

Britain: SEP supporter addresses Bradford anti-war meeting

Our correspondent
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Nearly 200 people packed a lecture theatre at Bradford University on January 23 for a meeting to protest US plans to attack Iraq.

The meeting was organised by the Stop the War Coalition, an umbrella group comprising trade unions, Labour lefts, radical groups, Islamisists and the Greens, and addressed by Professor Paul Rogers, a liberal academic from the university's department of Peace Studies.

Rogers outlined the strategic importance of Iraq for America's drive to consolidate its global hegemony and stressed that US/UK plans for war faced massive opposition. But he claimed that popular pressure could force the US and British governments to back down.

In the discussion that followed, Barbara Slaughter of the Socialist Equality Party stressed that the fight against war had to be based on the political mobilisation of the American, British and international working class.

President George W. Bush in no way represented the American people, Slaughter said. "Bush was not elected president of the United States, he was imposed on the American people by a criminal conspiracy. We are talking about a mafia that is in charge in the US that has no concern about issues of democracy," she explained.

"American policy is being directed in the interests of a very small cabal of business people at the top of American society," she continued. "The Democratic Party is going along with this. Bush could not have got the vote for his war policy through Congress without the support of the Democrats."

Similarly, workers and youth could not look to any section of the Labour Party to oppose Blair's militarism. "It is also absolutely essential to look at the record of the Labour Party," Slaughter said. "Contrary

to what Professor Rogers has said, there has been no opposition to the war from inside the Labour Party apart from one or two lone voices. Like the Democrats in the US, the Labour Party is supporting the war, either directly or under cover of calling for a United Nations resolution."

The drive to war is bound up with an offensive against all the gains and conditions of the working class at home, Slaughter explained, outlining Labour's attacks on health provision, employment, education, housing. "In every area, social services are being decimated and students are suffering as a result of the government's imposition of tuition fees."

"We are living in a new period," she went on, characterised by global economic instability and growing tensions between the major powers, particularly between America and Europe. "These developments are leading inexorably towards a third world war, which will—unless prevented by the international working class—result in the slaughter of millions of people."

"Even if the war against Iraq is postponed for a period of time, it will only be a temporary respite. Sooner rather than later a new pretext for war will be found, because we are living in a new period of imperialist conquest, when inter-imperialist conflict leads directly towards war."

Slaughter concluded, "In Britain and all over the world we have to see the huge groundswell of opposition to the attack on Iraq as a beginning of a movement against the capitalist system. It is only through the building of an international socialist movement that we can stop the drive to war."

Slaughter's remarks were listened to very attentively, and sparked several discussions after the meeting when hundreds of copies of the WSWs statement "The

political issues in the struggle against war” were distributed.



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