

SEP/WSWS meetings in Australia oppose Israeli-US aggression in Lebanon

Our correspondents

25 August 2006

The Socialist Equality Party and the World Socialist Web Site held public meetings in Sydney on August 22 and Melbourne on August 24 to oppose the US-backed Israeli assault on Lebanon. The meetings were addressed by WSWS staff writer Rick Kelly and Nick Beams, national secretary of the SEP and a member of the international editorial board of the WSWS. Kelly's report is available today on the WSWS and a full transcript of Beams's report will be published tomorrow.

Opening the Sydney meeting, chairperson and SEP assistant national secretary Linda Tenenbaum told the audience of WSWS readers, workers, pensioners, university and high school students:

“On July 13, Israel began a massive bombardment of Lebanon by sea and by air, and sent the first of thousands of troops into the country. This marked the start of a month-long war of aggression against Lebanon that was conducted with a degree of ferocity and barbarism that recalls the period prior to WWII.”

The Israeli government's assault, she said, “was backed to the hilt by the Bush administration, the Blair government in Britain and the entire official political establishment in Australia”. It followed five months of provocations, economic blockade and violence by the Israeli Defence Forces against the Palestinian people on the West Bank and in Gaza—sparked by attempts to destroy the newly-elected Hamas-led Palestinian government in the Occupied Territories.

Tenenbaum continued: “We have been told again and again by the Israeli and US governments, the world's media, the United Nations, the European powers—including France and Germany—and the Australian government that Israel's actions have been motivated by self-defence.

“The argument of ‘self-defence’ has been utilised repeatedly—and falsely—since the state of Israel was first established in 1947-48, to justify the bloody dispossession of the Palestinian people and the reign of violence, intimidation and repression that has been continued against them, and their supporters in the region, for the past 60 years.

“The WSWS and SEP oppose Israel's aggressive war on Lebanon and call for the unity of the working class throughout the Middle East—Israeli, Arab, Muslim, Christian and Jewish—in a common struggle against Zionism and imperialism and for the socialist reorganisation of the entire region.

“Our attitude,” she declared, “is grounded on the internationalist principles and program of the Fourth International. The Trotskyist movement opposed the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 on the basis of Jewish nationalism and exclusivism, and warned that it would prove to be nothing but a bloody trap for Arabs and Jews alike. It would not provide an answer to the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust—but only sow the seeds for new ones.”

Israel's evolution over the past 60 years, she continued, “is a particularly tragic expression of the inexorable logic of all forms of nationalism—whether Jewish, Palestinian, Tamil, Irish, American or Australian. I say ‘particularly tragic’ because the Jewish people who, over centuries, came to be associated with some of the greatest and most progressive ideas and ideals in the arts, sciences and in politics—especially socialist and Marxist politics—have now become associated with some of the most reactionary ideas and agendas.”

Following the introduction, Rick Kelly exposed the justifications that accompanied the launching of the Israeli assault on Lebanon. He cited evidence that it was a long-prepared proxy war carried out on behalf of the Bush administration. Hezbollah's capture of two Israeli soldiers on July 12 was simply seized upon by the Olmert government to set in motion the US-Israeli attack.

Kelly stated: “The Bush administration viewed Israel's offensive in Lebanon as part of its broader drive to completely restructure the Middle East and Central Asia. Having invaded and occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, strategists in Washington have now set their sights on ‘regime change’ in Syria and Iran. The Bush administration considers these two countries as the most significant

obstacles to its goal of establishing US domination in the region and securing its control of critical oil and gas reserves...”

Kelly documented the savagery that had been employed by the Israeli military to terrorise the Lebanese population into submission. He noted, however, that the war had ended in a debacle for both the Olmert government and the Bush administration. Determined resistance had prevented the Israeli military from achieving its objective of shattering Hezbollah before the tenuous United Nations-brokered ceasefire took effect on August 15.

The bitter recriminations now raging within the US and Israeli political and military establishment over the failures of the operation could rapidly lead to the resumption of war. Kelly stressed that the Bush administration’s “fundamental strategy” remained unaltered.

In his report to the meetings, Nick Beams reviewed the driving forces behind the eruption of US militarism and neo-colonialism in the Middle East. He explained the transformation of the United States from unchallenged economic superiority following World War II, to a position of historic weakness in relation to its major rivals in Europe and Asia.

“The explosive character of the present period essentially derives from the fact that the US is attempting to compensate for the decline in its global economic position by military means. And this program has its own inexorable logic. It means that the more deeply embroiled the US becomes in military conflict, the more it has to resort to the use of force, not so much because of military defeats, but, more often than not, to overcome problems created by its victories.”

Beams concluded his report by attacking all those political tendencies that sought to promote the illusion that war could be stopped by protest or appeals to capitalist governments.

As an example, he cited the August 16 edition of the *Green Left Weekly*, the publication of the middle class protest organisation, the Democratic Socialist Perspective. As part of the “Stop the War Coalition” the DSP declared: “We need to keep mobilising public opposition to end this war. That, in the end, is the only way to make [Australian Prime Minister] Howard, George Bush, Tony Blair and Ehud Olmert listen.”

Beams commented: “Consider the analysis which underlies such a perspective. It is that the essential problem lies with the various individuals who occupy the leading posts in various imperialist governments and that it is necessary to keep protesting until they listen or are replaced. An altogether different conclusion flows from the scientific analysis which understands that the drive to war arises not from the psyche or politics of individual imperialist

politicians, but is rooted in processes at the very heart of the capitalist system itself.”

The task, Beams stated, “is not one of trying to put pressure on this or that imperialist power, but in ending the capitalist system, based on private profit and the conflict of national states”.

A lively question and answer session followed the reports at both meetings. In Sydney, Beams was asked how the international unity of the working class could prevent future wars. He explained that all the wars of the twentieth century, including both world wars, had been fought on behalf of the capitalist interests of the various ruling classes. The working class, however, had “no economic interests in war” or in the maintenance of national borders.

In Melbourne, the speakers were asked about support for the WSWS in the Middle East, the SEP’s attitude to the Australian military occupation of East Timor, and the attitude of Marxists toward religion.

The WSWS interviewed members of the audience after the meetings. Michelle Bennett, a TAFE student and parent, attended the meeting in Sydney after reading an article on the WSWS for the first time last week.

“Before this meeting I thought the war was to try and get rid of the terrorists from Lebanon. The media didn’t put any alternative view. I never knew why America was so silent. I was wondering what the underlying motive was. Now I know they let Israel do the fighting because the capitalists in the US want the resources in that region. I think they’re using this as a justification to send their military force into the Middle East. They were already thinking about doing it, and this made things easier.”

Khalil, a Telstra worker in Melbourne, said: “I’m close to what goes on in the Middle East. I’ve been focused on the injustice there. I was born there and I have relatives there and in Syria.

“It was interesting to hear your views on the Lebanon war. You don’t hear that much in the west. I wasn’t aware of the bigger picture of the working class and the conflicts between the ruling classes. I’ve also never linked the Arab leaders with all their corruption to the western powers. They’re kept in power by leaders in the west as they keep the masses down and give a supply of oil to the west.”



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