

# World Socialist Web Site holds international conference on socialism and the struggle against war

The WSWS Editorial Board  
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*Today we are publishing this summary account of the Socialist Equality Party conference held over the weekend in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the opening report to the conference given by David North, chairman of the WSWS International Editorial Board and national secretary of the SEP in the United States. Over the next several days we will publish the resolutions adopted by the conference, as well as the remarks made by the presenters and portions of the discussion from both the conference floor and the platform.*

On March 29-30, the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party held an international conference entitled “Socialism and the Struggle against Imperialism and War: the Strategy and Program of a New International Working Class Movement.” The conference was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan and was attended by 150 delegates.

Delegates came from many parts of the US, some traveling hundreds of miles from the South, the West Coast and the East Coast to attend. Many of the workers, high school and college students and retired workers who attended were readers of the WSWS, who became interested in socialism and the policies of the Socialist Equality Party through the daily commentary and political analysis provided by the web site.

The opening report was given by David North, chairman of the WSWS International Editorial Board and national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in the US. [See: “Into the maelstrom: the crisis of American imperialism and the war against Iraq” ] North denounced the war on Iraq and warned that the American government, in the face of unanticipated resistance from the Iraqi people, will employ ever more brutal methods in its assault on the country.

“The Pentagon is now being compelled to confront the unanticipated consequences of its own illusions,” he said. “With unbounded cynicism, the Bush administration has dubbed this war ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom.’ In the face of increasing mass resistance, the logic of its objective—the seizure of Iraq and its transformation into an American

colonial protectorate—will drive the United States into increasingly violent reprisals against the Iraqi people... Unless the government is stopped, this war will degenerate inevitably into an orgy of mass murder.”

North continued: “The greatest mistake would be to underestimate the tenacity of the ruling elite and its capacity for ruthlessness. The American ruling class and its military are not invincible. But they are not a pushover. All its vast historical experience, accumulated in the course of countless wars against enemies abroad and in bitter struggle against opposition at home, has conditioned the ruling elite to respond with unrestrained brutality to challenges to its class interests.”

North denounced the role of the media in promoting and justifying the war. “The last year witnessed the complete degeneration of the establishment media into nothing more than an outlet of White House and Pentagon propaganda. It made no attempt to distinguish fact from misinformation, lies and pure fiction. The media gladly accepted its integration as a tool of the military’s psychological operations.”

North welcomed the outpouring of international opposition to the war and emphasized the need to elaborate a political perspective to guide this opposition. “It is our aim,” he said, “to develop the *World Socialist Web Site* as the intellectual and political center of a new international socialist movement—to provide the orientation, analysis and program required by all those entering into struggle against imperialist war, against all forms of human exploitation and injustice, and for social equality.”

The conference unanimously passed resolutions denouncing the war and demanding the withdrawal of US and British troops from Iraq, calling for the international unity of the working class, declaring for the political independence of the working class, opposing the growing assault on democratic rights, condemning the attacks on working class living standards and the growth of social

inequality, and denouncing the American media for its complicity in the war.

In endorsing the resolution “Stop the war with Iraq! US, Britain out of the Middle East!” the delegates declared, “All those responsible for launching the US war against Iraq—the top officials of the Bush administration, the Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress, the military commanders, and the heads of the media monopolies—are guilty of war crimes and should be brought to judgment before an international tribunal.” They called for the international working class to demand the immediate withdrawal of US and British military forces from Iraq, an immediate end to all sanctions, and an emergency program of humanitarian and economic aid for the Iraqi people.

Barry Grey, a member of the WSWs editorial board, introduced the resolution on the political independence of the working class. He emphasized the need for a definitive break with the Democratic Party, citing the long history of the political subordination of American workers to this bourgeois party, extending back to the nineteenth century in the period prior to the Civil War, when the Democratic Party defended the interests of the southern slaveocracy.

Grey stressed that the political independence of the working class could not be achieved through the construction of a reformist “third party.” Rather, as the resolution stated, it could be achieved “only through the building of a party that attacks the economic foundations of the capitalist system.” The resolution concluded: “We undertake the task of building the Socialist Equality Party as the mass political party of the working class which, on the basis of an internationalist and socialist program, will fight for power.”

Many international delegates attended the conference, including Ulrich Rippert, national secretary of the German Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, Chris Marsden, national secretary of the British Socialist Equality Party, Linda Tenenbaum, assistant national secretary of the Australian Socialist Equality Party, Keith Jones, national secretary of the SEP of Canada, and Vladimir Volkov of Russia, a member of the WSWs International Editorial Board.

The international delegates joined with delegates from across the US to pass the resolution on the international unity of the working class, which declared: “The only genuine mass base for the struggle against imperialism and war is the American and international working class...[This struggle] cannot be developed from above—through the auspices of one or another of the imperialist powers, national governments, or institutions such as the United Nations.... Only by building a movement from below—among the broad masses of working people—and imbuing it with an international socialist strategy aimed at the complete

transformation of society, can the struggle against war go forward.”

The discussion at the conference was intense and lively, with many of the delegates participating. Some had been reading the WSWs for years, but now felt the need to become more politically active. A number of young people asked questions about the perspective of the Socialist Equality Party and spoke of the need for a serious study of history and politics. Others discussed the particular problems they faced in different parts of the country and spoke in support of the resolutions.

In the resolution on democratic rights, the conference demanded the immediate release of the thousands of immigrants arrested on spurious charges following September 11. The delegates condemned the Patriot Act and other anti-democratic legislation, and called for an independent inquiry into the events of September 11, which have been used by the American ruling elite to justify its assault on civil liberties and constitutional safeguards.

In the resolution “War and the social crisis in the United States” the conference stressed the need for a movement that linked the struggle against war with the struggle for social equality. It raised the need for socialist policies to provide decent jobs and wages, education, health care and housing for all. The delegates called for the conversion of the arms industry into publicly owned institutions for the production of socially useful goods, and for the nationalization of giant corporations under the democratic control of the working population.

The delegates pledged to fight for the development of the *World Socialist Web Site* and the expansion of its readership. They stressed the critical role of the WSWs in promoting the growth of socialist consciousness in the international working class.



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