

Students, veterans, workers denounce Iraq war at Saturday protests

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At the January 27 demonstration in Washington DC, organized by United for Peace and Justice, members and supporters of the Socialist Equality Party intervened distributing the ICFI statement, “For an international mobilization of workers and youth against the war in Iraq,” as well as a statement appealing for students to join and build the International Students for Social Equality.

Many of those interviewed by the WSWS reporters expressed anger not only at the Bush administration, but at the Democratic Party for its complicity in the war.

JoAnn and Robert Drozd have a son in the 173rd Airborne. “He spent a year in Afghanistan and he is due to get out in July,” JoAnn told the WSWS. “I am afraid that he might get stop-lossed and sent back to Iraq with the surge in troops.”

“I am against the war in Iraq,” she continued. “It is an illegal and unjust war. I believe that it is being done for profit and we don’t want our son there. I think both parties, Democrats and Republicans, think there is money to be made with this war and that’s why they are supporting it.”

Asked about leading figures in the Democratic Party, including Hilary Clinton, JoAnn responded, “Hillary Clinton is a typical politician—she beats around the bush and doesn’t answer the questions.”

The protest drew tens of thousands of students and youth from around the country, and for many, Saturday’s protest was their first in Washington. WSWS reporters met Daniel Montgomery, Shannon Isaacs, and Ari Staiger, all high school students who had traveled from Ohio.

“I’ve never been to a really massive protest with tens of thousands of people,” said Phil, a high school junior. “I’d been to other, smaller protests around Cincinnati,

and the cause was the same—opposing the war.”

Asked why they opposed the war, Shannon, a sophomore, was quick to respond: “All the killing is wrong,” she said, “The war is not really about anything but oil.” The other students agreed.

Stacy Hafley’s husband was in Iraq and suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. She traveled from Columbia, Missouri to attend the demonstrations, but her husband could not come. “He does not do well in crowds,” she said, “but he supports that I am here. Our whole family is against the war. Our little six-year-old son made this sign”—she displayed a sign that read, “No More Moms and Dads in Iraq.”

“I think this is a war based on lies,” Stacy added. “My feeling is if the Democrats don’t stop the funding and safely and quickly bring our troops home, and if they approve the funding for this war, then they own the war and they are just as responsible for what happens as Bush.”

Erika Illaness from Santa Barbara, California was in Iraq from October 2005 through October 2006. “I don’t believe in the war in Iraq,” she said. “They should get everyone out now. We are in Iraq for no reason. We know that they didn’t do 9/11.

“I was not ready for college, decided that I wanted to go out on my own, so I joined the Army. I didn’t realize that that is not ‘on your own’ because they tell you everything to do and not to do. In Iraq, I was working in a warehouse near the Baghdad International Airport. It was a shipping depot; shipments of supplies would come through us. There were a lot of attacks on the base all the time.

Dinah Mason, Erika’s mother, is a Vietnam-era veteran. “I am really mad at all the politicians,” she said. “I am a supporter of the Democratic Party but I am very mad at them for supporting the war. While

they are all discussing it and positioning themselves, soldiers are dying.

“You can get the list of soldiers from California who have died in Iraq, and a lot of them have Hispanic last names. I am speaking for those families as well, because while their sons have died in Iraq, many of them are afraid to speak out because they may have a relative who is undocumented and they don’t want the government to deport them.

Tim Baker from Baltimore, Maryland, did two tours of duty in Iraq. “I am here to stop the escalation, and show my support for the quickest way to bring people home,” he said. “The longer we stay the more soldiers we lose. It makes no sense to stay in and commit more troops when they’re not wanted. I think that the country was misled to believe something that was not true.”

Asked about the Democrats, he said, “The Democrats are just talking a good game, but the problem is we need actions to end the war.”

SEP members and supporters also distributed leaflets and spoke with workers and students at protests in Los Angeles and San Francisco, organized by a coalition of left and antiwar groups to coincide with the protest in Washington, DC.

“This is my first demonstration ever,” said a second-year student at the University of California Los Angeles. “I almost didn’t come, but then I don’t think I have ever been so angry against the government, against the president, against Congress. I don’t think any of them are really against the war. I came to that conclusion when I saw Nancy Pelosi kissy-kissy with Bush right after the elections. I think it’s the people who are going to put an end to this war, not the Democrats or any party that I know of.”

An immigrant field laborer from Oxnard, California spoke with the WSWS in Spanish. “We came by bus, a whole bunch of us,” he said. “We’re not working very much because of the recent frost which has damaged a lot of crops. But anyway, I want everyone to know that workers have no borders, that not many of us have any faith in the Republicans or Democrats ending this war against workers—Democrats only in name, by the way. But what can we do? I heard Mrs. Clinton is running. That might change things. But wasn’t she *for* the war?”

“Would you believe I voted for that Bush in 2000? That was a long time ago and a lot has happened since

then,” said a worker from Water and Power in Los Angeles. “Today I wouldn’t even vote for the Democrats. I mean, what have they done except act like little dogs for the Republicans and their greed for oil? They have supported Bush by giving him all the money he’s asked for that war in Iraq. And now they want to go to war against Iran. No way. No way am I going to let my son go into the army.”



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