

Los Angeles antiwar protests draw tens of thousands

Kim Saito, Nick Davis
24 March 2003

On Saturday, March 22, a crowd peacefully marched from Hollywood and Vine to the CNN building on Sunset Boulevard, where demonstrators rallied to protest the network's broadcasting of government lies and glorification of war. (Organizers estimated the crowd at 20,000, while police estimates were much lower.) Hundreds of Los Angeles Police Department and California Highway Patrol police lined the route on foot, bicycles and horseback.

Later they returned to Hollywood and Vine, where an organizer explained to the energized crowd of about 100 people that they were about to participate in an act of civil disobedience. They urged everyone who intended to get arrested to sit down in the intersection. Police then rushed in, some on horseback, and arrested 78 people for failure to disperse, as the new LAPD Chief William Bratton watched from the sidelines in civilian clothes.

Several WSWS supporters passed out leaflets to the demonstrators and people emerging from the subway station. The statement, "Build an international working class movement against imperialist war," was very well received. A middle-aged woman carrying a picket sign for the demonstration said this was the first time she had ever gotten politically involved. She explained that she used to be one of those many who never questioned the government and couldn't understand why people in other countries hated America. She said this was not her government, asking how America could be attacking a poor country like Iraq. After living 15 years in France, she returned to California to find the social conditions here absolutely appalling.

A history professor from Irvine Valley College took the WSWS leaflet and exclaimed, "This is the most amazing, amazing web site! It's got the best international news coverage. I've been reading your web site for about three years and use it in my classes."

Other demonstrations were staged in other parts of

southern California. In Long Beach, surfers arranged their boards in the shape of a giant peace symbol on the sand.

The following report was received on an earlier Los Angeles demonstration.

On March 20, 5,000 to 7,000 people surrounded the West Side Federal Building in Los Angeles to denounce the war launched by the Bush administration against Iraq. Protesters also spoke out against state budget cuts in education and other social services to cover California's estimated \$34.6 billion deficit.

A major traffic artery was blocked, local streets were clogged and the I-405 freeway was jammed in the vicinity of the demonstration. Acts of civil disobedience led to over 40 reported arrests. The crowd consisted of housewives, workers and a large number of students from the community colleges and the University of California, Los Angeles campus.

"I am a student and I'm worried about what is going to happen with the new budget. The Republicans chose today, the first day of the war, to propose their new budget. This budget is even going to take away benefits from veterans' health care and they say they support the soldiers!" Shauna Lang told a reporter, "I want to say this isn't just tree hugging liberal college students here—this is everybody. Look around you, this is the whole community—white, black and every shade in between, we have young people, seniors, we have Catholics, Jews and Muslims because they are all part of our community and we're all here to protest Bush and his war for oil and world domination."

As darkness fell people continued to stream in, some carrying lit candles. As police crews filmed the scene and a police helicopter circled overhead flooding the area with an eerie light, the crowd raised the chant "Exxon, Mobil you can't hide. We charge you with genocide" and "1, 2, 3, 4, we don't want your oil war, 5, 6, 7, 8 we don't want your fascist state." Confined by cordons of police, the

demonstrators were not allowed to march through the community. But colorful banners waved and people milled around carrying signs saying, “Killing for Peace,” “Dying for Dollars,” “Rome Fell,” and “Bombs Kill Kids.”

Joanna told the WSWS, “We want an end to hypocrisy in government. We think all this money that is being spent on war should be spent on what the people of this country and the world really need. This is about making money and imperial conquest—getting their oil. After we destroy the country we will send our corporations in to fix it and they will make money twice.”

“I oppose the war by a terrorist country that has a history of terrorism, that has never stood for justice, freedom, or anything it says that it has, and has oppressed people from all over the world of all races,” John, a legal worker, said. “Now it has turned on the Middle East and I completely oppose that. If you study history and the progress of America, you’ll see this war is about economic interests. In this case it’s oil and maintaining power in the Middle East and Central Asia, and it’s about bringing down a regime that no longer supports the US interests.

“Rice, Ridge, and baby Bush, you never heard of them—now they are supposedly leaders of this country. They all came from corporate America. All these politicians receive their funding from these corporations.” On Bush’s claim that the war will bring democracy to Iraq, John added, “It has no bearing on reality. I am not surprised that Hussein was funded by the CIA, so was every other dictator. How many around the world have been funded by the CIA, like Pinochet? If they no longer support the CIA, they go on their hit list, like what happened to Noriega.”

John, who is a regular reader of the *World Socialist Web Site*, concluded, “I love the WSWS articles. They are really honest and they are true. They get to the heart of the issues and to the politics of the economic system that is inherently and fundamentally opposed to all moral and ethical standards.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact