

Socialist Equality Party US presidential candidate to speak in Sri Lanka

SEP/World Socialist Web Site public meetings: the US election and the war against Iraq

9 October 2004

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) in Sri Lanka and the *World Socialist Web Site* are pleased to announce that Bill Van Auken, the US SEP's presidential candidate in the 2004 elections, will address public meetings in Colombo on October 23 and Kandy on October 25.

The presidential campaign of the US SEP has immense political significance for workers, young people and intellectuals in Sri Lanka, throughout the Indian subcontinent and internationally. The SEP is the only party in the US to unequivocally oppose the subjugation of Iraq and advance a socialist perspective to unite workers around the world against the eruption of US militarism. The meetings in Sri Lanka, together with the preceding meeting in London, are an integral part of this internationalist campaign.

The US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq marks a new period in world history. All of the Bush administration's pretexts for the war—Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein's links to Al Qaeda, and the perspective of "liberating" Iraq—have been exposed as outright lies. The real aim of the illegal war was to secure control of Iraq and its huge oil reserves as part of US ambitions for hegemony throughout the Middle East and internationally. Washington's bloody military repression, which is aimed at suppressing the widespread resistance of the Iraqi masses, has been accompanied by draconian attacks on the democratic rights and social conditions of working people in America itself.

The entire US political establishment supports the continued occupation of Iraq and is desperate to prevent any avenue for the expression of the deeply-felt antiwar

sentiments of millions of Americans within the 2004 election campaign. The differences between President Bush and Democratic Party candidate John Kerry are purely tactical. Far from promising to pull US troops out of Iraq, Kerry insists that he can more effectively prosecute the war. In the recent debate with Bush, Kerry boasted "I am going to lead the troops to victory".

The political leaders of the so-called Third World—on the Indian subcontinent as in the Middle East—have uniformly distinguished themselves by their cowardly subservience to the Bush administration and their complete failure to defend the basic rights of the Iraqi people. In the name of the bogus "war on terrorism", the Indian and Bangladeshi governments, along with the military regime in Pakistan, have backed the invasion of Iraq in the hope of material and political rewards from Washington.

The United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government in Sri Lanka is no different. The role of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), which falsely claims at times to be "Marxist" and "socialist", is particularly revealing. Now part of a ruling coalition, the JVP demagogues have junked their anti-imperialist rhetoric and issued not a word of protest against the daily slaughter being carried out by the US military in Iraq. Their accommodation to Washington is the logical outcome of their nationalist and communal program.

The necessary lessons must be drawn. The working class in Sri Lanka, like its counterparts in the US and internationally, needs to make a complete break from the entire political establishment and turn to the building of a mass independent movement against war

and social inequality, grounded on a socialist program. We call on all those who are seeking a progressive and genuine alternative to capitalism and war to attend the meetings in Colombo and Kandy, where Bill Van Auken will speak on the key political and historical issues posed by the Iraq war.

Colombo:

New Town Hall, Green Path, Colombo

Date: October 23, 2004

Time: 3 p.m.

Kandy:

Kannangara Hall, Peradeniya University Campus

Date: October 25, 2004

Time: 4 p.m.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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