imperialism is leading inexorably toward world war. In the last century, the human cost of imperialist war was reckoned in the tens of millions. In the twenty-first century, it will—unless prevented by the American and international working class—be calculated in the billions.

If anything is to be learned from the tragedies of the last century, it is that the only viable answer to imperialist war is

the independent political mobilization of the working class in the struggle for international socialism—that is, for social equality and genuine democracy.

This perspective requires, as its elementary prerequisite, the unconditional and unequivocal repudiation of the Democratic Party. All those who propose the “reform” of this reactionary capitalist party are practicing charlatany or self-deception. Again and again, the subordination of mass protest movements to this party has resulted in betrayal and defeat.

The entire Democratic Party is implicated in the domestic and international policies of the American government. It must not be forgotten that Bush’s polices are only a more extreme version of those of the Clinton administration, which, in addition to enforcing a brutal sanctions regime against Iraq, carried out military attacks on Somalia, Yugoslavia and Iraq itself.

It would be impossible for Bush to carry out the war in Afghanistan or the coming war against Iraq without the support he receives from the Democratic Party. The Democrats supplied Bush with the votes he needed to obtain congressional authorization for war against Iraq, and the debacle of the Democrats in the mid-term elections was an expression of its inability to mount any serious opposition to the Bush administration. Al Gore’s decision to withdraw from the 2004 presidential race signifies an even sharper turn to the right, and all of the major Democratic contenders endorse the war and Bush’s oppressive domestic policy.

On all questions essential to the class interests of the American financial oligarchy, the two parties are united. The Democratic Party is and has always been an imperialist party. Its differences with the Bush administration are of a purely tactical and not fundamental nature.

The construction of a successful movement against war requires a break with the Democratic Party and a resolute turn to the working class, the vast majority of the American population. Turning to the working class means linking the struggle against war with a struggle for jobs, social services, health care and education, and for the defense of democratic rights.

It means basing the struggle against militarism on a program that frankly and openly opposes the capitalist system, connecting the fight against imperialist war to the most far-reaching redistribution of wealth from the ruling elite to the working people. This means mounting a massive assault on entrenched wealth and privilege, including the expropriation of the corporate and financial oligopolies and their conversion into public enterprises, run on the basis of scientific planning and under the democratic control of the working class.

The eruption of social struggles in the US has already begun. The recent strike at General Electric is only one expression of deep social discontent building up among working people all over the country. The emergence of the class struggle is the most decisive refutation of those who say a mass socialist

movement against imperialist war cannot be built, that the American working class is not interested in opposing the policies of the US government, that it is not a progressive and revolutionary force, etc.

A turn to the working class is a turn to internationalism, for the working class is inherently an international class, whose interests span all boundaries of nation, race and religion. Opposition to the global capitalist system must be a global opposition. This means that a movement against war cannot be subordinated either to the bourgeois governments of Europe or to the United Nations—that “den of thieves” and pliant instrument of the major imperialist powers.

While solidarizing itself with the many thousands who have gathered this weekend in Washington and elsewhere, the *World Socialist Web Site* is fundamentally opposed to the political perspective of groups and individuals organizing the demonstrations, who seek to shore up the credibility of the Democratic Party and the United Nations, and spread the illusion that these imperialist institutions can somehow be transformed into instruments of peace and democracy. We stand unconditionally for the political independence of the working class from all of the parties and political representatives of the bourgeoisie.

A new, independent socialist movement of the international working class must be built. The Socialist Equality Party in the US and its sister parties around the world that comprise the Fourth International are constructing this movement. The *World Socialist Web Site* is the political organ of the Fourth International, and we urge all those dedicated to the struggle against war to join the SEP, contribute to the WSWWS, distribute its material and help deepen and expand its influence in the American and international working class.



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